The Fatal Attraction of the Dead-Centre

and

The Opportunity of the Feminine

in

Joseph Conrad's Texts

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ABSTRACT

THE FATAL ATTRACTION OF THE DEAD-CENTRE

AND THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE FEMININE IN JOSEPH CONRAD'S TEXTS

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Although Joseph Conrad has been characterized often in critical circles as a representative voice of patriarchal European values, his texts actually provide a forum for the questioning of those values. This debate engages a feminine perspective, represented sometimes by female characters; but that perspective is also a position on the borders of the patriarchal circle--a position of intersection where the known meets the unknown, and text and reader interact. With the unbarring of the gates of the patriarchal institutions, the characters, and the texts with them, enter the terrain of flux, possibility, understanding, and creativity--states which Conrad allies with femininity. This feminine agency in Conrad's works is, thereby, a vital element in the achievement of fiction with multiple perspectives and layers of potentiality.

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INTRODUCTION

The novel as a form has been characterized often by literary theorists as the expression of a loss and longing that is at the heart of Western civilization. Georg Lukács, for instance, discusses in his Theory of the Novel mankind's sense of the loss of a holistic entity that was once his protective home. The "utopian perfection" conveyed in the Homeric epic is now only a reverie of the ideal and inaccessible, and in the novel, the hero is thrust into a state of alienation and discontinuity which he seeks to rectify. The novel, then, is born in the cradle of exile; it is "the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God" (88). The crisis of faith, whose effects rumbled underfoot from Dover Beach to The Wasteland and beyond, is also a catalyst to written expression. Jacques Derrida proposes that all writing is, in a sense, fatherless discourse, and the sense of being disinherited from the authority of tradition and orphaned from the concord of the past serves as an inspiring anxiety to the "lost sons" who take up the pen in answer to the hollow echo of the void: "l'Ecriture est le fils miserable ... de toute facon un fils perdu" (La Dissémination, 167-8).

Joseph Conrad's novels are populated by lost sons orphaned from the source of their identities, and exiled from the sheltering forms they were

raised in and on. From his first, Almayer's Folly in 1895, to the publication of The Rescue twenty-five years later, we can trace the course of these heirs who carry them the Arcadian dream of the lost original home where certitude and agreement were guaranteed.

There is in Conrad's texts a struggle for the renewal of a lost accord, an effort in which the heir to the order takes up the crown as the new ruling entity, and, by extension, the agent of unity. This is in keeping with the tradition in Western thought of the creator as a male authority, and creativity as man subjugating chaos. This readily serves the public's eager need for some reliable godhead of truth and meaning in whose name it can resign its doubts.

Yet, Conrad's texts also encourage a critical examination of such a concept of artistic creation and passive reading. At the same time, they contain what I see as a feminine alternative. As Robert Kroetsch suggests, "Conrad creates a very male kind of world. But I now think of Conrad as having a silent centre which is feminine; there's a kind of erotic play around that centre" (Neuman, 22). I agree with the sentiment of Kroetsch's comment, but I believe that the feminine agents achieve an effective and efficacious voice of their own in Conrad's texts, even if those voices have been ignored by the majority of Conrad's critics.

In an essay entitled "The Father, Love, and Banishment," Julia Kristeva refers to the works of Samuel Beckett as examples of Western

literature's expression of alienation, and how in fact the act of writing is the expression of that sense of loss and longing. The aspect of absence is initially and most evidently conveyed in a missing father, but Kristeva detects also the faint fading voice of the mother from behind the walls of the paternal constructs. This maternal element exists more as an absence in Beckett's works, but in Conrad's works, there is a very real struggle underway for the feminine to achieve a place around the table of debate. Conrad's texts exist in a dynamic state between those two poles or cores of absence--held to the memory of a former condition of unity and uniformity, and drawn to the promise and potentiality of life's diverse forms. The pull of the feminine elements in Conrad's texts decentres the male dominion, and Conrad's texts find fertile soil amidst the teeming growth outside the crumbling walls of paradise.

