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The "Deliberate Belief":

Reflections between The Book of the Duchess and Heart of Darkness

Dev Loyola-Nazareth

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

English

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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ABSTRACT

THE "DELIBERATE BELIEF":
REFLECTIONS BETWEEN THE BOOK OF THE DUCHESS AND HEART OF DARKNESS

Dev Loyola-Nazareth

This thesis gives a perspective on Chaucer's The Book of the Duchess through Conrad's Heart of Darkness. It explores the sense of a "noble humility" of the authors as manifested in these two works. This "noble humility" is essentially a perspective on humanity, a perspective focused by a discovery and elaboration of some emotional and intellectual reflections of the works. The literary effects of the works that excite our reactions are analyzed for a clarification of their part in the communication of the truth of the works. The success of the communication resting also on our immediacy to the experience of reading the works, the thesis examines our participation in the sequential discovery of the truth, wherein there is a conversion from solipsist to vicarious participant. From the deliberate, self-imposed isolation introduced by the Prologues, the two works provide for the introspection that develops from a review of the external, social world to a deepening scrutiny of the relationship of the self with society and, ultimately, of the self itself.

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This thesis would have been impossible without the enlightening guidance and kind encouragement of my adviser, Prof. Eyvind Ronquist. His criticisms were always clarifying and constructive. His extraordinary patience and perseverance helped me invaluablely. I owe much also to my parents, for whose foresight in educating me I shall be forever grateful. My ultimate debt is to my wife, Ingrid, my "Phisicien," whose superb typing and proofreading climaxed the support she extravagantly gave me.

For INGRID

PRELIMINARY NOTE

The editions used throughout and to which all page references are made are The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), and Heart of Darkness, ed. Robert Kimbrough (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1971). The foci of the thesis being Chaucer's The Book of the Duchess and Conrad's Heart of Darkness, the two works are hereafter cited as BD and HD respectively. Secondary quotation marks have been occasionally omitted in references from Heart of Darkness.

PREFACE

An Apologia for Binocular Vision

The delicate, composed elaborations of Heart of Darkness awoke in my memory the echoes of the deliberate, embellished complications of The Book of the Duchess. I realized with excitement that the tones of the prose work were resonating like those of the poem. Their frequencies seemed the same. I was fascinated by the mutual harmony and decided to investigate it.

Heart of Darkness continued to be the canonic scale with which I listened, literally and metaphorically, to the development of The Book of the Duchess. The prose work, because it was relatively contemporary, was sooner comprehensible to me; its elaborate articulation and its complementary, far-reaching exploration, its verbal distance, communicated its truth more readily than did the relatively remote poem. The prose work helped me focus on The Book of the Duchess. It became the key that carried, that transported me to the poem. Its melismatics helped me hear the poem's; its self-consciousness made me aware of the poem's; its considerations facilitated by example the explication of the poem's concerns.

My reading of Heart of Darkness also benefited from its projection on The Book of the Duchess. The comparison of the philosophies of the two works inevitably demanded a scrutiny of both. The prose work, because it reflected the poem, was researched in the reflection of the

poem itself. Often, the poem might be referred to the prose work. Thus,
my perspective of each work was finely focused by the other.

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CHAPTER I

Finding a Perspective: The Approach

Amonge al this I fond a tale
That me thoughte a wonder thing. (BD 60-61)

In The Book of the Duchess, Chaucer misreads a tale from Ovid's Metamorphoses. His misprision is deliberate, calculated to anticipate his elegy's "first mater." Chaucer's Narrator purports simply to retell the tale--"This was the tale" (BD 62)--but he presents a Seys-Alcyone story that is carefully edited and even annotated to highlight events that, in turn, underscore principles that are elaborated in the Dream he will later recall. Ovid's tale is recounted because it shares some essentials with the Narrator's Dream; and it is articulated by the Narrator to demonstrate these mutualities to its audience.

The integrity of the original text by Ovid is not being eroded by a plagiarizing, expedient Chaucer. Rather, the text is appreciated quite literally by an honest, delicate poet who expresses his understanding of the story in his own emphasis and commentary. Thus he explores at some length the humour inherent in the tale and stresses the ostensible, ultimate futility of Alcyone's invocation, with its final hopelessness. As I will discuss later, the explicit comedy and the contradictory, implicit despair that Chaucer's Narrator discovers in the story are conspicuous in their anticipation of the mixed moods that pervade the Dream.

With a quiet, subtle purpose, Chaucer skins over those elements of Ovid's tale that he deems superfluous to his analogy. He summarizes Ovid's detail of the storm and shipwreck in eight lines. The circumstances of the king's death are not important. Only the tragedy of his premature demise is necessary for the comparison. Once this fact is conveyed, Chaucer focuses on Alcyone: "Now for to speken of his wif" (BD 76). He remarks her deep, unrelenting sorrow, her ideal devotion to her king, because it is a key element of his elegy. It recalls the extreme sorrow of the Prologue's Narrator and predicts that of the Dream's Man in Black. Chaucer's impression of the significance of Alcyone's sorrow and devotion is evident in his comment in lines 95 to 100. Once he completes his critical review of the Seys-Alcyone story, he quickly sets the text aside. He is detached from Alcyone's final monologue--"Hyf were to longe for to dwelle" (BD 217)--because it is unnecessary for his comparison. The fact of her death, with its profound implications, is comment enough on the lessons of the story and of the Dream.

I have borrowed Chaucer's purposive, analytical method of misprision for my exploration of the Deliberate Beliefs of The Book of the Duchess and Heart of Darkness. Hinging them on their mutual expressions of an unspeakable, I juxtapose the two works so that they make conspicuous by duplication the elements they share. In my comparison, I learn more quickly to be sensitive to their individual experiences of their respective truths.

Misreading, the deliberately angled scrutiny, is discussed by Harold Bloom in A Map of Misreading:

Influence, as I conceive it, means that there are no texts, but only relationships between texts. These relationships depend upon a critical act, a misreading or misprision, that one poet performs upon another, and that does not differ in kind from the necessary critical acts performed by every strong reader upon every text he encounters. The influence-relation governs reading as it governs writing, and reading is therefore a miswriting just as writing is a misreading. As literary history lengthens, all poetry necessarily becomes verse-criticism, just as all criticism becomes prose-poetry.¹

Bloom finds the cause of the misreading in the reader's personality, his own particular perspective. A study of the emotional and intellectual effect of a literary work on its reader inevitably suggests the comparison of texts that have affected the reader in similar ways, that manifest the "influence" that Bloom discusses:

You cannot write or teach or think or even read without imitation, and what you imitate is what another person has done, that person's writing or teaching or thinking or reading. Your relation to what informs that person is tradition. . . . Literary tradition begins when a fresh author is simultaneously cognizant not only of his own struggle against the forms and presence of a Precursor, but is compelled also to a sense of the Precursor's place in regard to what came before him.²

Chaucer is acutely conscious of his tradition, as his use of conventions and even substantial portions of other poets' works shows. Of course, his art does not merely imitate but imposes his own personality on his borrowings as he employs them for his purpose. Chaucer adapts the familiar device of a dream-vision to his purpose of an elegy. Within the frame-work of the dream-vision itself, he carefully shapes borrowed components, literally reinventing them for this "first mater." His misreading and miswriting, therefore, become criticisms, a fresh perspective. The misprision becomes an appreciation in its comparison.

Heart of Darkness, in its transcendental exploration of the elegy, compels its comparison with The Book of the Duchess. Both works exemplify Abbie Finlay Potts' definition, in The Elegaic Mode, that "the aim of elegaic composition is the refinement of human understanding in a series of revelations about the nature of human life and human destiny."³ The sensitive reader will discover that despite the difference of superficial aspects--the conventions, the contexts, the inspirations, the language itself--the deep sympathy between the works is conspicuous, startling. At the beginning of the encounter, the reader wonders and, in wondering, questions: What would these two works say to each other? What would the discourse be? This curiosity is a vigorous response by the reader to the experience of his reading. As he follows this "conversation" that he constructs between the works, he learns the answer to his question on both: How should he listen?

First of all, we can say that the indeterminate elements of literary prose--perhaps even of all literature--represent the most important link between text and reader. It is the switch that activates the reader in using his own ideas in order to fulfill the intention of the text. This means that it is the basis of a textual structure in which the reader's part is already incorporated.

In this respect, literary texts differ from those which formulate a concrete meaning or truth. Texts of the latter kind are, by their very nature, independent of the individual reader, for the meaning or truth which they express exists independently of any reader's participation. But when the most vital element of a textual structure is the process of reading, it is forced to rely on the individual reader for the realization of a possible meaning or truth. The meaning is conditioned by the text itself, but only in a form that allows the reader himself to bring it out.⁴

Wolfgang Iser's discussion of hermeneutics, concentrated pungently in the quoted passages from his essay entitled "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction," loudly echoes Conrad's own definition in Heart

of Darkness of a narrational communication of a truth, expressed succinctly through the narrator's comment on the yarns of seamen and elaborated in Marlow's ironic defense of his way of explicating a truth: "'I don't want to bother you much with what happened to me personally . . . yet to understand the effect of it on me you ought to know how I got out there, what I saw, how I went up that river to the place where I first met the poor chap'" (HD 17). The reader's involvement is critical to the discovery of the truth. Marlow's narrative is not a truth in itself. If it did denote the truth, it would demand only an observation from its reader. The reader would either agree or disagree with the truth stated.

V. S. Pritchett, in an essay on Conrad, prefers the kind of text that accepts a plain exegesis without elaborate intervention by the reader:

There are times when the belief in original sin sounds either histrionic or professional; and in Heart of Darkness far too much play is made with words like "inscrutable," "unfathomable," "impalpable," "mysterious," "inconceivable" in a manner that suggests an attempt to create a system or dogma of evil by sheer oratory. Conrad's description of the Congo is unforgettable, but his moral reflections look like stage drawings or temporary constructions. I think the exile's temperament gave Conrad his obsession with the allusive. He could never resist a symbol; and his images tend to submerge his people at their crisis, as if they were evasions. Even so, such a concern for texture does not really explain why "Mistah Kurtz," the whole focus of Heart of Darkness, is a ghost or figment. His extreme lusts--what are they? What unnamable things did he do? Was he a cannibal? He murdered, we suppose. It is curious that when Marlow actually sees the heads on the poles outside the hut, he sees them not by the defenseless naked eye but by the magnifying intervention of binoculars. At the very crisis of the story we do not directly face the fact; we are given the distorting illusion.⁵

The disadvantage of this kind of exegesis is its preoccupation with the superficial, with what Marlow calls a "surface-truth" (HD 37).

Pritchett's obsession with the "histrionics" of the work blinds him to the

profound implications of its powerful undercurrents, its provocative substance. In his exegesis, Pritchett, instead of pondering the meaning of Conrad's evidently self-conscious eloquence, tosses it aside as a weakness, a flaw. He considers the work's evasiveness a defect. Evading the allusions wanting explanation, Pritchett focuses on the ostensible, and his discovery leaves him dissatisfied emotionally and intellectually. But he should question the "distorting illusion." He should not retire with disappointment at the dearth of factual, mundane information on Kurtz but scrutinize his impalpability to sense the aura of its purpose. Looking at the obvious Pritchett loses sight of the subtle; studying the evident, he ignores the essential.

The ostensibly inorganic structure of Heart of Darkness, its composition of "schematized views,"⁶ is also found in Chaucer's The Book of the Duchess. Pritchett's criticisms of Heart of Darkness could clearly be levelled at this poem also. The obsession of its Prologue with an unnatural "sorwe" is never clarified. It resounds with the repeated mention of the symptoms--"I may nat slepe wel nygh noght," "defaute of slep," "to endure / Withoute slep and be in sorwe," "ydel thoght," "feþynge in nothyng," "mased thyng," "sorwful ymagynacioun," "melancolye," "hevynesse" but never explains them. The mood is carefully constructed by adjectival insistence. Pritchett might well demand: What is the cause of this sleeplessness? What is the detail of the "sickness"? Who is the "phisicien"? Pritchett would probably fault the poem's focus, the Man in Black, for being so ghostly, for hiding himself behind the ornate conventions of his eulogy. He would probably complain of the immediately disappointing climax, with its apparent, almost tangible ignorance of the "fact."

The trouble with using literal exegesis as the main approach to these two works is its emphasis on the concrete, the evident, or, at the least, on the denotation of words rather than their connotations. Eugene Dorfman, who uses the term "narreme" for the central or core incident of each component of the train of incidents in a narrative, argues against inorganic structure and its complementary evasiveness and indeterminacy:

Except for the initial narreme, which serves as the necessary foundation for what is to follow, and the final narreme, which is the natural outcome of what has preceded, the test of a narreme is that it be the organic consequence of the preceding narreme and the effective cause of the following one. All incidents are marginal and belong solely to the superstructure if their omission would not affect the basic story line, however poetic, delightful, entertaining, artistic, and otherwise memorable they may be.

Dorfman's Aristotelian severity would ostracize the episodic components of The Book of the Duchess and Heart of Darkness. In the poem, the core incident of the Seys-Alcyone story, the invocation to Juno, accented only by the narrator's own invocation later, is not neatly isolated from its accompanying incidents, which most certainly contribute to the influence of the story on the explication of the poem. The waking of Morpheus, for example, with its glaring humour, can be shown as essential, not incidental, to the purpose of the telling of the story. In fact, beyond the Narrator's invocation and sleep--those immediate consequences of the Seys-Alcyone story--the involvement of Morpheus proves to have greater, more profound repercussions than the prayer to Juno. The core incident of the ultimate meeting, the Man in Black's eulogy, is also finally subordinated to the apparently incidental reaction of the Dreamer, with its graver, more astonishing implications. In Heart of Darkness, the core incidents of individual episodes prove as difficult to pinpoint. Their

initial importance is inevitably undermined by incidentals, which ultimately prove to be equally or even more ponderous. At the Central Station, a spontaneous jig will awake echoes that will be heard far beyond the confines of its immediate context; and their loudness will belie its humble, even inconsequential whisper in the deliberate cacophony of that Station. The central incident of the meeting between Marlow and the Intended will also prove elusive and, when defined according to Dorfman's criteria, unsatisfying.

Dorfman's and Pritchett's methods of exegeses could not comprehend The Book of the Duchess and Heart of Darkness because they cannot fully appreciate the connotations, the projections, the inductions, the aura that are impalpable to pure intellect. Such exegeses get mired in the literalness of words and sink in ambiguous soft-spots that do not support their demand for solid fact. Consequently, they cannot explore the whole work. Since such exegeses find the gaps among the "schematized views" disconcerting, they cannot transcend the breaks, and do not discover the emanations that bridge the "views." The indeterminacy that is the distance between the "schematized views" must be experienced and explored by the reader who hopes to comprehend the entire work. The reader must participate in the experience of the work in order to understand it, and he is thus compelled to ponder the work more carefully, to act deliberately to orient himself constantly in order to continue in the true direction. In reading The Book of the Duchess and Heart of Darkness, the reader must become as knowingly and carefully self-conscious as the narrators, as he shares in their explorations.

CHAPTER II

Defining the Standard: The Remarkable

. . . I not what is best to doo. (BD 29)

I humbly suggest, as I ardently strive to emulate Chaucer's own noble humility, that this line is the key to a correct reading of The Book of the Duchess. I do not intend to imply that Chaucer lacked the self-assurance or confidence that is born of the maturity, in perspective or vision, manifest in his art. Even a cursory reading of the poet's works would provoke a passionate denial of such a suggestion. Nonetheless, I ask you to consider his distinct lack of hubris, of self-conceit, that is a sign of true maturity. I recommend that you study Chaucer pondering the imponderable and you will realize his recognition of the limits, the finiteness, imposed on humans by their humanity. This is part of the noble humility of which I speak.

The complement to that facet of noble humility is the simultaneous perception of the urgency for positive action. The acceptance of our humanity and its inherent curbs must not precipitate us toward hopelessness and despair; rather, we must endeavour to the best of our ability. Chaucer did not perceive our humanity to be crippling or imprisoning. He saw life as a framework within which, paradoxically, existed endless possibilities. As manifested in his Canterbury Tales, he comprehended life's infinite variety--its joys, its sorrows; its beauty, its grotesque-

ness; its comedy and its tragedy--and, marvelling at what he saw, was inspired to act, to write.