CHAPTER I

KEEPERS OF THE PATERNAL GRAVE

The narratives of both Charles Gould in Nostromo and Axel Heyst of Victory grow out of the fresh-turned soil of their fathers' graves. In Nostromo, the death of Charles' father brings about a crisis of faith as the orderly and just system upon which he depended is suddenly in question. "He ought to have had many years yet. We are a long-lived family" (Nostromo, 62). Charles feels now exposed and vulnerable as his protective paternal shelter is invaded by disquieting doubts as though a guarantee has been revoked:

> That irreparable change a death makes in the course of our daily thoughts can be felt in a vague and poignant discomfort of mind. It hurt Charles Gould to feel that never more, by no effort of will, would he be able to think of his father in the same way he used to think of him when the poor man was alive. This consideration, closely affecting his own identity, filled his breast with a mournful and angry desire for action. (66)

There, etched upon the memorial plaque above the unsettled and unsettling grave, the son reads his own name and destiny, and he seeks to assert his individuality and potency, for "only in the conduct of our action can we find the sense of mastery over the Fates" (66).

These declarations of Nostromo's narrator are echoed by Conrad in his article "Autocracy and War": "Action, in which is to be found the illusion of a mastered destiny, can alone satisfy our uneasy vanity and lay to rest the haunting fear of the future" (Notes on Life and Letters,[1] 108). Both Charles Gould and Axel Heyst respond to the vision of a future suddenly thrown into dark relief by the long shadow of the paternal tomb. Against this darkening horizon, the son seeks to redraw the course of life which now appears descending inevitably towards that waiting grave.

Like Gould, Heyst answers the claims of fate with "Action--the first thought, or perhaps the first impulse, on earth! The barbed hook, baited with the illusion of progress, to bring out of the lightless void the shoals of unnumbered generations!" (Victory, 149). Bearing the standard of "progress," the new-born writer resolves to carry out of the gathering darkness the truths of the past and thereby enlighten the multitudes of generations to come. But "shoals" carries a second meaning--an accumulated sandbank of past lives and duties, and in this respect the narrating son seeks to free himself from the claims of the past. He intends to claim the landscape before him as his own and be the author of his own destiny, and his actions are justified by his belief that he serves the ideal of perfection.

Within Conrad's novels, this sense of loss acts as a First Cause in the origin of an individual character, who sets out to establish an identity

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[1] Hereinafter, Notes On Life and Letters will be designated by the initials, NLL.

independent of the causal line of descent. In both Nostromo and Victory, this remedial response is presented as almost a primordial reflex. Heyst is likened to "that first ancestor who, as soon as he could uplift his muddy frame from the celestial mould, started inspecting and naming the animals of that paradise which he was soon to lose" (Victory, 149). Here, in the house which becomes his upon the father's retreat, this Adamite assumes the power to name and define his world. He will author this landscape--write his own name upon it and delineate its boundaries. Like Adam, he inherits the word of the father which becomes his instrument of independence from a fixed destiny.

Julia Kristeva detects a similar reflex in some of Samuel Beckett's characters. She observes that, in order to establish himself in the world, the son departs the paternal home, and takes up what she refers to as "a waste-object... fallen off the father, taking the place of his protection" (Kristeva, 150). In order to assert his independence from the patrimony of death, the decamped son reaches for some surrogate paternal aegis which, in terms of the writer removed from paradisal certainty, can be interpreted as the word, the instrument of the lost father, and now seen as the opportunity for the achievement of one's own identity and created form of certitude.

In Nostromo, Charles Gould takes up the remnant of the fallen order, the "Gould Concession"--the mining rights in the South American country of

Costaguana--with which he intends to stamp his own name on the coinage of the future. Only the mine offers him the opportunity for a recovered and achieved identity. Through his own mastery of the conditions that claimed his father, Charles believes he can remove the stain of failure from his inheritance--the mine and his name: "It has killed him.... But if he had only grappled with it in a proper way" (62).