This delicate balance between the sober, intellectual acceptance of our humanity with its resident imperfections and weaknesses and the delighted and delightful conviction of man's vitality and zest for life and all that it affords is evident on scrutiny not only in the text of The Book of the Duchess, but also in the writing of the poem. Chaucer, recognizing man's emotional and mental nature, must have known that, to communicate the truth of his work, he would have to address both components of our humanity, appealing to our hearts and our minds through the twin voices of emotion and reason. In The Book of the Duchess, the emotions and the intellect speak sometimes independently and sometimes together. The two voices modify each other. The resulting medium is the focus and, in fact, the very essence of the poem itself. Like the literal, apparent arguments it contains, the poem itself, through its structure and tone, evokes the audience's emotional and intellectual responses. Born of the heart and the mind, it appeals to the heart and the mind; being humane, it touches our humanity.

The relationship between the heart and the mind in Chaucer's poetry has been discussed briefly by several critics; however, the emphasis of the discussions has been on "impetus" and "ratio," "energy" and "order," a concept that does not fully comprehend the heart and the mind. The emphasis on "impetus" and "ratio" underscores the poet's debt, for the concept, to medieval Christian doctrine, concentrating most of the responsibility for the use of the concept on convention. While the influence of medieval Christian tradition cannot be denied, its effect on the author

of The Book of the Duchess should not be overestimated. Chaucer was an orthodox Christian--his later poem, "Truth," reveals clearly his Christian view--whose personality effected a finer focus of his basically medieval Christian perspective of life. However, Chaucer's adventitious Christian attitudes were profoundly affected by his inherent qualities, his "inborn strength." My reference to Chaucer's "inborn strength" is inspired by the sense of the concept underlying The Book of the Duchess; therefore, while the concept is manifest in the poet's later, major works, my discussion of it will encompass only this poem.

I borrowed the concept of "inborn strength" from Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness because I found that it best expressed the quality that the poet had and that I have been highlighting, and because I see a remarkable sympathy between Conrad's opus and Chaucer's first major poem. Here, to preserve the continuity of thought and purpose, I will comment on the concept only, promising to elaborate on my second premise in the following chapters. In Heart of Darkness, "inborn strength" is best explained during the dreamlike journey up the Congo River:

"The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there--there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were--No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it--this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity--like yours--the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you--you so remote from the night of first ages--could comprehend. And why not? The mind of man is capable of anything--because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What

was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage--who can tell?--but truth--truth stripped of its cloak of time. Let the fool gape and shudder--the man knows, and can look on without a wink. But he must at least be as much of a man as these on the shore. He must meet that truth with his own true stuff--with his own inborn strength. Principles? Principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags--rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No; you want a deliberate belief. An appeal to me in this fiendish row-- is there? Very well; I hear; I admit, but I have a voice too, and for good or evil mine is the speech that cannot be silenced."
(HD 36-37)

According to the sense of the concept of "inborn strength" expressed in this passage, Chaucer's medieval Christian upbringing, his inculcation of Christian doctrine, would be mere "Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags--rags that would fly off at the first good shake." Chaucer's true personality, that wrought a "deliberate belief," that imposed a focus on the medieval Christian perspective given him, was his "inborn strength."

My references to Chaucer's "inborn strength" in The Book of the Duchess may lead some readers to accuse me of an unsophisticated perspective of the relationship between poet and poem. Am I not guilty of confusing reality with fiction, of mistaking Chaucer to be the poem's Narrator, who is apparently subject occasionally to a myopia that could never afflict Chaucer himself, and of confounding the poet, the maker himself, with the poem's persona, the created Dreamer? I argue, as Robert Jordan cautions in Chaucer and the Shape of Creation, that we should not commit the error of applying modern critical norms and judgments to Chaucer's work. Jordan states:

The primary artistic means of discriminating between art and life is the clear structural outline, the explicit indication of the limits of illusion. . . . This sense of structure has in recent times dissolved, not only in the language of criti-

cism . . . but in the practice of novelists who have developed subtle techniques for the "rendering" of experiences, techniques intended to exclude from the fiction the signs of an external, shaping hand. The absence of "explanations" and of explicit beginnings and conclusive conclusions indicates the importance for modern fiction of preserving the illusion that art is not "made" but is, that it is an organism rather than a mechanism.⁸

In Chaucer's literary tradition, art was "made," and, as a consequence, manifested the effects of its creator. Art was a "mechanism" in so far as it was explicitly shaped and dependent on its artisan, its creator, who dramatized his own efforts, as in the Iliad. The poem existed for its creator; its purpose was its creator's purpose. I hope to show that this view of art as a mechanism is especially valid for The Book of the Duchess. The poem was written by the poet to fulfill and express his purpose. One may argue that all fiction fulfills a purpose. True; but much modern fiction remains isolated from its author, who employs various devices to sustain the organic, independent quality of his work. The Book of the Duchess shows an almost direct link with its "auctour." Its Narrator is not Chaucer, but Chaucer is its narrator. That is, what is true of the Narrator in the poem is not necessarily true of Chaucer--for example, the Narrator in the poem has suffered an eight year "sickness" that Chaucer himself may not have shared--but Chaucer uses the Narrator as a medium through which to express his views, to articulate his thoughts, to accomplish his purpose. Thus the Narrator of The Book of the Duchess may still be named "Chaucer," a subtle and self-conscious Chaucer.

Jordan, calling for a correct appreciation of what he has termed "inorganic" art, argues:

. . . irregularities and inconsistencies of a Chaucerian narrative, particularly the recurrent disruptions of illusion but also other overt evidence of the maker's hand--the exposed joints and seams, the unresolved contradictions, the clashes of perspective--are not simply the signs of primitive genius, as Sydney and Dryden were willing to believe; nor are they trivial stylistic blemishes, as modern advocates of psychological realism and dramatic unity have maintained. They are significant determinants of Chaucer's art, based upon an aesthetic which conceives of art not as an organism, a living plant, but as an inorganic material, a "veil," as Petrarch and Boccaccio understood it, or in more complex works such as Troilus, the Canterbury Tales . . . as a structure possessed of architectonic as well as planimetric dimensions.⁹

I extend the thrust of Jordan's proposition. The Book of the Duchess' strong sense of purpose is manifested in its multilevelled structure: each level works toward and supports the one purpose, and reinforces the support given by the other levels. This unity of purpose is not always apparent; the overt, even deliberate ambivalence often tends to confuse. The various levels or voices seem often in apparent contradiction or disharmony, each voice being independent. Nevertheless, I have found as a reader that they ultimately reinforce one another, echoing the same theme, and leading inexorably to a common end.

The Book of the Duchess can be heard as the voices of the heart and the mind in a variety of disputes and duets. The Prologue is an eventful marriage of the heart and the mind, of emotion and reason. It appears to be purely emotive, an expression of great sorrow. Though the emotions have ostensibly been numbed in the Narrator, who says he has "felynge in nothyng, / But, as yt were, a maséd thyng, / Alway in poynt to falle adoun" (BD 11-13), the Narrator himself refers his benumbed condition to his "sorwful ymagynacioun." However, it is also intellectual in its introduction of the poem's purpose by providing a sympathetic link with

John of Gaunt, by building the necessary empathy with Gaunt without eclipsing his own real sorrow and loss, and by hinting at the quality of the final consolation offered.

The voices of the heart and the mind emanate through various speakers--Chaucer, the Narrator, and the Dreamer--each of whom represents a level of consciousness in the communication between the poet and his audience. The speakers, who serve as the media through which the heart and the mind express themselves, contribute to the multilevelled structure of the poem; they provide the choruses that blend into the crescendo of the poem's theme.

CHAPTER III

Exploring the Comparison: The Reflection

The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine. (HD 5)

I believe that the above comment can be applied to the "auctour" of The Book of the Duchess. In Chaucer's narration, as in Conrad's, the meaning lies not on the literal level of the work; the meaning surrounds the literal work, and is illuminated by a reading of the literal work. This aura of meaning is reached through the literal but must transcend it, because the meaning is a truth, which by its very nature is elusive. The truth cannot be shown completely through a literal communication because it is essentially amorphous. Its vagueness, its impalpability, makes it incomprehensible to pure logic, though it must affect the intellect if it is to be seen clearly.

Both The Book of the Duchess and Heart of Darkness are literally elegies, but both have their aim the revelation of a truth. As elegies, the works must appeal to the heart and the mind (obviously, an unreasonable consolation is no consolation). As revealers of truths, the works also must reach the heart and the mind, because a truth lies between pure emotion and pure reason. Both works accomplish their revelations of

their respective truths through their multilevelled structures that enable the voices of the heart and the mind to be heard by the audience at many levels of consciousness. To label broadly these levels of consciousness, I will look to Heart of Darkness for inspiration, and refer to the "Outer Station," the "Central Station," and the "Inner Station."

Leading to the "Outer Station" in Heart of Darkness is a Prologue that parallels remarkably in its function the Prologue of The Book of the Duchess: it anticipates the rest of the work. In the Prologue of Heart of Darkness, the preparation of the audience for the final revelation is begun. We are made aware of an imminent journey. The "Nellie" is at only a temporary rest; it is sea-bound. With the turning of the tide, it will sail away from the threatening gloom. We are not told the yawl's actual destination; however, we are given an idea of the potential of "a waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth" (HD 4). Our own journey through the story holds the same potential as the "Nellie's." If we must presume that, like the "Nellie," we will be returned to our starting point ultimately, we must ponder the purpose of our journey. If it has no real destination, its purpose must be implicit. We are offered an explanation by the end of the Prologue, by Marlow. I recall for emphasis:

"I don't want to bother you much with what happened to me personally . . . yet to understand the effect of it on me you ought to know how I got out there, what I saw, how I went up that river to the place where I first met the poor chap. It was the farthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me--and into my thoughts. It was sombre enough too--and pitiful--not extraordinary in any way--not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light." (HD 7)

The experiencing of the truth is the key to understanding it, Marlow argues. The truth is too amorphous to be trapped in one statement. It must be felt by the heart and the mind to be affecting and appreciated. The Prologue begins the experience of the truth for its readers.

We are first introduced to a feeling of helplessness, of being at the mercy of fate: the "Nellie" must anchor and wait for a favorable tide. This ripple of helplessness is succeeded by a wave of gloom. The fictive Narrator's description of the setting on the occasion of Marlow's narrative immediately introduces the mood that seems to pervade most of the work:

The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint, and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished sprits. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth. (HD 3)

The almost plodding repetitions of the word "gloom" further the effect of the quoted passage. Through the Narrator's reiteration, we ourselves are made to brood on the threatening gloom: "Only the gloom to the west, brooding over the upper reaches, became more sombre every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun" (HD 4). We are filled with forboding as we vicariously share the Narrator's darkening vision: "And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall, the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men" (HD 4).

While our hearts are being filled with an incipient despair, we must ponder the significance of the choreographed play of light and dark that the Narrator details. We realize that we need not be overwhelmed by despair. The gloom is pending, but it still lies behind us; before us lies hope. We must look forward, like the "Nellie" and her crew; we must dare to try to escape the deadly influence of the suspended gloom. Our spirits are lightened and our perspective becomes that of the Narrator who, considering the Thames "in the august light of abiding memories" (HD 4), enthusiastically and patriotically recalls: "What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! . . . The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires" (HD 4-6).

Then, this vision of a glorious, civilized and civilizing England is quickly and suddenly shattered. London, the heart of the "sacred fire," becomes "the monstrous town" (HD 5). "'And this also,' said Marlow suddenly, 'has been one of the dark places of the earth'" (HD 5). Marlow seems to be able to read the Narrator's unspoken sentiments, which we have begun to adopt, and react to them. He follows his cryptic statement with a perspective of England that is in such a direct contrast to the one which we have been sharing with the Narrator, that we are forced to rein in our almost extravagant feelings to allow our minds to ruminate on his thoughts. We find that we cannot deny the inexorable logic of Marlow's argument. His reasoning may appear unpleasant and even unpatriotic, but it rings true and, instead of banishing our generous vision of a civilized and civilizing England, modifies it so that we can see more clearly.

The interweave of emotion and reason, the mutual tempering of the

one by the other, is remarkable also in the Prologue of The Book of the Duchess. A cursory reading of the opening forty-three lines leaves us with the impression that the Narrator is naive. He expresses a childlike wonder; he seems helpless and uncomprehending. We might interpret this naiveté as a device used to heighten our pathos: it suits the subject of the occasion of the poem well.

Nonetheless, the opening lines show a man who realizes and can articulate his condition:

I have gret wonder, be this lyght,
 How that I lyve, for day ne nyght
 I may nat slepe wel nygh noght;
 I have so many an ydel thocht,
 Purely for defaute of slep,
 That, by my trouthe, I take no kep
 Of nothing, how hyt cometh or gooth,
 Ne me nys nothyng leef nor looth.
 Al is ylyche good to me--
 Joye or sorowe, wherso hyt be--
 For I have felynge in nothyng,
 But, as yt were, a mased thyng,
 Alway in poynt to falle a-down;
 For sorwful ymagynacioun
 Ys alway hooly in my mynde. (BD 1-15)

Despite or perhaps through the emotions displayed, we must remark that this "mased thyng" is capable of realizing that "wel ye woot, agaynes kynde / Hyt were to lyven in thys wysé" (BD 16-17). The Narrator states further that "Suche fantasies ben in myn hede, / So I not what is best to doo" (BD 28-29); however, he is capable of recognizing that his present lifestyle is "agaynes kynde," that

nature wolde nat suffyse
 To noon erthly creature
 Nat longe tyme to endure
 Withoute slep and be in sorwe. (BD 18-21)

Rather than gloss over this apparent paradox, we must explain it.

Wolfgang Clemen notes:

Reading the 43 lines with which Chaucer opens his Book of the Duchess one feels baffled and wonders what lies behind them. Froissart clearly states the reason for his melancholy (and the author of the Songé Vert describes both his low spirits before the dream and the reason for them); Chaucer, however, says nothing about such causes.¹⁰

Clemen feels that this "reserved, evasive utterance" is typically

Chaucerian. He adds:

. . . not a few passages in Chaucer's introduction sound like a man talking to himself, touching as if in passing now on this thought, now on that. Some topics already mentioned recur later (3-22, 44), others are intentionally shelved and dropped (40-1). The frequent interpolations and asides, the natural way the lines run on, make Chaucer's writings sound like a man thinking aloud to himself.¹¹

As Clemen points out, The Book of the Duchess is an occasional poem, to be read before an audience, to John of Gaunt. The opening lines give the impression of a man talking aloud to himself because they are the deliberate articulations of a Narrator reasoning aloud, not only to himself, but for the benefit of his patron and audience. The audience is itself first filled with a "gret wonder" at the copious expressions of an extreme sorrow. Then its inchoate curiosity is lured on by the subtle rationality of the "mased thyng." The statement of complete helplessness, "So I not what is best to doo" (BD-29), seems to be belied by the sympathy-provoking expression of sorrow and the coherent argument against unnatural sorrow. Our growing curiosity is anticipated by the Narrator who, elaborating on his desired effect, suddenly seems to become conscious of

his audience and turns modest and reticent.

John Lawlor comments that Chaucer "has taken the first step in the design of his poem by conveying the poignancy of love sorrow, and, for those who have ears to hear, establishing a connection between the sorrow of unfulfilled love and the sorrow of fulfilled love abruptly by death."¹² The Narrator's modest reference to his own "sickness" provides for the consideration of the two loves. However, its full purpose is far more profound: it condenses and directly states the rational argument of the poem:

. . . . but that is don.
 Passe we over untill eft;
 That wil not be mot nede be left;
 Our first mater is good to kepe. (BD 40-43)

These four lines are explicitly reasonable. They underscore the Narrator's balance between emotion and reason. He may be affected by a great sorrow, but he realizes the demands of life and the parameters of his humanity. The four lines bring the intent of the preceding thirty-nine lines into relief. The Narrator may not know what is "best to doo" about his sorrowful condition, but he does know: "That wil not be mot nede be left; / Our first mater is good to kepe."

Neither of the two Prologues can communicate fully its "mater." The Prologues have begun the adjusting of our perspectives but must allow the rest of the works to complete the focus. The Prologues act as anchors that keep the rest of the work and the audience from drifting away. In both works, they are both the beginning and the end of our literary journey, its premise and its conclusion. They comprehend the truth of the

story, but the experiencing of the truth in the elaboration of the body of the work is imperative for the focusing of our perspectives, that we may glimpse the truth on our return to the Prologues. The Prologues of The Book of the Duchess and Heart of Darkness recognize that the truth contained is amorphous and cannot be stated, but must be revealed through experience. It must be felt emotionally and intellectually.

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

He was silent for a while.

". . . No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence--that which makes its truth, its meaning--its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream--alone. . . ."

(HD 27-28)

My comments on the function of the Prologues seem refuted by Marlow's statement. We are forced to wonder: if the failure to convey the truth is anticipated, why tell the story?

He paused again as if reflecting, then added:

"Of course in this you fellows see more than I could then. You see me, whom you know. . . ." (HD 28)

The key to the conveying of the truth in the story is the overview that the Prologue provides. The Prologues of the two works anticipate the rest of the story. They afford the reader a point by which he can orient himself as he travels through the rest of the work, and a point to which he can return, in retrospect, with an altered perspective.

CHAPTER IV

Preparing for an Introspection

The city suggestive of a "whited sepulchre" (HD 9) provides a fitting initiation into the nightmarish world of Heart of Darkness. Its deathly desolation, the knitters of black wool, the Plato-quoting clerk, and the doctor who warns, "Du calme, du calme" (HD 12), add to the gloom that has set in at the Prologue itself. Even in this oppressive pessimism, Marlow finds moments of humour. The obtaining of his appointment because a captain has died in a scuffle with the natives should fill Marlow with dread, but he treats the quarrel over two black hens as the occasion for a sarcastic comment on the allegedly civilizing influence of the white man on the African, and he delights in a postscript: "What became of the hens I don't know either. I should think the cause of progress got them, anyhow. However, through this glorious affair I got my appointment, before I had fairly begun to hope for it" (HD 9). His description of the slim knitter of black wool, whose dress "was as plain as an umbrella-cover" (HD 10), and his near caricature of the doctor attest further to his remarkable find of humour in so morbid a circumstance.

The Narrator, in The Book of the Duchess, makes an extraordinary discovery in the tragic Seys-Alcyone story. This story, like Marlow's visit to Brussels, furthers the mood of the Prologue and continues to prepare the reader for the rest of the work and, ultimately, for the truth.

Like the fateful events that facilitated Marlow's obtaining his

appointment, the Seys-Alcyone story seems picked by chance:

Amonge al this I fond a tale
That me thoughte a wonder thing. (BD 60-61)

Of course, the story suits the Narrator's mood of sorrow and sleeplessness and anticipates the dream. As Clemen notes:

In almost every instance so far, French allegorizing poetry had made use of classical tales as "exempla." They are introduced when something specific is to be demonstrated. Some "doctrine" is expressly stated, often before the story begins. With Chaucer, however, we have no idea at the outset why he chooses the story he does; moreover, he does not "bring it in," he reads it; that is to say he appears to come upon it by chance. The connection thus appears more personal, less purposive. The "application" of the story is made in a subtle and disguised fashion; for its fundamentally vital relation to the dream-content is never expressly revealed; we hear only of its usefulness as a way of getting to sleep.¹³

G. L. Kittredge observes that in the Fontaine Amoureuse:

. . . the use of Alcyone's story in the lament is undeniably ingenious. We may even discover a psychological link of cause and effect between its presence there and the vision vouchsafed to the lover. But the psychology is feeble and the connection somewhat remote.¹⁴

Machaut uses the story because it provides a "way of getting to sleep"; it affords a transition to the dream and does not transcend this superficial connection. Clemen notes:

For Chaucer, however, this was a human story akin to the one he himself was to set forth in his dream. Just as Halcyone was comforted by the reappearance of her husband in a dream, the Knight was comforted by recalling his dead wife to mind as he told his own story. It was to bring out this and other parallels that Chaucer made some alterations in the tale.¹⁵

One of the points at which Chaucer deviates from Ovid is the appearance of Morpheus in the guise of the dead king. Implicit in lines 142-44 of The Book of the Duchess is a parallel between the dead and the living dead, those like the Black Knight and the Narrator who are "mased" and "have felynge in nothyng"--in as much as the physical manifestations of unnatural sorrow are similar to the physical appearance of the dead body. In lines 488-99, the Narrator describes the Knight:

Hys sorwful hert gan faste faynte,
 And his spirites wexen dede;
 The blood was fled for pure drede
 Down to hys herte, to make hym warm--
 For wel hyt feled the herte had harm--
 To wite eke why hyt was adrad
 By kynde, and for to make hyt glad;
 For hit ys membre principal
 Of the body; and that made al
 Hys hewe chaunge and wexe grene
 And pale, for ther noo blood ys sene
 In no maner lym of hys.

Even before the Knight recites his complaint, the Narrator says that he is "Ful pitous pale, and nothyng red" (BD 470), a line strikingly similar to line 143, in the Seys-Alcyone story, that describes the dead king's body: "That lyeth ful pale and nothyng rody." Of course, in the parallel between the dead and the living dead, there is an implicit warning of the consequence of unnatural sorrow, in going "agaynes kynde."

The urgency for action and living is further highlighted in the Seys-Alcyone story by the scene at the Cave of Sleep. The cave is situated in a barren, dead place in which "never yet grew corn ne gras, / Ne tre, ne [nothing] that ought was, / Beste, ne man, ne noght elles" (BD 157-59). Even the few streams make a "dedly slepyng soun" (BD 162),

running past the cave which is itself deep in a valley. The cave is described as dark as a "helle-pit." In this insulated shell, the gods "That slep and dide noon other werk" (BD 169) are in a state of oblivion. They seem to have succumbed to the "dedly slepyngge soun," and even the noise of all their snoring does not disturb them. Ironically, one of these gods of oblivion will be instrumental in bringing Alcyone out of her coma and letting her die. His action brings death. Alcyone's death seems her choice; but her choice is governed by her emotions. She is unable to accept the practical advice given by Morpheus and succumbs to her great grief. Her death seems inevitable in a consideration of her offer of self-sacrifice to Juno--again a gesture born of great love and sorrow.

Playing against death as immutable and inevitable and human love and sorrow as tragically powerful movers, the comedy in the Seys-Alcyone story, like the comedy in Heart of Darkness, begs attention because of its apparent incongruity. Bertrand Bronson notes that "the narrator can repeat a story with verve; witness the visit of Juno's messenger to the gods of slumber, 'who slept and did no other work.' The comic aspects of the episode are by no means lost upon him."

"Awake!" quod he, "whoo ys lyth there?"
 And blew his horn ryght in here eere,
 And cried "Awaketh!" wonder hye.
 This god of slep with hys oon ye
 Cast up, axed, "Who clepeth ther?"
 "Hyt am I," quod this messager. (BD 181-86)

Bronson observes that here is "no lack of lively and humorous awareness."¹⁶

Clemen observes that it is "with his usual delight in what he finds

strange and old (and at the same time slightly comical) as he roams through the fields of mythology and legend that Chaucer tells us how this 'messenger' comes to the cave in the 'derke valeye' and there finds 'these goddes'--truly a strange company--asleep in the most varied attitudes.¹⁷

They had good leyser for to route,
 To envye who myghte slepe best.
 Somme henge her chyn upon hir brest,
 And slept upryght, hir hed yhed,
 And somme lay naked in her bed
 And slepe whiles the dayes laste. (BD 172-77)

Like Bronson, Clemen sees also the comedy in the awakening of the sleeping Morpheus.¹⁸

James Winny accounts for the comedy with this argument:

However closely The Boke of the Duchesse accommodates itself to the courtly obligation which the death of Blanche placed on Chaucer, the primary task of the poem is to give form to its author's private awareness; and even a cursory reading of The Boke of the Duchesse shows that its concern with the dead lady is only one of many issues, some of them incompatible with an elegaic purpose. Though not so lengthy a preamble as the Wife of Bath's audience must submit to, the preliminaries to the dreamer's meeting with the Man in Black show Chaucer fully occupied with a wide variety of topics, and in no hurry to proceed. When the narrative is taken over by this new character, the poem loses its diversity of interest and undergoes a fundamental change of mood. If we regard the Man in Black's story as the dominating element of the poem, we are left to explain the function of its opening four hundred and fifty lines, and to suggest how the waking section and first episodes of the dream are to be fitted into a reading of the whole work.¹⁹

While I agree with the bulk of this statement, I do not accept the view of the incompatibility of some of the issues in the poem with an elegaic purpose. The nature of this elegy itself being realistic, what might have been incompatible with a directly Christian elegy like Lycidas, with

its promise of a heavenly afterlife as a reward for a good life on earth, is part of this poem's purpose. The comedy in the Seys-Alcyone story has been considered to be inappropriate in an elegy. But Chaucer's elegy does not offer an extravagant consolation; in fact, it seems to offer very little consolation. It contains no rationale on death, neither promise nor even a hint of an afterlife. Ovid's story is not modified to work toward Christian Revelation as is the pagan tradition in Lycidas. While it provides neither a vision of heaven nor any other mentally tangible reward, this elegy is not a despairing lament. It is a view of death as inevitable and irreversible, but it is also a view of life as vibrant and infinite in its offerings to man. This elegy seeks to console only within the confines of our humanity. It accepts the great grief at the death of a beloved and knows it can try only to lessen the sorrow by resurrecting, at the least, in lieu of a projected, Christian resurrection, the memories of a happy life with the late beloved. It admits also the great human urge to live.

The powerful human will to live and man's wonder at life's seemingly infinite experiences are manifested in the comedy in the Seys-Alcyone story. The humour is a counterbalance to the grave subject of the story. For John of Gaunt it must have provided some comic relief, a brief respite from the brooding on death; for the ordinary reader it affords delight--a tempering of the emotional perspective. It also provokes thought. The very act of stopping to wonder at the apparent inaptness of the comedy in the context of the tragedy of the story compels a rethinking of the significance of the story. The adjusted perspective should help to clarify the Prologue and correct our anticipation of the poem to come.

In the Seys-Alcyone story, Chaucer reveals clearly his recognition of the limits of humanity: we cannot always follow the most logical path, but we are led also by emotion. The Narrator should find the Seys-Alcyone story unbearably morbid, and so should the reader. The Narrator thinks the tale a "wonder thing" despite his empathy with its tragic events because he thrills to life. Notwithstanding his extreme spiritual, mental, and physical torpor born of excessive sorrow, he can marvel at the great love and loyalty exhibited by Alcyone and appreciate her inability to practise Morpheus' rationality. In spite of the gloomy topic of the story, he can see the comic and must smile. He cannot deny his humanity.

CHAPTER V

Beginning the Introspection: The Outer Station

Marlow seeks distraction from his boredom in his boyhood passion for exploration, and finds himself obsessed by a river leading to the depths of the Congo: "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" (HD 8). His desperation for getting there makes him do what he considers incredible. He asks a woman, an aunt, to get him a job on a steamboat that plies the river. His aunt's intercession is successful, but the circumstances facilitating his appointment as a river steamboat captain and his experiences during the preparations for his departure disquiet Marlow. The black humour of his observations on the preliminaries to his journey to the Outer Station graduates to a profound skepticism and grim forboding. The beginning of the journey to the centre of Africa becomes the start of the nightmare of Marlow's descent into the heart of darkness.

The Narrator of The Book of the Duchess tries to find diversion in his love of reading, and his literary exploration leaves him fascinated with the specialized gods of yore. Though he "knew never god but oon" (BD 237), the Narrator's desperation for sleep makes him do the unprecedented. He prays to the pagan gods, "To make me slepe and have som reste" (BD 245). However, his prayer is said half jokingly, in "game." The Narrator, despite his moribund condition, is still conscious of the

comedy of the Seys-Alcyone story. His urgency to live lets him dwell on the comic rather than the deadly aspects of the story, which leaves him amused enough to seek comfort in a jocular, light-hearted way. Perhaps the slight easing of his desperation and the incidental weakening, however little, of his obsession with his lack of sleep and his sorrow crack the tension and permit exhaustion to put the Narrator to sleep.

Winnu comments on the Narrator's invocation for sleep:

The splendid bed offered to Morpheus, with its black satin "doutremer" and Breton linen, stands in the poem as an emblem of its central theme; representing both the comfort brought by sleep and the state of spiritual torpor threatening those who abandon themselves to despondency. Like Alcyone and the bereaved Man in Black whom he will later meet, the dreamer declares himself oppressed by "sorrowful ymagynacioun"; and in looking for sleep he may be encouraging himself to become as inert and unhearing as the unresponsive figures in Morpheus' cave. But the bed also symbolizes dreaming, and the better understanding which he may acquire through the fantasmal experience which at this point of the poem is about to start.²⁰

The Narrator, by discovering the comedy in the Seys-Alcyone story and relishing his own wit and humour evoked despite his great sorrow, predisposes himself for the vital, fresh reawakening in the dream that seems to follow immediately his falling asleep. The joyful innocence of his invocation anticipates his rebirth, emotionally and characteristically, as a new man, the apparently naive but profoundly wise and tactful

Dreamer:

And in the dawaynyge I lay
(Me mette thus) in my bed al naked. (BD 292-93)

Marlow's initiation into his nightmare is immediate and brutal. He experiences no soul-cleansing death and rebirth; rather, the growing

skepticism and pessimism born of his experiences in Europe seem to predict and give him a predilection for the horrible. During his ~~journey~~ by steamer to Africa--a voyage that should indicate a beginning of a new experience, a spacial and environmental rebirth at the least--his gloom becomes not only oppressive but amorphous and mysterious. In the spontaneous, uncontrollable rush of nightmare, a feeling of utter helplessness becomes acute and an aimlessness looms evident, and, against this precipitation of horror, Marlow can react only in terribly slow motion, like a true dreamer in bewilderment. He struggles to maintain reality, to repel the overwhelming insanity, but his journey continues as a "weary pilgrimage amongst hints for nightmares" (HD 14).

While Marlow hears the incomprehensible and the abominable, the Dreamer of The Book of the Duchess is awakened by a choir of birds that sing in exquisite harmony. The Dreamer is immediately alert and appreciative of the bird-song and even of individual voices in the company:

For instrument nor melodye
 Was nowhere herd yet half so swete,
 Nor of acord half so mete;
 For ther was noon of hem that feyned
 To syng, for ech of hem hym peyned
 To fynde out mezy crafty notes.
 They ne spared not her throttes. (BD 314-20)

The Dreamer's wonderful observation of the "swete entewnes" is succeeded in logical sequence by a vitally curious examination of his surroundings. The Dreamer reacts like a man fully awake. He does not seem overwhelmed and impotent like Marlow. He orients himself in his dream by references to reality--the historical and legendary scenes on the walls of his chamber, the text of the Romance of the Rose. Marlow uses the same

trick to clear his perspective but his vision, even when clarified and acute enough to place events lucidly in their contexts, is like Alcyone's, tainted with a pessimistic realism. Marlow is reassured by the sight of blacks animatedly paddling a boat. He sees in them and their actions the natural and the real. However, he sees only insanity, "lugubrious drollery," and devastation in the actions of the white colonizers in Africa.

In contrast to this moribund skepticism and the morbidity, the Narrator's dream in The Book of the Duchess seems to burst forth into life. Nature (in contrast especially to Nature described on page 14 of Heart of Darkness) is animated and vigorous: the "gret hep" of small birds sings lustily; the sun is shining brightly in a cloudless sky; and even the air is temperate. Beckoned by life--the birds seem to chorus especially for him and the sun's golden beams seem to reach through the windows for him--the Dreamer responds vivaciously. Hearing the clarion call of the hunting horn, the tumult of activity, and the excited and exciting discussions of the hunt, the Dreamer leaves his chamber and his isolation.