Charles is steeled with the confidence that he is the only one who truly understands the Sulacan situation. He maintains that abandoned mines have been merely "misunderstood," and from this he will rescue them (59). To do so, however, he must defy the edict of the father forbidding his return to Costaguana to take control of the mine: "It was imperative sometimes to know how to disobey the solemn wishes of the dead. He resolved firmly to make his disobedience as thorough (by way of atonement) as it well could be" (66). Charles declares himself an independent agent, defying the fates, and asserting his freedom from the burden of descent. As the narrating character of Lord Jim, Marlow, says, "all assertion in this world of doubts is a defiance, is an insolence" (180).

Charles Gould's assertion of individuality comes in the form of that return to his birthplace, Costaguana, and like Oedipus's return to Thebes, that action carries with it the intertwined threads of rebellion against the fates, opposition to the father, and yet renewal of the lineal paternal order. In Origins of the Novel, Marthe Robert argues that the novel form draws on

this kind of Oedipal mythic pattern for its structuring principle; that is, novels achieve originality through the defiance of the paternal codes and traditional narrative forms, and yet at the same time utilize and embody those sacred forms. As Roland Barthes asks in The Pleasure of the Text, "Doesn't every narrative lead back to Oedipus? Isn't storytelling always a way of searching for one's origin, speaking one's conflicts with the Law, entering into the dialectic of tenderness and hatred?" (47). Although he does not elaborate on the issue here, the suggestion is there that the deposed or deceased father remains an active force in the novel in as much as he acts as an attracting magnetic pole. Narration is powered by the twin forces of rebellion and the reclamation of the lost identity.

Thus, at twilight, while standing within "the ruined palazzo" (61) of a man "who had known how to give up his life to the independence and unity of his country" (Nostromo, 60), Charles Gould reveals to his fiancée, Emilia, his own mission for unity and independence. "The mine had been the cause of an absurd moral disaster; its workings must be made a serious and moral success. He owed it to the dead man's memory" (66). That memory is no longer "the breathing image" of the father, but now little more than the cadaver of an ideal which Charles intends to resurrect. "A vague idea of rehabilitation had entered the plan of their life.... It was as if they had been morally bound to make good their vigorous view of life against the unnatural error of weariness and despair" (Nostromo, 74).

Like Oedipus, Charles Gould's forbidden return to his birthplace of Costaguana amounts to his replacement of the ruling principle, and Charles becomes, in the eyes of the locals, the new King of Sulaco. Armed with the instrument of power, the rights to the silver mine, Charles declares himself the keeper of the moral order, and provider of "law, good faith, order, security" (84). He offers this up as a kind of liturgy, a charter, and a license to act, to "impose the conditions on which alone they can continue to exist." Charles dons the fallen crest and rides into "the senseless fray as his poor uncle, whose sword hung on the wall of his study, had gone forth--in the defence of the commonest decencies of organized society" (365). Like a valiant warrior bent on saving the endangered castle, Charles drapes himself in the protective armour of necessity, and brandishes the "wealth of the mine" as both sword and shield. As Julia Kristeva proposes in "Place Names," an essay based on the writings of Freud, the literary son is driven by "the desire to take [the father's] place, to assume the moral, paternal function.... The father is dead, long live the father that 'I' am" (275).

Martin Decoud, the young French journalist living in Sulaco, is another lost son who sees this South American state as his own personal responsibility and opportunity: "I seemed ... to hold my new state in the hollow of my hand" (233). "Neither the son of his own country nor of any other" (198), he intends to legitimatize himself and define himself as an efficacious entity. The revolutionary uprising in Costaguana becomes his occasion to

achieve these aims, and his arrogance provides him with the confidence and isolating belief that he is "the only man with a definite idea in his head" (230).

This "new state" acts as a meeting ground for men who look upon this foreign land as the terrain for the realization of their own subjective aims. Gould's financial backer, Holyroyd, looks across a map of the world and sees only a parchment for the dictates of American manifest destiny: "We shall be giving the word for everything ... from Cape Horn clear over to Smith's Sound, and beyond, too.... And then we shall have the leisure to take in hand the outlying islands and continents of the earth" (77). This represents his "faith in destiny," but it also expresses his personal zeal to rule over a large portion of that map through the execution of his "Holyroyd Missionary Fund" (509). This monetary agency operates on the principle of spreading Protestant values through wealth--the currency of the Holy Word, and the divine power of the dollar. Meanwhile, the administrator of the railway system, Sir John, aims to circumscribe and assimilate this foreign land into "one vast scheme" forged with steel and commercial conditioning, with the railway as the engine for his plans--"a project of systematic colonization of the Occidental Province" (117).

Under the pressure of such systems, the people of Costaguana are stripped of not only their material riches, but their independence and individuality. The communal festivities of the Costaguanan people disappear

as do their colourful costumes, replaced by the monochromatic uniforms of the mine workers. As the narrator of Nostromo states, "the material apparatus of perfected civilization ... obliterates the individuality of old towns under the stereotyped conveniences of modern life" (96). By rendering these foreign lands and people as converted forms of the home order, these colonial agents cancel difference and variance, and at the same time confirm their right to act in the name of morality and progress.

In The Dialogic Imagination, Russian linguist and literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, discusses the ways in which ideological forces work to bring heterogeneity to heel under the rule of correctness. Languages and cultures are conquered, supplanted, enslaved, and incorporated "into a unitary language of culture and truth, the canonization of ideological systems" (271), thereby "guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding" (270). The "process of illuminating them with the True Word," serves to "unify and centralize" in the quest for the certitude of the One, of Truth, God, the Law, and other principles in upper-case letters. The consecrated word, the inherited sceptre of the paternal order, is thus marshalled to control and convert anything that is "other" to the ruling forces and voices, and so confirm their authorial objectives.

In The Rescue, also, Martin Travers and his fellow Europeans aboard a pleasure yacht cruise through Malaysian waters buoyed by their "special rights and obligations"--governed by "an international understanding--the

duty to civilize." In Travers's mind, these foreign lands require the controlling and defining hand of the Western powers; "and if the inferior race must perish, it is a gain, a step toward the perfecting of society which is the aim of progress" (120).

In the same novel, the old seaman Shaw holds up his inherited faith as a sanctuary from moral doubt, and a provider of purposeful action. Although he openly admits that he "cannot see through the peculiarities" of foreign worlds and people, he believes implicitly in the order he represents; and he expounds on the necessity of using force upon "Chinamen, or niggers, or such people as must be kept in order and won't listen to reason; having not sense enough to know what's good for them, when it's explained to them by their betters--missionaries, and such like au-tho-ri-ties" (18).

As the progeny of parsons, both The Rescue's Shaw and the title character of Lord Jim come by their fixed faith almost as a birthright, a faith detailed in a letter Jim receives from his father stating that "virtue is one all over the world, and there is only one faith, one conceivable conduct of life, one manner of dying" (257). This acts as not only a unifying creed but a kind of moral visa and licence to act in the name of the order free of doubt. "Jim's father possessed such certain knowledge of the Unknowable as made for the righteousness of people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerring Providence enables to live in mansions" (Lord Jim, 10). The consecrated word enables Jim and the other sons and

agents of the order to circumscribe the globe safe within "the circular stillness of water and sky with the black speck of the moving hull remaining everlastingly in its centre." Jim sets out across the seas as a ship's officer confident in his secure place within that ruling circle, an "assurance of everlasting security [and] the great certitude of unbounded safety and peace" (19).

Supported by such guarantees, the pilgrims aboard The Patna come "urged by faith and the hope of paradise.... At the call of an idea they had left... the surroundings of their youth and the graves of their fathers" (17). They await their arrival at their holy destination, confident in the abilities of the white crew and captain; and the ascendant course to a better tomorrow is marked out with the instruments of inscription, like the points of God's compass,

> Parallel rulers with a pair of dividers reposed on it; the ship's position at last noon was marked with a small black cross, and the straight pencil-line drawn firmly as far as Perim figured the course of the ship--the path of souls towards the holy place, the promise of salvation, the reward of eternal life--while the pencil with its sharp end touching the Somali coast lay round and still like a naked ship's spar floating in the pool of a sheltered dock. (21)

The "sheltered dock" is the collective code of values and singular faith, the

precepts of the fathers by which Jim, like the others, identifies himself and justifies his actions.