In contrast, a tropical oppressiveness smothers the Outer Station in Heart of Darkness, "where not a breath stirred, not a leaf moved" (HD 17). Outside, black bodies are "scattered in every pose of contorted collapse" (HD 18); the station itself is in chaos; excepting the Accountant, everything is dilapidated and dying. This cloying atmosphere of destruction and death makes Marlow's departure for the Central Station welcome to him. While the Dreamer is drawn out, Marlow is almost forced to leave.

Marlow maintains a remarkably clear judgment in the midst of the confusion and ruin of the Outer Station. Despite his coming from the

colonizing powers of Europe, he does not automatically assume a missionary zeal for "'weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways'"

(HD 12). He sees the black man in Africa as natural and real in his context; his traditional ways are viewed as valid and true in his environment. To Marlow, the ways of the white colonizer and civilizer are based, for the most part, on hypocrisy--the ulterior motive of profit is carefully hidden under a "great cause of these high and just proceedings" (HD 16)--and he remains an intruder, albeit a conqueror, in a land that seems physically to resent and repulse his foreign presence. The blacks who have been "reclaimed, the product of the new forces at work" (HD 16), are considered by Marlow to have lost their primitive innocence. They have assumed, with the superficial sophistication of their bosses, the sense of despair and purposelessness that characterises the "flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly" (HD 17).

Marlow can appreciate the pandemonium of the Outer Station and he can especially remark the Company's Chief Accountant who is conspicuous by his ability to continue his work in the moribund and chaotic surroundings. He perceives that the Accountant's great dedication to his work insulates and protects him from the destructive forces around him. This idea of work as redeeming and imperative will remain with him. He realizes that a devotion to duty will keep him impervious to distractions that have reduced others to "flabby . . . devils." But, impressed as he is by the Chief Accountant's work ethic, Marlow detects the man's great lack of feeling and humanity. Marlow is disturbed by the Accountant's callous treatment of the sick agent and his blind hatred of the natives whom he regards as a savage nuisance:

In the steady buzz of flies the homeward-bound agent was lying flushed and insensible; the other, bent over his books, was making correct entries of perfectly correct transactions; and fifty feet below the doorstep I could see the still tree-tops of the grove of death. (HD 20)

Thus, the Outer Station of Heart of Darkness manifests a medium through the exposition of the terrible extremes of unrestrained emotion (evident in the chaos of the station, that was probably aggravated by the inefficiencies of its sentimental chief agent) and cold, detached calculation (embodied in the robot-like Accountant), which are brilliantly juxtaposed in one powerful utterance of the Accountant: "When one has got to make correct entries, one comes to hate those savages--hate them to the death" (HD 19). Meanwhile, the opening of the Dream is unabashedly vigorous in its love of life. The perfect harmony of the inspired birds' choir; the proper, elegant room:

Fulwel depeynted, and with glas
Were al the wyndowes wel yglased,
Ful clere, and nat an hoole ycrased,
That to beholde hyt was gret joye (BD 322-25);

the fair weather--"Blew, bryght, clere was the ayr" (BD 340); and the animated spirit of the Dreamer himself combine into an undeniable model of the temperate and vital. The birds sing lustily, but each keeps his part, and thus contributes to the heavenly harmony. The room has windowpanes that are decorated with figures, but they allow the bright sun to gild the bed with its beams. The air outside is "ful attempre . . . nother to cold nor hoot" (BD 341-42). The Dreamer himself, though just awoken from his sleep, is immediately alert and sensitive to his surroundings. His love of life is defined by his appreciation of his circum-

stances.

Our love of life also is defined by our reaction to the events of the Outer Station sequences of both works. We are apt to feel vicariously the emotions astir in Marlow and the Dreamer, and we are liable to nod in concurrence with their appreciation of the rational. We marvel in Heart of Darkness at Marlow's will to live. We are shocked by all he sees; we are moved by his description of the devastation because his details of useless death and wanton rapacity are eloquent arguments paradoxically for sensible life and positive action.

We are reborn with the Dreamer of The Book of the Duchess in an innocent, wondrously paradisaical world that immediately overwhelms our painful memories of the wakeful world and elates us. Our human urgency for order and balance in the world is at once satisfied. However, our incipient complacency begins to mutate into a disquietude as we digest the delicate morsel of the Golden Age. We begin to wonder about the extreme, absolute perfection of the Dreamer's new world. We become aware of its incredible and impossible symmetry, its inhuman, utter flawlessness, and, indeed, its even terrifyingly deliberate innocence. We apprehend the artificiality of the microcosmic Eden and know that its extravagant bliss cannot transcend the dream. It cannot last. It is impalpable and unreal.

We complete our reading of the Outer Station sequences of the two works in emotional and mental tumult. These sequences have lured us from hot emotion to cool reason and back. They seem to leave us ambivalent and anxiously perplexed. To resolve our confusion, we are forced to consider our responses to the stimuli in our reading; we are compelled to look at and into ourselves. On examining our reactions, we may find that we have

been affected similarly by both works despite their apparent differences of approach and tone. Our profound pessimism and disillusionment evoked by Heart of Darkness are tempered by our reassurance in Marlow's "inborn strength," in his will to survive the devastation, of which we become aware on scrutinizing and pondering the text. Our inchoate gladness at the rebirth of the Dreamer in a perfect world becomes tinged with a growing dread as we realize that the perfection cannot be sustained and translated to reality, that the complete happiness cannot remain unbroken, that, from this peak of joy and vitality, we can only fall. Emotion and reason are confounded.

CHAPTER VI

Delving Deeper: The Central Station

The Dreamer is startled out of his contemplation of his immediate surroundings by the loud note of a hunter's horn that heralds the excitement of human activity (in the preparation of a hart hunt) to which he responds as a typically curious and gregarious human being. His alert and lucid reaction to the horn's clarion call contrasts sharply with Morpheus' slow and confused waking from his coma and evokes through the comparison our memory of the deathly ambiance of the Cave of the gods of sleep of the Seys-Alcyone story. Against that memory, the rebirth of the lethargic Narrator as the vital Dreamer who exults in his animate surroundings is highlighted. A warning against extreme, obsessive sorrowing that can lead to stupor is again implied.

The retrospection of the extreme moribundity of the Cave of Sleep puts into relief the impossible animation and perfection of the Dreamer's chamber. The Dreamer, like Morpheus, must leave the ideal to serve in the real world, which is anticipated in the Dream by the hunt and its failure despite the elaborate organization of "hunters and eke of foresteres, / With many relays and lymeres" (BD 361-62).

The hunt's failure marks the predictive end of a significant movement from the ~~beginning~~ beginning of the Dream. The deliberate and ornate harmonies of the Dream's opening yield to a singular-minded fugue that moves inexorably

to its end. The sudden change from the carefully structured opening chords to the melodic rush, while the echoes are still booming, facilitates an appreciation of both movements.

The Dream's chamber provided us with a perfect model of life, vigorous, inspiring, and stimulating. But the fantastic flawlessness of its beauty and equilibrium rendered it awesome, untouchable, and impossible. The hunting horn introduces the single theme of the hunt, that is described simply, without exaggeration and ornamentation, in terms that are tangible and reassuring in their humanness. The Dreamer is drawn to the sounds of his kind. He must satisfy his gregariousness by joining the hunting party. He must thrill to the sounds of the hunt. He is inspired by the sounds of the ordinary, mundane, activity of men to leave his classical chamber and its wondrous vicinity, to rise from his bed on which he lay in a contented repose that seemed an extreme contradiction of the oblivion of the gods of sleep, and to participate in human activity. With his response to the call of the hunting horn, the Dreamer elects to rejoin the living.

In Heart of Darkness, Marlow forsakes the company of the white men at the Station, excepting the few mechanics, and isolates himself in his work:

"I went to work the next day, turning, so to speak, my back on that station. In that way only it seemed to me I could keep my hold on the redeeming facts of life." (HD 23)

Marlow seems unsociable but he is choosing a solid, human activity instead of the useless company of the moribund, purposeless pilgrims who represent the "whited sepulchre" and its far-reaching, deadly effects. Marlow is

appalled by the wanton devastation he has encountered continually. His journey to the Central Station has become a more profound extension of his experiences at the Outer Station, of the journey to the Congo, and, before that, in Brussels. He has seen useless destruction, a complete dearth of purpose, and even a hollow hypocrisy that lacks conviction and the deviousness of effort.

A powerful theme concerned with aimless, languid, unmotivated living came to the fore immediately after the counterbalancing extremes of utter chaos and the perfect, detached, intense, amoral purpose and order of the Chief Accountant at the Outer Station. During his subsequent two hundred mile journey from that Station, Marlow travels along paths that are part of an elaborate network but that seem to lead nowhere and to be used by nobody. He and his carriers pass through a bleak countryside that is strewn with human ruins. In this desolate wilderness, they meet an armed band charged with the preposterously amorphous responsibility of "maintaining the road," and later, Marlow comes across evidence of the band's lack of moral organization, authority, and discipline.

The journey well anticipates the Central Station. The Station's dilapidation clearly indicates the complete apathy of those in charge. Its white residents seem useless, desperate, and lethargic; those who act do so from hypocrisy and without conviction. The pilgrims have sunk the steamer in their haste, disinterest, and ignorance. During a fire, a stout man runs about trying to extinguish it with a leaking pail of water, while the rest of his companions only gesticulate wildly. The first-class agent, charged with the duty of making bricks, fritters away his time in furthering his own interests--"and if he did secretarial work for the

manager, it was because 'no sensible man rejects wantonly the confidence of his superiors'" (HD 28). The conspicuously and grandly named "Eldorado Exploring Expedition" claims to be sworn to secrecy:

"Their talk, however, was the talk of sordid buccaneers: it was reckless without hardihood, greedy without audacity, and cruel without courage; there was not an atom of foresight or of serious intention in the whole batch of them, and they did not seem aware these things are wanted for the work of the world." (HD 31)

The pilgrims may seem to constitute a phalanx, missionaries of civilization who live for the same cause, but, as Marlow observes perspicaciously, they merely co-exist on the same premises without actually integrating socially or at work. Their one apparent social pasttime is pettily plotting against one another, and they do even this with a dispassion that renders the motion futile:

"The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a trading-post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages. They intrigued and slandered and hated each other only on that account--but as to effectually lifting a little finger--oh no! By Heavens! there is something after all in the world allowing one man to steal a horse while another must not look at a halter. Steal a horse straight out. Very well. He has done it. Perhaps he can ride. But there is a way of looking at a halter that would provoke the most charitable of saints into a kick." (HD 25)

The pilgrims' extreme apathy repels Marlow, and he seeks refuge from their contagious spiritual and physical moribundity in the vigour of work. Work offers Marlow the chance to discover his abilities, his own true worth, because its fulfilment demands attention and will. It involves energy and purpose, consequently giving energy and purpose to its doer. Work encourages Marlow to develop his vitality and gives meaning to his life.

It provides also the companionship of those who share this vitality. Marlow feels separate from the pilgrims who do nothing but wait, and he views them with great scorn as hollow, superficial men, "papier-mâché Mephistopheles" (HD 26), who are incapable of living. But he instinctively associates with the foreman, "a good worker" (HD 29), whom he describes with sympathy and a kind humour.

Marlow remarks the man's fervent love for his children and his consuming hobby of pigeon-flying, both of which manifest his zest for life. This perception is critically important to our consideration of Marlow's attitude toward life. His pronouncements on work and its virtues probably bias the reader into imagining a saturnine man who is ruled only by his work ethic and lacks innocent joy. But Marlow, even in his tragic narration, has found occasions for humour--undoubtedly mainly dark, but humour nonetheless--and witticisms. His detail of the circumstances of his getting the job on the steamboat and his preparations for departure in Brussels shows him sardonic. His relation of the experience with his white companion during his journey to the Central Station demonstrates his verve and love of comedy, even slapstick. His description of the exaggerated actions of the stout, mustachioed man underscores this skill at farce.²¹ Marlow's humour is at its most innocent and joyous when he speaks of the foreman at the Central Station:

"He was a lank, bony, yellow-faced man, with big intense eyes. His aspect was worried, and his head was as bald as the palm of my hand; but his hair in falling seemed to have stuck to his chin, and had prospered in the new locality, for his beard hung down to his waist." (HD 29)

Marlow has great sympathy for this odd but very human individual. He delights in the eccentricities that make the foreman so conspicuously human and mark him as intensely alive:

" . . . at work, when he had to crawl in the mud under the bottom of the steamboat, he would tie up that beard of his in a kind of white serviette he brought for the purpose. It had loops to go over his ears. In the evening he could be seen squatted on the bank rinsing that wrapper in the creek with great care, then spreading it solemnly on a bush to dry."

(HD 30)

The foreman's idiosyncrasies make him unique but not alien because they are somehow manifestations of his love of life. His fondness of talking about his children, his passion for pigeon-flying, and his painstaking care of his beard mark him as one who, despite tragedy (his wife is dead), has given meaning and reason to his life, has explored his natural vitality. Marlow feels such a kinship with this active foreman that he drops his customary restraint even in the oppressive gloom of the Central Station and becomes completely spontaneous. He rebels against the pervasive pessimism of his environment and indulges his optimism and his craving for social companionship by cavorting with the foreman on the iron deck of the steamboat, notwithstanding the effect on the sleeping Station.

This burst of extravagance shows Marlow to be a lover of life, not just serious work. He turns to work to escape the moribundity of his circumstances and because he cannot usually find any other vital social activity. The Dreamer of The Book of the Duchess, also, indulges his love of life in the ephemeral society and social activity afforded by the hunt. His joining the rush of the chase is as spontaneous an act as Marlow's improvised jig with the foreman:

"Say, felowe, who shal hunte here?"
 Quod I, and he answered ageyn,
 "Syr, th'emperour Octovyen,"
 Quod he, "and ys here faste by."
 "A Goddes half, in good tyme!" quod I,
 "Go we faste!" and gan to ryde.
 Whan we came to the forest syde,
 Every man dide ryght anoon
 As to huntynge fil to doon. (BD 366-74)

The poem's Narrator seems to possess, at the poem's beginning, before his Dream, an attitude that contradicts that of the Dreamer and Marlow during the Central Station sequence. He informs us of his preference of reading a book to playing either chess or backgammon. His self-imposed isolation appears to bespeak introversion and even solipsism. He has forsaken the opportunity to socialize, to enjoy the companionship of his fellows, and busies himself in an activity that has the essence of solitariness, reading to himself. His act of self-isolation, however, should be considered in the context of his purpose. He is setting himself apart from his ordinary peers because he is different from them. His experience of great sorrow and lack of sleep is extraordinary and segregates him from the mundane. Chaucer wants his Narrator to be special and unique, because he desires the psychic sympathy of his primary audience, John of Gaunt. The commissioned elegy demands the uniqueness of the sorrow and the sorrower insofar as great sorrow, though a universal possibility, remains a profoundly private and personal experience, unreachable despite the sincerest commiseration. In fact, with this sensitivity, Chaucer's Narrator glosses over the reasons for his own great grief once he has established his foundation of empathy by building a bridge of mutual interest, of curiosity even, for his initial listener.

The Narrator seeks in his reading what Marlow looks for in his work.

He hopes to occupy himself with:

fables

That clerkes had in olde tyme,
 And other poets, put in rime
 To rede, and for to be in minde,
 While men loved the lawe of kinde (BD 52-56),

and to fend off with this intelligent exercise the emotional and mental torpidity that threatens to overwhelm him. As the Dreamer, he can leave his isolation to join the hunt because the hunters are symbolically seeking what he desires--a "hert," a heart. Their common purpose makes their sympathies mutual and renders them compatible and fit companions.

The acts of living manifested in the spontaneous rush of the hunt and the frenzy of the improvised jig are those of human vitality and hope. However fleeting they are, they proclaim human perseverance in the face of apparent despair and morbidity and demonstrate clearly human invention and regeneration in the midst of moribundity and ruin. They underscore man's vigour, resilience, and powerful will to live.