Jim relies upon the belief that "he came from the right place; he was one of us" (38), which means that he is not one of "'them,' meaning all of mankind with skins brown, yellow, or black in colour" (255). Although those words are penned by Marlow, the novel's internal narrator, the suggestion is there that he is in fact echoing sentiments expressed previously by the "privileged reader" to whom Marlow sends the transcripts of this tale. His confidential sharer had once advised Marlow that the kind of redemptive quest Jim enacts in the Malaysian village of Patusan is

> endurable and enduring when based on a firm conviction in the truth of ideas racially our own, in whose name are established the order, the morality of an ethical progress. We want its strength at our backs.... We want a belief in its necessity and its justice, to make a worthy and conscious sacrifice of our lives. (255)

The narrator of Conrad's short story, "Outpost of Progress," expresses similar observations:

> Few men realize that their life, the very essence of their character, their capabilities and their audacities, are only the expression of their belief in the safety of their surroundings. The courage, the composure, the confidence; the emotions and the

> principles; every great and every insignificant thought belongs not to the individual but to the crowd: to the crowd that believes blindly in the irresistible force of its institutions and of its morals. ("Outpost of Progress," 85-6).

This sense of belonging and rectitude is the foundation of the society that both Jim and Marlow rely on, that "obscure body of men held together ... by fidelity to a certain standard of conduct" (43-4), "whose very existence is based upon honest faith" (38). However, an unforeseen obstacle punctures the hull of The Patna and skews the comforting shield. In response, Jim and the other officers abandon the damaged vessel and, with that, their collective code of conduct.

The collision and his impulsive leap throw Jim out of the circle of membership and virtue, and exile him from his former holistic state of innocence and certitude. Jim becomes impelled by the desire to return to the lost paternal certitude inherent in the father's creed of singularity and universality, housed within Jim's memory of his father's study: "the inviolable shelter of his book-lined, faded, and comfortable study" in "that quiet corner of the world as free of danger or strife as a tomb, and breathing equably the air of undisturbed rectitude" (Lord Jim, 257). This musty sterile environment is the protected and protective confines of institutionalized thought and conduct--a chamber of fixed, continuous, and immutable beliefs. As Beckett writes in an essay entitled "Dante... Bruno. Vico..

Joyce": "Paradise is the static lifelessness of unrelieved immaculation" (22).

In flight from the stain of his failure and in pursuit of "some sort of chance to get it all back again" (137-8), Jim scrambles for some surrogate ruling principle, a kind of "waste-object ... taking the place of [the father's] protection" (Kristeva, 150); and this quest leads him to the Malaysian village of Patusan, which becomes, for Jim, his opportunity for a paradise regained--a domain for his own redemption as well as a model of the ideal state of agreement.

On the canvas of this new world, Jim intends not only to renew the lost "scheme of a safe universe," but his own heroic self-conception--to fulfil the reveries of his pre-lapsarian days when he entertained dreams of himself

> saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line; or as a lonely castaway, barefooted and half-naked, walking on uncovered reefs in search of shellfish to stave off starvation. He confronted savages on tropical shores, quelled mutinies on the high seas ... always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book. (11)

Patusan becomes the stage upon which Jim will play the part of saviour and redeemer by quelling rebellion and rescuing the faltering order. As Herbert G. Klein puts it, Jim casts himself as "the archetypal male hero who rescues the world from chaos" (150). By subduing tribal disputes and acting as a

new sovereign power in Patusan, Jim raises himself from the fallen state of an outcast son to the position of an author of a new order. By extension, Jim may rescue himself from his outcast state and repair his lineage to the world of his fathers and their code of honour.

Jim's fictional model for his imagined exploits may well have been the title character of Daniel Defoe's seminal novel, Robinson Crusoe, the barefooted castaway who also "confronts savages on tropical shores" and establishes a surrogate home order on a conquered landscape. After washing up on a deserted tropical island, Crusoe declares himself lord of all he surveys: "To think that this was all my own, that I was king and lord of all this country indefeasibly and had a right of possession; and if I could convey it, I might have it in inheritance" (89). To his mind, this world is unnamed until he comes upon it--the page is blank and awaits his conquering hand. As Ian Watt points out in The Rise of the Novel, "the natural scene on the island appeals not for adoration, but for exploitation; wherever Crusoe looks his acres cry out so loud for improvement that he has no leisure to observe that they also compose a landscape" (78).

Like the Adamite Axel Heyst, Crusoe raises himself up and names "all the animals of that paradise" (Victory, 149), and in so doing composes his own personal subjective salvation. His surroundings become simply implements in the narration of his own story--the monologue which is that novel. Like Heyst, Jim, and Charles Gould, Crusoe rescues himself from the

"lightless void" (Victory, 149) and fixes his own name to the lineage of history.

Both Crusoe and Jim act out of a sense of not only rectitude but also duty--a duty to redeem a tarnished or fallen ideal. At the heart of their actions is a sense of sin against the paternal code. Just as Jim transgresses the codified "standard of conduct," Crusoe also defies his father's wishes by going off to sea, and is then dogged by guilt over this mutiny. In both cases, they envision the foreign landscapes before them as their opportunity to recapture their lost innocence and escape their fallen states, and reconstitute a lost ideal state.

Marlow, in Lord Jim, is also inspired by a similar loss of faith and certainty to reform the fractured monolithic conception of his world. By deserting their duty, Jim and his fellow officers cast adrift the collective's safe carriage to an ascendant future. Like Charles Gould upon the death of his father, Marlow experiences the personal effects of this abandonment. It is "like a hint of a destructive fate ready for us all whose youth ... had resembled his youth" (Lord Jim, 44). Those are the fears and doubts which provoke a response from Marlow, and which form the germ of his narrative in the novel.

Stripped of his protective faith and sense of unity, Marlow now feels haunted by the spectre of scepticism, "uneasy doubt uprising like a mist, secret and gnawing like a worm, and more chilling than the certitude of

death--the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct" (44). Much like Charles Gould and Shakespeare's fatherless Danish Prince, Marlow is prompted by this apparition to revenge "this most foul, strange, and unnatural" death (Hamlet, I, v), and his narrative becomes his attempt to perform some "exorcism against the ghost of doubt" (44).

Marlow comments on the crash and the officers' subsequent desertion by saying that

> when your ship fails you, your whole world seems to fail you; the world that made you, restrained you, taken care of you. It is as if the souls of men floating on an abyss and in touch with immensity had been set free for any excess of heroism, absurdity, or abomination. (LJ, 95).

His observation here reflects ironically on his own actions after the failure of his supportive beliefs, actions which contain the seed of what Conrad describes as the "artistic impulse":

> It is rescue work, this snatching of vanishing phases of turbulence ... out of the native obscurity into a light where the struggling forms may be seen, seized upon, endowed with the only possible form of permanence in this world of relative values--the permanence of memory. (NLL, 13)

Just as Charles Gould takes up the sceptre as keeper of order and justice in Sulaco upon the fall of his father, so too does Marlow take on the

duty of keeper and narrator of Jim's tale with the collapse of his founding faith, and his efforts to rescue Jim's tale from the "vanishing phases" of time, and rendering it in a cohesive narrative, is his attempt at recreating the lost dependable "standard of conduct." By justifying contradictions and formulating a principle of consistency, he will be the medium for the renewal of the lost principle of singularity. Harmony is to be achieved in the single voice--in his own voice. "I am telling you so much about my own instinctive feelings and bemused reflections because there remains so little to be told of him.... it is only through me that he exists for you" (171).

Like Jim and Crusoe, Marlow sets out initially to be the controlling voice and provider of the True Word, and Jim becomes for Marlow what Patusan is for Jim: the opportunity and material for his own personal reign. Crusoe, for example, confirms his position through the rescue of a renegade native: "First, I made him know his name should be Friday, which was the day I saved his life.... I likewise taught him to say master, and then let him know that was to be my name" (185). After all, one cannot be king nor author without subjects, and Friday becomes a part of the monologue which is this novel--through Crusoe, he exists for us. By rescuing Jim, Marlow intends to save himself from the retreating past and darkening future, and convert all experience into his own narrative, a dependable causal monologue. In this way, he may lay the ghosts of doubt to rest and restore the uniformity of his world by "imposing specific limits" and thereby "guaran-

teeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding" (Bakhtin, 270). He will, in effect, become the executor of the True Word.