CHAPTER VII

Gravitating toward the Inner Station

The immediate futility of the effort of the jig and the energy of the hunt is apocalyptic. It at once underscores human vitality and optimism and man's ultimate, tragic helplessness. It defines the humanity of Heart of Darkness and The Book of the Duchess.

Marlow's burst of hope that manifests itself in the improvised jig is the spontaneous rebellion of the human spirit against the constraints of its humanity. The rebellion is provoked by the weaknesses of humanity, incarnated in the "flabby," "hollow" pilgrims with their hypocritical ways that effect the destruction of the Congo and its inhabitants, weaknesses that are the essence of human despair and devastation. The human spirit cannot apathetically and passively accept the hopelessness of its situation but strives to exalt itself, to give meaning and, therefore, hope to its existence. Marlow's optimism proves to be unfounded--instead of the rivets, further embodiments of despondency and waste arrive at the Station--but it defines man's resilience of spirit and his essential vitality. The futility of the optimism, the practical ineffectiveness of the jig, describes man's context and, in doing so, complements the definition of his vitality and hope.

In The Book of the Duchess, the excited, optimistic anticipation of the hunt is quickly quelled by the escape of the hart. But the hunt, like the jig, provides an occasion for spontaneity and joy, for energetic

living. The hunt is purposive, an alternative to oblivious sleeping and even passive resting in the gilt chamber. In the psychology of dreaming, it can be seen as the subconscious rejection by the Dreamer of his waking life of unnatural sorrow, lifelessness, and isolation in favour of an intensely involving, thrilling social activity. The hunt's sudden stopping serves as a reminder of man's ultimate inability to control his circumstances and his life. The hunters fail in their quest despite their careful organization and diligent efforts, and the Dreamer, having joined them in their purpose, fails with them.

The ultimate futility of the jig and the hunt foreshadows the powerful sense of helplessness with which the ends of the two books leave their readers. We have vicariously cavorted in a wild joy and thrilled to the heady rush of the horses and the brilliant call of the horn, but we return quickly to the mundane and the real while we follow with a growing skepticism the wait for the arrival of the rivets and while we dismount, listening to the dying echoes that were born of the "forloyn." With Marlow and the Dreamer, we are sobered.

II

Like the paradoxes in the preceding sections, the apparent, terrible contradictions in this section have forced us to pause in our reading and ruminate. We have had to analyze our texts because we have had to settle the conflicting and even confused emotions our reading has provoked. In this exercise, our intellects have been allowed to temper our sentiments. We have been able to consider all we have perused, to orient ourselves,

to rearrange our perspectives by our experience, and to anticipate the rest of the works.

In our sobriety, at the close of the jig and the hunt, we can view our literary experience in retrospect. We can see that both works have been composed of several layers, subtle or otherwise, that I have tried to divide artificially by chapters. Each layer has progressed from and extended its precedent. In The Book of the Duchess, the Prologue demonstrated the interplay between the heart and the mind, as did the Prologue of Heart of Darkness. However, the interweave of emotion and intellect was not completely apparent till we had progressed further into the works because we tended to gloss over many of the ostensible inconsistencies and contradictions instead of pausing to question them and their possible purposes. The humour that followed the Prologues forced us to reconsider our readings and we had to return to the beginning to render some judgment. Then we were able to proceed with our reading with a keener eye, a more acute vision. The extremes of the Outer Station segments were discerned by us and we could speculate with some authority on their meanings, reaching back to the Prologues for help in focusing our perspectives. The Central Station sections of the two works were similarly comprehensible to us as reinforcements of their predecessors. Thus we have arrived at our present state of a rising exhilaration that is finally curbed by a growing feeling of helplessness. And looking back through the preceding segments to the Prologues, we find ourselves now more divided than ever between the hopeful and despairing, between life and oblivion:

Suche fantasies ben in myn hede,
So I not what is best to doo. (BD 28-29)

The clarity of this realization does not render us ready to accept it passively. The futility of the optimism manifested in the jig does not stop Marlow from continuing his journey and the failure of the hunt does not deter the Dreamer from satisfying his other curiosities. We may be torn between hope and despair, as the Dreamer and Marlow are, but we share their humanity, their infinite vitality, and we plod forward with them to explore life and the living. In our continuing we prove our resilience; in our curiosity, our infinite hope.

The very act of living implies hope. The Dreamer affirms his hope by quickly translating his involvement in life from the hunt to the whelp that seeks his attention. He is attracted by the puppy's friendliness and tries to catch it. He is so immersed in life and in living that he follows the puppy into the woods in which he seems to lose it, and becomes fascinated by the wooded grove of huge trees and the teeming fauna. The Dreamer exults in the beauty and lushness of the trees,

so huge of strengthe,
Of fourty or fifty fadme lengthe,
Clene withoute bowgh or stikke,
With croppes brode, and eke as thikke--
They were nat an ynche asonder--
That hit was shadewe overal under (BD 421-26),

and the quantity of wildlife that surrounds him. His failure in catching the whelp is not consequential because the attempt was a manifestation of his love of life and its incidental but necessary play. Having lost the dog, the Dreamer easily loses himself in marvelling at the extravagant display of life in the woods.

Neither is Marlow's vitality sapped by the moribundity of body and

spirit around him. His confidence in the timely arrival of the rivets proves to be unfounded, but his innate curiosity and his sense of humour--evidence of his infinite optimism even in the face of terrible circumstances--remain remarkable as he accepts the set-back. Marlow's acute vision and extraordinary rationality remain. His perspicacity is conspicuous in his scathing but terribly honest description of the actions of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition.

This resilience of spirit enables Marlow to withstand the continual onslaught of the gloom and abomination and to find something else of interest with which to occupy himself:

"I had given up worrying myself about the rivets. One's capacity for that kind of folly is more limited than you would suppose. I said Hang!--and let things slide. I had plenty of time for meditation, and now and then I would give some thought to Kurtz. I wasn't very interested in him. No. Still, I was curious to see whether this man, who had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort, would climb to the top after all, and how he would set about his work when there." (HD 31)

Kurtz attracts Marlow's attention because he is reputed to be a man of high thought and unusual capabilities. He seems to be an antithesis of the pilgrims, a man who has a purpose in life, a missionary with zeal. Kurtz seems alive, and especially so in this environment of devastation, both physical and spiritual. His ostensible vitality evokes the sympathy of Marlow, who begins to think about all he has heard of this man whom he has never met.

After he overhears the manager of the Central Station and his uncle discussing Kurtz, Marlow's incipient interest in Kurtz develops into an excitement in anticipation of meeting him. Marlow begins to admire

Kurtz's apparent courage in turning his back on civilization to return to the remoteness of the jungle. He appreciates Kurtz's half-caste clerk, "who, as far as I could see, had conducted a difficult trip with great prudence and pluck" (HD 32). Marlow's esteem is for the only second sign of life, of purpose and action, that he has seen in the wilderness since leaving the robot-like Accountant at the Outer Station. His high regard for vigour and resoluteness is born of his own energy and determination.

Kurtz's principle that "Each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things, a centre for trade of course, but also for humanising, improving, instructing" (HD 33) impresses Marlow with its rationale, its harmonious coupling of practical concerns and altruistic considerations. It is especially remarkable in its context, which has assaulted Marlow's sensibilities and spirit with mindless exploitation, wanton destruction and killing, moribund and aimless existence, and the terrible isolation of the incomprehensible. Kurtz's potential for a vital, purposeful life grips Marlow's imagination because it reflects Marlow's obsession. Marlow's destination up the river becomes Kurtz.

During the journey to the Inner Station, the idea of Kurtz remains as intangible, amorphous, and dreamy as the elusive whelp that leads the Dreamer into the luxuriant woods. Kurtz has been neither seen nor heard by Marlow. The whelp, while visible to the Dreamer, seems to remain at a distance physically and intentionally and finally mysteriously disappears from the narration. Both the name of Kurtz and the phantom puppy represent life, energetic and purposeful, and their attraction is the potential for vitality and meaning. Kurtz's reputation leads Marlow to him. The puppy draws the Dreamer through the meadow bursting with flowers to the

woods that seem literally to inspire life.

As inevitably as the

floury grene . . .
 Ful thikke of gras, ful softe and swete.
 With floures fele, faire under fete,
 And litel used, hyt semed thus (BD 398-401),

that provides access to the woods, the uncivilized and virtually unexplored Congo river affords an ingress to the wilderness of Heart of Darkness:

"Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest." (HD 34)

The atmosphere is oppressive, complementing the pervasive gloom of Marlow's circumstances. The forest nurtures tropical life, monstrous and dangerous, unlike the temperate innocence of the fauna of the woods. This savage but vital force is simmering also in the natural human inhabitants of the land. The cannibals on the steamboat, in dire contrast to the aimless and moribund pilgrims, exhibit a vitality and resoluteness that elicit Marlow's appreciation. Even during the horror of the anticipated attack in the thick fog, the cannibals display restraint and natural courage.

The harmony among the uncivilized cannibals is projected to their kinship with the wilderness and, finally, to the bloody but natural ecology. Thus the exotic forests and the familiar, pastoral woods share the same fertility, a mutual energy, and inspiration. This fecundity, however, is extremely fragile and is continually threatened by its own

excesses. The literally innumerable beasts in the Chaucerian woods seem to defy comprehension. Their numbers confuse not only the mind but the Dreamer's purpose, which gets swallowed with the whelp in the oblivion of surfeit. In Heart of Darkness, the wilderness seems ready to suffocate the steamer and its occupants with its oppressive lushness:

"The living trees, lashed together by the creepers and every living bush of the undergrowth, might have been changed into stone, even to the slenderest twig, to the lightest leaf. It was not sleep--it seemed unnatural, like a state of trance. Not the faintest sound of any kind could be heard. You looked on amazed, and began to suspect yourself of being deaf--then the night came suddenly, and struck you blind as well." (HD 40)

The terrible, incomprehensible cries emanating suddenly from the wilderness break the deathly silence, but, bursting through the almost impenetrable mist that grips and threatens to swallow the intruders, they seem to verbalize stridently the environment's utter rejection of the newcomers. Marlow and his companions are clearly invaders who do not belong to, what is to them, this very unnatural concentration of raw nature.

The ultimate unreality of this apparently invigorating setting in both the works is an element of the dreamy quality that pervades them. The extreme exoticism of the locale shows its remoteness from human experience and extremes underline its fantasy. The dreamlike quality imparts to the near perfection of the scene of vivacity and natural balance the final flaw of incredibility, of improbability. On scrutiny, the woods of The Book of the Duchess become deliberately too full of life to be real; they must be a dream-vision. The wilderness of Heart of Darkness grows too dense with life, that seems rampant, to be other than fantastic. The dream exposes the unreality and impossibility of what was apparently ideal.

It even revises the apparently ideal to the defective and destructive: the Dreamer loses his purpose and orientation and Marlow is rendered confused and helpless.

III

The narrations subsequent to the hunt and jig were remarkable for their expression of undying hope. The expression was subtle but there nonetheless. The continuation of interest in life and living, through the transfer of focus and affection from one source of optimistic life that is exhausted to another that continues to hold potential, spoke of a chronic hope that endured despite its many contradictions. In The Book of the Duchess, the complacent illusion of well-being is quickly aborted by the realization that the unnatural surfeit of life in the woods is impossible and, in its impossibility, confusing and even contradictory of its initial purpose. The unreality of the woods seems to be the unexpected culmination of the wondrous path--discovered by the whelp--that seemed to promise so much at its destination. The wilderness of Heart of Darkness, with its impenetrable mist and savage terrors, seems to obstruct the waterway that showed such a potential for meaning and purpose when it allowed an escape from the moribundity of the Central Station.

That embodiment of life, the whelp, disappears mysteriously, perhaps in the woods, among the innumerable beasts. The Dreamer certainly loses sight of it in his distraction by the profuse environment. In the chaos of the mist and the subsequent attack, the magic of the name "Kurtz," that other promise of life and purpose, is overwhelmed by the terror and

confusion of the moment. The loss of these guides or motivators seems to compound the loss of momentum in emotion and intellect. The guides being gone and the paths appearing blocked, meaning and purpose seem to be missing.

The Dreamer does not despair, however. His passive and superficial wonder at the richness of life, a digression from the purpose with which he followed the whelp, refers in immediate succession to a worthier object of his attention, a Man in Black. The Dreamer's profound humanity, his sense of identity, is manifested by the speed with which he translates his attention from the beasts to the man:

But forth they romed ryght wonder faste
Down the woode; so at the laste
I was war of a man in blak,
That sat and had yturned his bak
To an ook, an huge tree. (BD 443-47)

The wonders of the woods that he has seen are eclipsed at once by the spectacle of another human being who seems to be in a predicament similar to his own:

"Lord," thocht I, "who may that be?
What ayleth hym to sitten her?"
Anoon-ryght I wente ner. (BD 448-50)

The Dreamer suspects that the Man in Black is troubled because he is solitary, a tentative insight made possible by the fact that the Dreamer, solitary too, has himself been led into the woods in the pursuit, however desperate, of society, of some purposeful human living. His own need of vitality and vigour having brought him into these woods, the Dreamer easily presumes the Man in Black's condition to be like his own. He stops

to listen, to discover more about this Man because his compassion demands his involvement. Their humanity unites them and their sympathy makes them equal and mutually approachable, at the least in the consideration of the Dreamer.

Marlow shows the same resilience and hope as he attains the Inner Station and Kurtz. Despite the terrors of his experiences in the wilderness--the moribundity and decay, both physical and spiritual, of his companions; the horrors of the unknown, especially in attempting to navigate a mysterious and resisting wilderness; and the savage attack--Marlow retains his hope and plods onward, fixing his sights on Kurtz:

"For the moment that was the dominant thought. There was a sense of extreme disappointment, as though I had found out I had been striving after something altogether without a substance. I couldn't have been more disgusted if I had travelled all this way for the sole purpose of talking with Mr. Kurtz. Talking with . . . I flung one shoe overboard, and became aware that that was exactly what I had been looking forward to--a talk with Kurtz." (HD 47-48)

Marlow's admiration has made Kurtz his destination in life. Kurtz seems to possess that potential for a purposeful and vigorous life so highly valued by Marlow:

"The point was in his being a gifted creature, and that of all his gifts the one that stood out pre-eminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words--the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness." (HD 48)

Kurtz has the faculty of eloquence, and his reputed ideas on the Company's work in Africa have earlier impressed Marlow. Now, having experienced

the corruptive forces that seem to have been generated by the white man's presence in Africa, Marlow is anxious to determine whether the promise of Kurtz has been kept. Has Kurtz been able to translate his eloquence into action or is he living a lie? Kurtz's ideas would give meaning and purpose to the white man's actions in Africa, and, by extension, in Europe. Marlow's concern being this very project, Kurtz must be in empathy with him and, therefore, accessible.

The empathy between the Dreamer and the Man in Black and that between Marlow and Kurtz have had their germs sown in the fertile Prologues. Chaucer's Narrator's calculated eloquence placed him in psychic sympathy with his specific audience, John of Gaunt. The Narrator provided himself the privilege of approaching his listener in the fiction as a lover who had never had his love returned, and he simultaneously emphasized the happiness that must result from a mutual affection. From the Speys-Alcyone story to the dream of the woods, the Narrator's fluency with words has shifted from the self-conscious, direct, personal address of the Prologue to a subtle, almost aloof narrative that furthers the argument of the Prologue symbolically and subconsciously. The Prologue had pointed at a truth. The succeeding narrative smoothly and almost inconspicuously works its listener's emotions and intellect to prepare them for a return to the directness of the Prologue until the truth is finally felt. The Dreamer's preparation for a dialogue with the Man in Black begins the return to the Prologue; his eloquence and the Narrator's oratory in telling the Man in Black's responses will know their audience intimately.

In a like manner, Marlow's verbal fluency at the beginning of Heart of Darkness has established a kinship between Kurtz and him. Marlow's

ability to construct a special perspective with words is remarkably like Kurtz's. The Narrator presented the River Thames as the source of modern civilization, but Marlow effortlessly contradicted and reversed that view by describing the Thames as seen by the conquering Romans. The River was to the Romans what the Congo River is to the Europeans, a door to a mysterious and dangerous wilderness. Marlow seemed to be able to read his companion's thoughts on the greatness of England and his sudden, silence-breaking comment, "And this also . . . has been one of the dark places of the earth" (HD 5), developed into a cogent argument that completely reversed the established perspective. His narrative itself grew detached and, like the parallel sections in The Book of the Duchess, forged its theme with symbol and subtlety. Now, at the Inner Station, Marlow will meet Kurtz, a man whom he admires and who fascinates him because he appears to share a similar attitude toward life, and will enter into a personal lecture obviously directed toward the audience which comprises Kurtz.

The Dreamer and Marlow are both drawn fatefully to their meetings. The Dreamer begins as the Narrator who cannot sleep, reads the Seys-Alcyone story to pass time and discovers the gods of sleep. His playful but earnest invocation to the gods makes him the Dreamer, who is drawn out of his chamber by the sounds of the hunt and finally led into the woods by a mysterious and evanescent puppy. In the woods, the Dreamer finds the Man in Black whose sorrowful condition seems roughly to match the Narrator's. Beyond that superficial connection, the Dreamer and the Man in Black will be seen to be bound by attitude toward life, by philosophy, by their common humanity. The Dreamer's meeting with the Man

in *Black* will be, quite simply, the Narrator's confrontation of his own humanity, with himself. In retrospect, the sequence of events leading to the confrontation will be viewed as a profound preparation for the final meeting, a research and consolidation of ideas that must ultimately be pondered.

In Heart of Darkness, Marlow commences his journey into himself as the restless sailor who seeks distraction in a map in a shop window, is fascinated by a river shown, and realizes that he can use the influence of relatives to attain this desired destination. His aunt's intercession launches him on his journey to the Outer and Central Stations at which he hears of Kurtz. Kurtz's reputation plays the part of the whelp of The Book of The Duchess. It attracts him to the Inner Station at which he meets Kurtz, with whom he shares certain ideals. Marlow's meeting with Kurtz will compel him to examine these ideals and, ultimately, to scrutinize himself and his humanity.

CHAPTER VIII

Pausing for a Reflection: Before the Inner Station

The journey from the Central Station to the Inner Station is at once a reaching into the deepest consciousness and a return to the familiarity of the Prologue. The Inner Station marks the limit of the movement from the Outer Station in pure emotional and intellectual distance. The Outer Station was actually the beginning of the journey; the Prologue is the experience and recollection of the journey. In logical and chronological sequence, the Prologue must follow the Inner Station and be a conclusion, an epilogue. It can condense and anticipate the movements that succeed it in narration only if it is the experience of those movements. The Outer Station, then, marks the beginning of the descent into human consciousness--it is the door to humanity. It tells of a man who is a solitary in society. His isolation itself provides the occasion for reflection, for questioning the values or characteristics that define his difference from the rest of men. The solitary's perspective is described in The Book of the Duchess in the telling of the Seys-Alcyone story; in Heart of Darkness, in the narration of the European sojourn. From this external and superficial examination of his relationship with his immediate world, the solitary progresses to the Central Station, at which he sees himself in relation to ideals. By juxtaposing himself with these ideals, the solitary makes his humanity conspicuous. Against the backdrop of abstractions, his humanity becomes more evident. And the next

step is to the more profound and complex scrutiny of self. This step needs be the third in sequence because it requires the experience of the previous two. In order to define himself, the solitary must have an idea of what he is supposed to be and what his circumstances can be. The solitary's remarkable sensitivity, that singled him out at the Outer Station and that responded to the various contexts available in the Central Station, now must discern and examine the image of his humanity. This examination must be deliberate and brilliant. The great sensitivity that has been honed on the experiences of the Outer and Central Stations must not now gloss over the familiar reflection. The experiences of the past must be considered in setting the focus because those experiences will give depth and add a dimension to the subject.

For the concentration required in this ultimate analysis, the Inner Station is suitably remote, removed from the distractions of the previous Stations. At the Outer Station the problem was finding or making a place in the broad context of society. If the final analysis is to be of humanity and of the reader's humanity in particular, cautious detachment of purpose must be established at the beginning of the examination. The detachment must be only at arm's length. The study of our humanity must comprehend society but we must be ultimately personal and introspective. The Outer Station affords the solitary the opportunity to remove himself from the routines, the daily concerns of immediate society. In The Book of the Duchess, the Narrator quickly segregates himself from the mundane to allow himself the chance for contemplation:

X
So when I saw I might not slepe
Til now late, this other night,

Upon my bed I sat upright
 And had oon reche me a book,
 A romaunce, and he it me tok
 To rede, and drive the night away;
 For me thoughte it beter play
 Then play either at ches or tables. (BD 44-51)

Now, he can consider and comment on the Seys-Alcyone story with some devotion. He can observe and ponder curiosities without interruption.

Marlow is granted this same opportunity in Heart of Darkness. He forsakes the stultifying and stagnating daily concerns of contemporary life to become the perspicacious experimenter of a concentrated, more intense life. Marlow becomes the sensitive appreciator of pomp and circumstance in Europe, of perverted rationalization, and of the power of motivation. His study of humanity has begun.

The perspective of the Outer Station comes into even finer focus at the Central Station. This Station allows the study of humanity to become more personal. While the Outer Station saw the solitary relate to circumstances through relatively detached observation of and commentary on events, the Central Station shows him involving himself in his environment to participate intimately in the experience. What had been vicariously learnt now becomes felt personally.

The Dreamer leaves the elevated and artificial comfort of the gilded room to join in the hunt, an exciting activity, the momentum of which sweeps him inexorably to its denouement. The vitality and dynamism of his experience is sustaining and sustained and is not obliterated by the failure of the hunt's purpose. The hunt's purpose does not matter to the Dreamer because his own purpose of satisfying his gregariousness, of exploring his humanity, and of giving meaning to his existence, of giving

substance to the essence, is fulfilled.

Marlow yields his self-imposed isolation and its complacency and protection to the call of his humanity when he joins the foreman in the spontaneous, improvised jig. The futility of the optimism of the jig does not decimate the rush of hope and meaning in which the two indulged. Having participated in the rush of human feeling, Marlow knows its strength and infinite energy. His hope and optimism is not unrestrained, like Chaucer's Narrator's, but his belief in human potential is confirmed and encouraged, his faith in his humanity is renewed despite the contradictions.

Having had this firsthand experience at the Central Station, the solitary is ready to enter the Inner Station. Thus far, he has been an aloof though concerned observer of and then a participant in life. Now he can confront and scrutinize himself and his life. The great contradiction of the blend of hope and helplessness must now be resolved. He must discover the meaning of the paradox by searching and researching himself. He must seek to comprehend in his humanity the truth implicit in the experiences he has just had.

The great empathy between the solitary and the person at the Inner Station affords the solitary a chance for self-analysis. Perhaps it is this very empathy that provides the attraction of the one to the other. The solitary's meeting with the person with whom he has such sympathy even forces the self-scrutiny, because the sympathy demands personal involvement and mutual comparison and because the empathy commands interest and concern:

"Lord," thought I, "who may that be?
What ayleth hym to sitten her?" (BD 448-49)

The Dreamer seems to be able to anticipate the Man in Black's emotional state, and his immediate reaction to spotting the Man is his concern about the trouble that has brought the Man into the woods. Of course, the Man's black raiments may be influencing the Dreamer's perception and the Dreamer may be projecting his own anxieties as the Narrator onto the Man in Black. But the Dreamer seems well prepared for the meeting, in fact too well prepared for it to be a mere coincidence. The black attire is meant to provide the empathy between the two, and the Dreamer has shown his expectation of this final meeting earlier, at the Outer Station, in the Seys-Alcyone story. In the story, Seys prays to Juno:

"Helpe me out of thys distresse,
And yeve me grace my lord to se
Soone, or wite wher-so he be,
Or how he fareth, or in what wise. . . ." (BD 110-13)

The subsequent meeting with the corpse of her husband forces her to face her own fears and pronounce her own philosophy, her attitude on life. In fact, her ultimate confrontation is with herself. As long as she cannot make the pronouncement, she remains in limbo. Her inability to resolve her fear--the ultimate fear that life lacks purpose, not the immediate fear of loss--makes for emotional and intellectual suspension because she becomes utterly devoid of all purpose excepting that of meeting her husband, of looking for purpose. When she finally makes her pronouncement, she stops living permanently:

With that hir eyen up she casteth
 And saw nocht. "Allas!" quod she for sorwe,
 And deyede within the thridde morwe. (BD 212-14)

Her regression past her coma is swift. She cannot find that "inborn strength," that moral courage to continue living because she can neither see nor give any meaning to her life.

In Heart of Darkness, Marlow's identification with Kurtz germinates in his fascination with the River Congo, the "fascination of the abomination" (HD 6). Marlow is brilliantly conscious of the fascination of the abomination when he prepares for the journey to Africa. His vision of Brussels and the Company's offices there is clouded with gloom and the imminence of spiritual and physical moribundity. He senses even then the terror he must confront, the awesome decision in perspective he must make. His impression of the two knitters of black wool is ominous. His contact with the clerk serves to increase his eerie feeling. When Marlow expresses his wonder at the clerk's not going to Africa to work there for the Company which he praises so highly, he is told: "I am not such a fool as I look, quoth Plato to his disciples" (HD 11).

Marlow's expectations are thus established early. He can anticipate his ultimate rendezvous with the unknown. He knows that the meeting will be critical and fateful. The subject of the meeting, the nature of the unknown, is even suggested by the old doctor who wants to measure Marlow's head:

"I always ask leave, in the interests of science, to measure the crania of those going out there," he said. "And when they come back too?" I asked. "Oh, I never see them," he remarked; "and, moreover, the changes take place inside, you know."
 (HD 11)

The meeting will be the culmination of a mental change, a change that will demand a final pronouncement. The clerk avoids this ultimate decision by remaining where he is; he is unable to make the journey to the unknown, to test himself, to research himself. The clerk is incapable of true introspection because he is insubstantial:

"The mind of man is capable of anything--because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage--who can tell?--but truth--truth stripped of its cloak of time. Let the fool gape and shudder--the man knows, and can look on without a wink. . . . He must meet that truth with his own true stuff--with his own inborn strength. Principles? Principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags--rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No; you want a deliberate belief." (HD 37)

The expression of this deliberate belief can come only after the belief is discovered and understood. The deliberation of the belief has been underway since the Outer Station. It has been searched for, isolated, and researched. Now, at the Inner Station, it will be explored ultimately and pronounced. This belief is necessary for a definition of the truth because it is an element of the truth. Its pronouncement will constitute the learning of the truth.

This ultimate exploration begins at the Inner Station. In The Book of the Duchess, the Narrator has reached deep into himself as the Dreamer and now reviews himself. His initial description of the Black Knight is remarkably reminiscent of himself in the Prologue:

. . . he saw me nought;
For-why he heng hys hed adoun,
And with a dedly sorwful soun
He made of rym ten vers or twelve
Of a compleynte to hymselfe,

The moste pitee, the moste rowthe,
 That ever I herde; for, by my trowthe,
 Hit was gret wonder that Nature
 Myght suffre any creature
 To have such sorwe, and be not ded. (BD 460-69)

The first twenty-nine lines of the Prologue are almost echoed here. The piteous soliloquizing, the grieving complaint, is remarked by the Dreamer, who will repeat in the Prologue the admonition:

And wel ye woot, agaynes kynde
 Hyt were to lyven in thys wyse;
 For nature wolde nat suffyse
 To noon erthly creature
 Nat longe tyme to endure
 Withoute slep and be in sorwe. (BD 16-21)

The Dreamer watches himself as the Narrator in an ironical reversal of the translation from Narrator to Dreamer. Now, in deep consciousness, the Dreamer looks at his waking self and the Narrator becomes the subject of his narrative.

In Heart of Darkness, the reflection of the Narrator by the Man in Black is paralleled by the mirroring of Marlow by Kurtz. In the Prologue, we are informed that Marlow "had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol" (HD 3). At the Inner Station, Marlow describes his first glimpse of Kurtz:

"I saw the man on the stretcher sit up, lank and with a up-lifted arm . . . the thin arm extended commandingly, the lower jaw moving, the eyes of that apparition shining darkly far in its bony head. . . ." (HD 60)

Besides the physical reminiscence, Marlow's inclination to orate is also

duplicated in Kurtz, who "presented himself as a voice" (HD 48):

"The volume of tone he emitted without effort, almost without the trouble of moving his lips, amazed me. A voice! a voice! It was grave, profound, vibrating, while the man did not seem capable of a whisper." (HD 61)

Earlier, the fictive Narrator spoke of Marlow's "narrative that seemed to shape itself without human lips" (HD 28).

The establishing of these superficial sympathies is a prelude to the profound reflections that are the direct confrontations of the Inner Station solitary by the adventitious solitary. These incipient glimpses of the self introduce the two egos, and allow the building of an acquaintance.

CHAPTER IX

Probing the Heart: The Inner Station

In The Book of the Duchess, the Dreamer approaches the Man in Black delicately and obliquely:

Anoon ryght I gan fynde a tale
To hym, to loke wher I myght ought
Have more knowynge of hys thought. (BD 536-38)

He begins by referring to the hunt, though he knows that the Man in Black is too despondent to be interested in the fortunes of the mundane chase. The Dreamer can be deliberate in his approach because he has had the opportunity to watch the Man in Black before personally meeting him. He has listened to the Man's complaint and seen him closely as he

argued with his owne thought,
And in hys wyt disputed faste
Why and how hys lyf myght laste;
Hym thoughte hys sorwes were so smerte
And lay so colde upon hys herte.
So, through hys sorwe and hevye thought,
Made hym that he herde me noight;
For he had wel nygh lost hys mynde (BD 504-11)

The Dreamer's advantage, of course, is the dream's Narrator's recognition of himself in a waking state. The mutual sorrow of the Narrator and the Man in Black is implicit in their words and actions. Having admitted the symptoms of the "illness," the Dreamer can commence diagnosing the illness itself.

Marlow approaches Kurtz, his destination, with the Dreamer's tact and gentleness. He does not overhear Kurtz himself at first but gleans a wealth of information about Kurtz from others who have known him. While much of what he has heard at the previous Stations was distorted by envy, the Russian at the Inner Station gushes enthusiastically about Kurtz and his influence. From this Russian youth, Marlow learns of Kurtz's ability to command the tribes. In the youth, Marlow can see evidence of Kurtz's eloquence and oratorical skill. However, Marlow's anticipation of Kurtz's perversion is founded not only on hearsay at the Outer and Inner Stations; in fact, it is based on a recognition of his own tendencies. Marlow has proven his inclination for expediency by using his relatives, especially his aunt, to secure his job for him. During the journey to the Inner Station, he has strongly felt the powerful attraction of the abomination and his capacity for restraint has been sorely tested. Having experienced the assault of the powers of darkness, Marlow can appreciate Kurtz's reactions to the fascination of the abomination. Kurtz becomes a perfect alter ego. Like Marlow, he possesses a celebrated eloquence and a love of moral, righteous ideals, and has been given the opportunity to test his capability to practice these ideals, to live according to his concepts of right and wrong. This sympathy between Marlow and Kurtz, their emotional and psychological propinquity, enables Marlow to perceive quickly the symptoms of Kurtz's peculiar illness and permits him to begin his exploration of the illness itself.

Both the Dreamer and Marlow begin their probings into their alternative selves with great deliberation. The anticipation and experiences of the Outer and Central Stations have prepared them for this profound,

sensitive self-examination. The Dreamer changes swiftly from the ostensibly casual, passive eavesdropper, who appears to happen on the Man in Black's soliloquy, to the utterly concerned ego who manoeuvres and manipulates his way into the other's soul. He can be so bold because his relationship to the other permits him. In essence, the other is his alter ego, and the Dreamer is confronting his waking self, the Narrator.

This intimacy allows the Dreamer to remain and watch the Man in Black's entire complaint and reaction although the latter seems oblivious to his presence even when the Dreamer stands facing him. The Dreamer can insist on being introduced to the other, on being recognized by him. Once the meeting begins, the Dreamer quickly dispenses with his normal reticence. He elicits, by his reference to the hunt, a response from the Man in Black that allows him directly to begin the therapy, by cracking the barrier of characteristic reserve, by provoking a sustained emotional response. The experiences up to the Inner Station have matured the ego, and, ripened, it explodes in unusual and extraordinary spontaneity when prodded so acutely:

"And telleth me of your sorwes smerte;
 Paraunter hyt may ese youre herte,
 That semeth ful sek under your syde." (BD 555-57)

Ironically, even this explosion itself proves to be typical of the style of communication that we have witnessed thus far in both works. After the deliberate descent through the many levels of consciousness, at the ostensible end of a convoluted series of experiences, our destination, we find, is still to come. Of course, the meeting of the solopists with the Man in Black in The Book of the Duchess and Marlow in Heart of

Darkness respectively, paralleling our own compelled and compelling introspection as readers, is the much anticipated event that climaxes the journey; but, evidencing the amorphousness and elusiveness of the truth that is to be revealed, even the climax is elaborate, and happens after an apparently false start.

The Man in Black yields to the insistent probing of the Dreamer, but his submission is veiled and subtle. His use of the metaphor of the game of chess with Fate is translucent but not transparent in its meaning. This suspense is necessary for the heralding of the imminence of the climax. Like the flash of the firework that precedes the boom, the narration of the game of chess readies the audience for the resounding directness of the revelation that immediately follows. The flash and the thunderclap are an integral experience, though each tempers the other by being distinct. The subtle and reticent revelation of a fact anticipates, provides, and influences the ultimately precipitate utterance of that fact.

The metaphor of the game of chess allows a tangible transition from the deliberate and even manipulated narration that has preceded it. The narration for all its deliberateness and artifice is not superficial and dishonest. Its fictive and often dreamlike articulation, its careful structure and shape, are conveyors of human truths and concerns. The narration has progressed from the initial, extreme extroversion of the Seye-Alcyone story (an extroversion born, ironically, of an intense solipsism that demands self-isolation first and then tries to forget itself in the oblivion of fiction); through the tentative society of the hunt, to the profound and deepening introversion of the meeting of the Man in

Black. The narrative's psychological progression has been matched by its literal progression. Ironically, the very act of dreaming, which is the ultimate self-isolation and is a consequence of the Dreamer's solipsism, becomes a kind of extroversion by its detachment of consciousness and its separation from reality. The dream permits the Dreamer's escape from his immediate obsessions and, of course, its accompanying sleeplessness, and thus facilitates his distancing himself from himself. At the meeting with the Man in Black, the Dreamer begins his journey back to his waking state as he readies himself to confront his humanity. The metaphor of the game of chess provides a gentle passage to the jolt that will end the dream and resurrect the waking state. It begins the process of waking up before it extends into the direct, matter of fact, prosaic narrative that immediately prefaces the rising. The metaphor is the final obstacle to the Dreamer's confrontation of his humanity. It is a veiled yet discernible temptation to which the Dreamer can react knowingly and honestly or, in desperation, blindly and mendaciously. The metaphor affords the Dreamer the opportunity to glimpse what lies ahead and to decide whether or not to pursue it.

By forcing that decision on the Dreamer, the metaphor in fact can define his humanity by his reaction. The Dreamer can read the metaphor and discern the fact he must consider. His decision to pursue the fact, to comprehend it for contemplation, must evidence the existence of his inborn strength, his ability at the least to dare to face an abomination. The quality of his inborn strength will be manifested by his reaction to what he sees.

In Heart of Darkness, Marlow experiences the same final suspense

that the Dreamer does. In lieu of the metaphor, Kurtz's illness and Marlow's immediate concerns with the ship provide the veil, cushioning the transition from the nightmarish sequences thus far to the even more nightmarish but terribly tangible quality of the ultimate confrontation.

While Marlow's journey to the Inner Station was not dreamt, as was the Dreamer's experience, his progress has certainly been dreamlike. Elaborate details of Marlow's experience seem to spring from some fantastic, twilight consciousness that grips him as tenaciously as the blinding fog that overpowers the steamer during its approach to the Inner Station.

The Russian "harlequin"--

"I looked at him, lost in astonishment. There he was before me, in motley, as though he had absconded from a troupe of mimes, enthusiastic, fabulous. His very existence was improbable, implausible, and altogether bewildering. He was an insoluble puzzle. It was inconceivable how he had existed, how he had succeeded in getting so far, how he had managed to remain--why he did not instantly disappear." (HD 55)--

makes the suitable, ultimate introduction to Kurtz. His apotheosis of Kurtz demands questioning. It induces and provokes criticism and, evidently, skepticism. The "harlequin's" own improbability projects the incredibility of his view of Kurtz. His being dreamlike and fantastic renders his judgment equally imaginary. So Marlow's first visual glimpse of Kurtz begins his ascent from the depths of his unreal and suppressed experience to the direct, even tangibly brutal physical confrontation, long anticipated. With his first view of Kurtz, Marlow can temper the opinions he has received, both the envious and the deifying.

Like the Dreamer of The Book of the Duchess, Marlow rises gradually from the depths of the dreamy consciousness to the deliberation of the

real. Like the Dreamer's, his ultimate meeting seems to happen in two, distinct stages. Marlow's first view of Kurtz is essentially superficial but resembles the degree of comprehension in the Dreamer's initial reading of the Man in Black's allegorical account. Marlow finds himself torn between revulsion and intense attraction to the object of his destination: a "fascination of the abomination." His experiences up to the Inner Station have anticipated the difficult, soul-wrenching confrontation he must make, but his fervent, even inexorable desire to know his own inborn strength, to test his humanity, to define himself, propels him to that defiance. Having reached Kurtz, Marlow knows he is at his destination. Now the anticipation soars to the point of trepidation.

While the Dreamer is afforded an insight of the Man in Black through the imperfect, slightly blurred metaphoric telescope of the narration of the game of chess, Marlow receives his equally veiled perspective from his awkward, even shy, detached dealings with the sick Kurtz:

"We had brought his belated correspondence, and a lot of torn envelopes and open letters littered his bed. His hand roamed feebly amongst these papers. I was struck by the fire of his eyes and the composed languor of his expression. It was not so much the exhaustion of disease. He did not seem in pain. This shadow looked satiated and calm, as though for the moment it had had its fill of all the emotions." (HD 61)

Immediately after his hearing of the voice which had lured him with its resonant promise to the depths of the Inner Station, Marlow views the terrible temptations and fascinations, that have imposed their unshakable will on Kurtz, in the incarnation of the "wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman":

"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." (HD 62)

The powerful effect of this vision on Marlow signifies his appreciation of the tremendous vocation that Kurtz has experienced. Contemplating this "savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent" (HD 62) woman, Marlow must consider Kurtz, and, through his own mental and emotional affinity to Kurtz, he must reflect on himself. Marlow must examine his own "tenebrous and passionate soul."

* Marlow's acknowledgement of his empathy with Kurtz is proclaimed in his almost automatic defense of the man against the enviously malicious observations--an obvious prelude to deleterious machinations--by the manager. He has perforce to fight for Kurtz because he believes in Kurtz's potential for ideals and for action albeit perverted by his lack of restraint. Marlow's defense implies his trust in Kurtz's blatant honesty, his essential integrity, notwithstanding his final apparent degradation. He is revolted by the manager's hypocrisy, his complete, wanton dishonesty, his absolute, blatant, cowardly mendacity, his sickly and sickening disloyalty.

The Dreamer of The Book of the Duchess displays a similarly ambivalent feeling toward the pursuit of the confrontation in which he is engaged. He mirrors Marlow's mix of fascination, of intense interest and lingering fear. Of course, the Dreamer's fear is an anxious, diffident, sorrowfully wonderful, gravely spiritual emotion, quite removed from the terrible, gut-wrenching brooding that Marlow expresses. This difference

does not deny the remarkable affinity between the two works. The difference is one of tone, and the message communicated remains shared.

The Book of the Duchess and Heart of Darkness can be heard as essentially similar tunes, in the one case played on a viola, in the second, a cello. The Book of the Duchess is plaintive and pessimistic but, occasionally at the least, it smiles and rejoices, spontaneously and immodestly, at humorous considerations. Heart of Darkness also breaks from its melancholy, but its brooding is so intensely concentrated that its diversion is hardly innocent. Its smile, beside that of the other work especially, turns quickly wry; it reverts to a deeper gloom. While The Book of the Duchess drops its public adjectival insistence on sorrow for significant sequences of the Dream, Heart of Darkness chants its brooding on gloom chronically, continuously.

The quiet reserve of The Book of the Duchess in its sorrowful discussion is continued in the second stage of the meeting of the Dreamer with the Man in Black. The metaphor being exhausted, the prose must be heard. The metaphor has been the harbinger of the plain, direct fact:

"Good sir, telle me al hooly
In what wyse, how, why, and wherfore
That ye have thus youré blysse lore." (BD 746-48)

The Dreamer's understanding of the metaphor of the game of chess is evidenced by his response, subtle and deliberate, to the lament of the Man in Black. The Dreamer uses the references to the tragedies of unrequited love to complement the comparison, incipient in the Prologue, that highlights the blessings and joys of a mutual love. The consolation of the elegy is thus reinforced. The apparent obliqueness of the reply is not a

result of a misunderstanding. It is a calculated reticence, in keeping with the slow, cautious approach through the metaphoric veil, a reticence that defers the ultimate confrontation demanded by the straight, unerring question to the second stage of the interview. The present argument speaks of love and of death, specifically suicide. In speaking of suicide, it considers the value and purpose of life. In talking of unrequited and betrayed love, it challenges a comparison with and an evaluation of the joys of requited love and provokes a reminiscing on the life with the beloved and a simultaneous reassessment of the value and purpose of life. In lines 746-49, the Dreamer takes the second step. He is ready for the plain, direct scrutiny. He proclaims his willingness and ability to hear and to listen to a statement of the fact:

"I shal ryght blythely, so God^me save,
Hooly, with al the wit I have,
Here yow, as wel as I kan." (BD 755-57)

The Dreamer declares himself ready to face the reality behind the metaphor.

Marlow makes a similar declaration by his silence on Kurtz's disappearance from the steamer:

"There was an agent buttoned up inside an ulster and sleeping on a chair on deck within three feet of me. The yells had not awakened him; he snored very slightly; I left him to his slumbers and leaped ashore. I did not betray Mr. Kurtz--it was ordered I should never betray him--it was written I should be loyal to the nightmare of my choice. 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 any one the peculiar blackness of that experience." (HD 65-66)

Marlow knows well the potential of his confrontation of Kurtz. He has seen the fence impaled with heads. He has felt Kurtz's awesome power. He has seen Kurtz himself, an incarnation of all his fascinations. He has glimpsed the temptations manifest in the savage woman, wildly sensuous and seductive. With all this knowledge, Marlow still delays his judgment of Kurtz. He waits for the final confrontation. He defends Kurtz instinctively against the manager's destructive criticisms because he does think Kurtz is a remarkable man, worthy of thorough, demanding scrutiny. Marlow must make the final scrutiny, and he must make it on his own. The making of the scrutiny itself will affect its quality of judgment. The concentration of purpose must not be broken by anyone. Marlow purportedly does not understand his great reluctance to share with anyone the experience of his meeting with Kurtz, although eventually he does share it through his narration of his experience. His decision not to raise an alarm that would alert the others to Kurtz's escape is effected by his great empathy with Kurtz and an overwhelming fear of the result of the meeting. Marlow is filled with trepidation on the eve of the final confrontation. His delay in directly challenging the man whom he has pursued so long proves his great anxiety. Kurtz's disappearance forces him to act decisively, and compels him to assert himself to show his moral courage. Perhaps this will of courage, struggling against the fear of failure, demands that he go to his destination alone. His knowledge of himself must be discovered and beheld by himself, on his own. This terrible loneliness of his decision and its consequence is a crucial element of the experience of discovering his humanity. The introversion must be complete, integral, honest, absolute.

To render his introversion absolute, the Dreamer of The Book of the Duchess forces the second step of the meeting with the Man in Black, which is his own ultimate self-examination. Notwithstanding its obvious, literal formality and conventionality, this second step is finally apocalyptic. It begins innocently as a prosaic, expected eulogy, a formalized description of a lady that heightens the occasion, which was to memorialize Duchess Blanche. The Dreamer soon manifests his keen interest, his great will, by interjecting that the beloved must have surpassed all others. He provokes a continuance of the encomium that, with its elaboration, must become reflective and introspective. To encourage the introspection, the Dreamer interposes in lines 1115-43 to manipulate the direction of the thought, to shift the focus from the lady herself to the lover's own involvement with her. Thus does the Dreamer render a recollection of the blessings of a requited love. This provoked reminiscing, a calculated dose of nostalgia, has as its purpose the setting of a perspective. The happiness of the past is resurrected, and it tempers the obsession with the sorrowful event of the death of the beloved. Relived in the remembrance, the joys of the past should ease the pain of the present. The very act of recollection should offer respite from the chronic, brooding reality of the present.

The remembering, demanded, and demanding in its very performance, climaxes in a verbally inexpressible joy:

"In al my yowthe, in al chaunce,
 She took me in hir governaunce.
 Therwyth she was alway so trewe,
 Our joye was ever ylyche newe;
 Oure hertes wern so evens a payre,
 That never nas that oon contrayre

To that other, for no woo.
 For sothe, ylyche they suffred thoo
 Oo blysse, and eke oo sorwe bothe;
 Ylyche they were bothe glad and wrothe;
 Al was us oon, withoute were.
 And thus we lyved ful many a yere
 So wel, I kan nat telle how." (BD 1285-97)

The climax, hardly attained, is immediately obliterated:

"Sir," quod I, "where is she now?" (BD 1298)

The recollection of happy days is abruptly terminated by the Dreamer's startling question. The question is meant to shock. Like the Dreamer's previous interjections, it is calculated and purposeful. It ends the remembering and the dreaming, and jolts the Dreamer and his audience, both fictive and literal, into reality.

The suddenness of the return to reality is crucial to the experience the Dreamer has sought. The dream and reality must be clearly juxtaposed. The substantial happiness of the past must be considered in the palpable clarity of the present. The abrupt action, besides being necessary to the quality of the experience, is an effect of the decision to confront the abomination; to express the inexpressible. The Man in Black, having made his encomium and gained an appreciation of his happiness with his beloved--both with the unobstrusive but compelling guidance of the Dreamer--must be returned to the present immediately, with his reminiscing still echoing loudly in his consciousness. The swift juxtapositioning of past and present should render possible the ultimate, active acceptance of reality. The Dreamer's question in line 1298 forces the Man in Black to consider and accept his situation. The Dreamer's ques-

tion also forces the Dreamer to confront the terrible, to think the unthinkable. It becomes the Dreamer's great effort to face the reality that he has been unable to confront till now. His last question is the clear statement of his almost defiant determination. It is the ultimate in a series of queries that have progressed from the reserved, general query of care and consideration to grow bolder, more daring, and more incisive. In lines 548-54, the Dreamer made his first statement of commitment:

"But certes, sire, yif that yee
 Wolde ought discure me youre woo,
 I wolde, as wys God helpe me soo,
 Amende hyt, yif I kan or may.
 Ye mowe preve hyt be assay;
 For, by my trouthe, to make yow hool,
 I wol do al my power hool."

The Dreamer has indeed kept his promise to listen closely to the explanation of sorrow and to try to find a cure for it. In lines 742-48, he elaborated the exploration of the sorrow. His adroit query invigorated the probing, the delicate searching. In lines 1126-43, the Dreamer's scrutiny became selective, appreciative. He invoked the past, to show the present in perspective and to clarify a recognition of a happiness enjoyed, of a purpose invented. His question exhorted a concentration on the real cause of the sorrow:

"What los ys that?" quod I thoo;
 "Nyl she not love yow? ys hyt soo?
 Or have ye oght doon amys,
 That she hath left yow? ys hyt this?
 For Goddes love, telle me al." (BD 1139-43)

After squeezing out the comprehensive circumstances, the very substance

of the sorrow, till the cause of the pain must be evident several times over, the Dreamer poses his last question that immediately commands the present and simultaneously comprehends the future:

"Allas, sir, how? what may that be?"
 "She ys ded!" "Nay!" "Yis, be my trouthe!"
 "Is that youre los? Be God, hyt ys routhe!" (BD 1308-10)

The question has succeeded in describing the sorrow, and has elicited a response that defines the essence of the truth.

The crucial response is not that made literally by the Man in Black. That reply has been anticipated several times in the provoked encomium. The apocalyptic answer is to the profound implications of the questions literally addressed to the Man in Black, and exploring the eulogy. Those questions were consciously rhetorical. The answer to their explicit concern was long evident. The queries were repeated, however, because their implicit anxiety was the interrogator's own ultimate answer to them. The repetition allowed a consideration of responses, a phrasing of the final utterance. The reply, passionately cried, is honestly shocked and shocking in its simplicity and innocence of emotion and its own ultimate inadequacy.

The Man in Black's reply to the apparent concerns is a statement of great perspective, an intensely heart-wrenching resignation, paralleling Alcyone's, that comprehends the whole experience of life and death and proves retroactive in its emotion and realization. In the twelve lines succeeding the climax of the eulogy, the happiness of the past, so painstakingly reconstructed, is bulldozed by the sad, tragic reality of the present—tragic especially by its brilliant contrast to the recent memory

of what was and its evident, hopeless obliviousness to what will be. Alcyone, at the least, was afforded hope through death--her dying might permit her to fulfill her promise to serve Juno absolutely. No such resurrection is glimpsed in the Man in Black's last vision. No hopeful purpose can be found in his violent affirmation of the death of his beloved. The effective telescoping of past into present may temper the pain of the loss with sweet memories, but it simultaneously makes the hurt more acute by its highlighting of the reality of the present, the inevitability and irreversibility of the death. The statement of the fact of death remains just that. It is rooted in the reality of the present. It projects nothing; it offers no future.

The final utterance echoes with greater accent the despair and sorrow of the Man in Black's opening lament. The accent is given by the retrospection, the happy nostalgia. It exposes with brilliant clarity the validity of the sorrow and despair of the initial lament. It now cries with great conviction that, notwithstanding the happiness of the past, the present sadness is real and justified. The Dreamer is challenged to reply by this pronouncement. The conjurer of the final statement, the educator of the definitive exclamation, he must respond. The Dreamer has been de facto the author of the final pronouncement of the Man in Black. Doggedly, he has sought the Man in Black's opinion. He has probed and delved and uncovered. His questions have been addressed to the Man in Black, but, in their deep sincerity, in their utter honesty, in their fervent curiosity, they have been reflexive. Having pledged himself to help a fellow human with whom he has such tremendous empathy, the Dreamer has recognized his own humanity--his exploration of the other

is the investigation of himself. His questions, then, born of his deepest concerns, are manifestations of his self-examination. Having reached into the Man in Black's deepest consciousness to uncover his view of life and his state of being, the Dreamer has posed the final question to himself directly. He has heard the Man in Black's pronouncement, and has elicited the reason for a great sorrow. Now he himself must pass judgment on what he has learnt. Having searched and discovered, he must appraise. The Dreamer's fascination with the abomination of the tragedy of the Man in Black's life--and, through the shared humanity and the special empathy, the tragedy of his own humanity--becomes the question to which he must respond.

Like the Dreamer, Marlow pursues his terrible curiosity with unremitting fervour. Confronting Kurtz in the physical and mental amorphousness of night in an incomprehensible wilderness, Marlow engages in a nightmarish argument with his own profound fears and secret desires. Facing Kurtz, Marlow is compelled to scrutinize himself. His fascination with "that Shadow--this wandering and tormented thing" (HD 67)-- is born of a fascination with his own flitting, troubled and troubling soul. His attempt to save Kurtz is an attempt to save himself. He must follow Kurtz to his limit to discover his own inborn strength:

"Soul! If anybody had ever struggled with a soul, I am the man. . . . But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by Heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad. I had--for my sins, I suppose, to go through the ordeal of looking into it myself. No eloquence could have been so withering to one's belief in mankind as his final burst of sincerity. He struggled with himself too. I saw it--I heard it. I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself." (HD 67-68)

Marlow vicariously shares Kurtz's conflict. He fights with and for Kurtz because he recognizes his own self in Kurtz. Kurtz's agony becomes his; Kurtz's passions are his. Kurtz's desires, secret and diabolical, overwhelming the innocent and altruistic ideals, fascinate and tempt him enough to excite in him a deep and sincere sympathy for Kurtz. Marlow feels the sympathy because he sees his own humanity in Kurtz. He perceives in Kurtz the volatile mix of powerful emotion and extraordinary intellect that constantly struggle with each other in himself.

The remarkable emotional and intellectual kinship between them is understood by Kurtz himself. He confides in Marlow, sharing his passion and even his precious worldly belongings. Their communion is completed and climaxed with the sharing of that most intimate of moments, always lonely, always too impalpable to communicate--death. Marlow, who has forced Kurtz to reconsider his final, decisive actions, also forces him to ponder that ultimate and fateful question: in his last moments, Kurtz, challenged and even compelled by Marlow's active and natural contradiction of his unrestrained, insane existence into a sincere introspection, must define his life. Death fittingly occasions the ultimate query:

"Anything approaching the change that came over his features I have never seen before, and hope never to see again. Oh, I wasn't touched. I was fascinated. It was as though a veil had been rent. I saw on that ivory face the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror--of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision--he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath:

'The horror! The horror!'" (HD 70-71)

The reply, provoked by Marlow, by his philosophical and active defiance

of Kurtz's surrender; demanded by his tangible, passionate empathy with Kurtz; inspired by the urgency of a shared humanity; rebounds, vigorously in death, which is itself provocative, a question. The pronouncement Marlow has sought, the judgment he has stubbornly rendered audible, now demands his own consideration. Marlow must deliberately comprehend the "horror."

CHAPTER X

The "Deliberate" Belief

Reflecting the elusiveness of the truth of The Book of the Duchess and Heart of Darkness, an ingeniously contrived and contriving, even amorphous impalpability that is suspect in the intriguing, baffling, seemingly infinite convolutions of logic that inspire the communication of the two works, the immediate, ostensible responses of the Dreamer and the Man in Black respectively to the questions they have stubbornly composed and deliberated are only discreet and reticent, almost reluctant, harbingers of a fluent, comprehensive reaction.

The Dreamer expresses his sorrow, an honest but brief, nigh truncated condolence, and with apparent perfunctoriness ends his dream and, having awoken, his narration:

Thoghte I, "Thys ys so queynt a sweven
That I wol, be processe of tyme,
Fonde to put this sweven in ryme
As I kan best, and that anon."
This was my swæven; now hit ys doon. (BD 1330-34)

The profound implications of the dream, its rich potential, its passionate promise, seem to be forgotten. The interest of superficialities seems to be preferred for consideration. After the long, difficult labour of several levels of theses and arguments first conceived in the ideal and literal fecundity of the Prologue, the culmination seems still-born, perhaps even aborted.

The terrible disappointment is felt also at the close of Heart of Darkness. Marlow is inspired by his meeting with Kurtz. Through Kurtz, he comes face to face with life and death, and their complementary, contradictory, and baffling relationship. He discovers in Kurtz the ultimate vindication of the hollow, wasted life, of the shattered promise, of the terribly misguided potential:

"I was within a hair's-breadth of the last opportunity for pronouncement, and I found with humiliation that probably I would have nothing to say. This is the reason why I affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it. . . . He had summed up--he had judged. 'The horror!' He was a remarkable man. After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candour, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth--the strange commingling of desire and hate. . . . It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory." (HD 72)

The tangible potential of the lesson of this experience, the essence of the experience that seems to induce momentarily in Marlow the vigorous conviction of a quality and nature of life itself, seems to dissolve into a frightening and frightened memory, suppressed by a chronic, dishonest, paradoxically relentless timidity, an inability to comprehend the truth. The glimpsing of the truth here, like that in The Book of the Duchess with the judgment by the Man in Black, proves apparently too horrible for contemplation. The "horror" of the lost, futile life of a hollow man with tremendous, promising ideals but without the inborn strength to maintain a firm hold on them and the ultimate hopelessness of the Man in Black's reminiscing of happy times with the beloved, underscored by the evanescence and eventual failure of the nostalgic resurrection, that, it-

self highlights the immutability of death, does not seem to provoke an equally strong reaction from Marlow and the Dreamer. Instead of comprehending the "horror" in a swift, vital vision, they appear to avoid it, shrink from it weakly and lapse into moribundity. While the Dreamer's obvious blindness quickly follows the literal and figurative turning away from the moment, Marlow's evident ignorance lies beneath a superficiality of the courage in his conviction of the truth in Kurtz's final vision. This courage is quickly eroded by the inability actually to accept the truth, and Marlow finds himself too weak to articulate the truth he has seen through Kurtz to the latter's Intended.

This complete lack of orientation, this self-induced oblivion, piques our curiosity and challenges us to investigate the demonstrated literal and figurative dead-end. Since the figurative is born of the literal, we must examine the literal for suggestive direction and satisfying culmination. We locate our first sign of hope in the conclusion of Heart of Darkness:

Marlow ceased, and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha. Nobody moved for a time. "We have lost the first of the ebb," said the Director suddenly. I raised my head. The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky--seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness. (HD 79)

The paragraph is overwhelmingly gloomy in what Pritchett in the essay cited in Chapter I would call its "adjectival insistence." However, rather than concluding on this note of pessimism, it culminates on an ominous tone that by its very imminence invites hope. The observation, "We have lost the first of the ebb," implies a warning and the logical, complementary projection of another turn of the tide. The gloom that

lies ahead is threatening and, therefore, still suspended. Its very presence ahead is a remarkable caution to adventurers, to the crew of the "Nellie," and, by extension, to us, the readers. While the warning of darkness provides the chance to prepare for the anticipated, it also completes the cycle of return; literally, to the Prologue. We, the readers, are referred to the opening tableau. Marlow has not changed his posture. The Director is still the thorough seaman, concerned with nautical functions. The "Nellie" is still at rest; only, now she is waiting the next favorable tide. The brooding gloom has made the only discernible shift; it has left its sinister presence over London, that source and concentration of civilization, to condense in the distance the horror that threatens. Projected from this perspective, Marlow's lying to the Intended ceases to be the sign of an inability to face the truth that Kurtz expressed. The final futility of life is not denied, but the resilience of the human spirit, its vigour, its eternal power of hope, is shown to be triumphant. Marlow does not finally ignore the truth he has glimpsed. Rather, he accepts it but acknowledges a greater, more powerful, paramount truth. The vitality of the human spirit, manifested often during the journey to the heart of darkness, the meeting with Kurtz and the profound introspection at the Inner Station, endures despite the pervasive horror that life is "that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose" (HD 71). Marlow's conviction of the reality of this horror yields to the conviction of the supreme force and energy of the human spirit. He acknowledges, even pays tribute to, this intense, spiritual vitality by protecting the Intended from Kurtz's ultimate utterance of horror, by deferring that judgment and, therefore, deferring

to the fact of human life animated and determinedly purposeful even in the face of its final futility. Marlow recognizes hope:

"I could not tell her. It would have been too dark--too dark altogether. . . ." (HD 79)

The culmination of the narration in its return to the Prologue signals the anticipation of the "Nellie's" voyage, the assumption of the journey, of life, notwithstanding the "horror" that appears imminent.

The profound implications of Heart of Darkness reflect the ultimate concerns of The Book of the Duchess in a magnified form. Heart of Darkness, in its elaboration, its adjectival insistence, its literary melismatics, defines its truth more readily than the more conservative and reticent poem. Scrutinizing the ending of the poem through our comprehensive and absolute experience of the prose work, we can interpret it anew. The ending of the poem does not conclude in ignorance:

Therwyth I awook myselve
 And fond me lyinge in my bed;
 And the book that I hadde red,
 Of Alcione and Seys the kyng,
 And of the goddes of slepyng,
 I fond hyt in myn hond ful even.
 Thoghte I, "Thys ys so queynt a sweven
 That I wol, be processe of tyme,
 Fonde to put this sweven in ryme
 As I kan best, and that anon."
 This was my sweven; now hit ys doon. (BD 1324-34)

The ending directs us to the future through the awakening of the present. The poem culminates in vitality and purposefulness. Its return to the present is not a denial of the immutability of death, of the apparent, ultimate aimlessness of life. Its revival of the present is a revival of

hope, of purpose, of vigour. Despite the failure of the Man in Black's nostalgic reminiscence, the Dreamer is ready to continue his own struggle to live actively. He may "not what is best to doo," but he will do the best he can. The narration of the poem becomes his immediate purpose. Like Marlow, the Dreamer cannot confute the truth he has glimpsed. Like Marlow, he subordinates this truth to the greater, natural truth of his humanity. The literal return through the culmination of the poem to its Prologue evidences this chronic hope amidst the apparent, general despair. The reading of the book and the sleep have not proven absolutely therapeutic; nevertheless, they have been utilized by the Narrator in his manifestation of purpose and vitality.

The return to the Prologues of the two works, demanded by our emotional and mental dissatisfaction with the initial denouement, projects us again through the cycle of the works. The prospect of this introspection compels us to revive the experiences of despair tempered ultimately by hope, of mutually tempering great emotion and reason that our readings aroused. We realize that our "deliberate belief" was incipient in the Prologues at our first reading. After being subtly suggested to our consciousness, it prodded alert a twin belief naturally inherent in us. It drew this twin after it as it was developed by the intriguing complexities of the works. Our sympathies were naturally emotionally and intellectually ready for their elaboration. They were primed by the experience of profound introspection for their ultimate self-awareness. The experience of reading the works, so self-conscious themselves, compelled us to grow conscious of the feelings that it provoked, forced us to examine their motivations, and effected an introspection in us too.

The ultimate "deliberate belief" of the two works springs from the heart and the mind, and thus from our humanity. The "deliberate belief" in life with vitality and purpose is essential to our humanity. The collective voices of the heart and mind superimpose themselves on the mostly intellectual or mostly emotional argument against this belief. We, being creatures of emotion and intellect, are more receptive to their union.

NOTES

¹ Harold Bloom, A Map of Misreading (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 3.

² Bloom, p. 32.

³ Abbie Finlay Potts, The Elegiac Mode: Poetic Form in Wordsworth and Other Elegists (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 73.

⁴ Wolfgang Iser, "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction," in Aspects of Narrative, ed. J. Hillis Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 43.

⁵ V. S. Pritchett, The Living Novel and Later Appreciations (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 197-98.

⁶ Iser, p. 10. Iser argues that the Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden's term is apt because the collection of these views unfolds the object of the work by symbol, by representation. The lack of denotation and the subsequent, allusive connotation allow the reader his active part in the reading of the work. The "gaps" among the views permit the reader's deliberation and orientation.

⁷ Eugene Dorfman, The Narreme in the Medieval Romance Epic (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 6-7.

⁸ Robert M. Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 6.

⁹ Jordan, pp. 8-9.

10. Wolfgang Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry, trans. C. A. M. Sym (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 27.
- 11 Clemen, p. 27.
- 12 John Lawlor, "The Pattern of Consolation in The Book of the Duchess," in Chaucer Criticism, ed. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), II, 243.
- 13 Clemen, pp. 30-31.
- 14 George Lyman Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 57.
- 15 Clemen, p. 31.
- 16 Bertrand Harris Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess," in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Edward C. Wagenknecht (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 279.
- 17 Clemen, p. 34.
- 18 Clemen, p. 34.
- 19 James Winny, Chaucer's Dream Poems (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), pp. 45-46.
- 20 Winny, p. 52.
- 21 For an elaboration on the comedy in Heart of Darkness, see Stanton de Voren Hoffman, Comedy and Form in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad (The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton and Co., 1969).

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