The juxtapositioning of Jim and Marlow in Lord Jim presents Marlow's narratorial aspirations in an ironic light, and Conrad's texts offer numerous other revealing pairings. For example, in Nostromo, the title character and Martin Decoud are portrayed as contrary personalities. The former is driven and sheltered by his protective illusion of infallibility and heroic grandeur. The latter, a French journalist, is a cynical observer of such romantic quests with no faith in anything beyond perhaps his own written words. Yet, both become caught up in the ruling Europeans' political cause of self-preservation in Sulaco. Their motives appear at first glance completely disparate--Nostromo is ruled by his sense of loyalty to his adopted home and to his belief in his own power, while Decoud is swayed by his devotion to his beloved Antonia. However, as their actions draw them into unified action, their commonalities become increasingly evident.

Both Decoud and Nostromo are born on the lip of the ruling paternal circle with the need for some form of self-actualization and the desire for an escape from their sense of exclusion. Like the other title character, "Lord Jim," Nostromo is a representative character in the novel that bears his name, as Conrad explains in his Author s Note: "In his firm grip on the earth he inherits ... in his manly vanity, in the obscure sense of his greatness and in his faithful devotion with something despairing as well as desperate in its

impulses, he is a Man of the People" (xlv). Nostromo enjoys initially the kind of regard and certitude of "Lord Jim," safe within the circle of Sulacan society. As "Capataz of the Cargadores," he is heralded as an adored hero of the people and, like Gould, a protector of the moral order in this South American state.

Nostromo bases his identity upon this regard, and in fact is ruled by it. The task falls to him to take into hiding, away from the hands of the rebellious Ribierist Republicans, a cache of silver ingots: the Europeans' instrument of power, the prize of their heritage, and the insurance of their continuing domination of Costaguana. Nostromo's actions are in fact motivated by his need to protect the throne of his identity: the European order and his position in that order.

Decoud's motives are not so different. Like Nostromo, Decoud is "neither the son of his own country nor of any other" (198), and he signs on for this "desperate affair," as Nostromo calls it (267), despite his claims of sceptical disinterest in the unceasing political machinations that toss this land in their wake. Decoud cannot resist the compulsion to legitimize himself and define himself as an efficacious entity in his environment, in the minds of others, and in the heart of his intended, Antonia--to confirm his place in the lineage of this adopted world, and thereby establish himself as something more than the flotsam of history.

With the colonizing zeal of a Crusoe, Holyroyd, or one of the other

aforementioned authorial agents, Decoud sets out to be the author of his own "new State" which he claims to "hold in the hollow" of his hand (233). And like those others, Decoud is steeled by the justifying and isolating belief that he is "the only man with a definite idea in his head" (230). These are sentiments he conveys to his sister in a letter that occupies the very centre of the novel.

Prior to his departure with Nostromo aboard the lighter, and troubled by doubts over his future, he writes to her seeking some validation for his actions. Like Marlow's written transcript of Jim's story in Lord Jim, this letter is Decoud's talisman against the "impenetrable darkness," "silence," and "solitude" which surrounds him (230-1), and like Gould's remedial efforts with the Sulacon mine, his attempt to escape the shadow of doubt and death, to form some instrument of self-preservation and understanding. He reaches out in an effort to "react upon the profound sympathies of another existence" (223); and to ensure a successful connection, he addresses the person he is confident will understand.

> It occured to him that no one could understand him so well as his sister. In the most sceptical heart there lurks at such moments, when the chances of existence are involved, a desire to leave a correct impression of the feelings, like a light by which the action may be seen when personality is gone, gone where no light of investigation can ever reach the truth which

every death takes out of the world. (230)

Decoud's sister represents his safe harbour in which he may stow his self-revelations confident of compassion and understanding. The home order is thought of as the sanctuary of unity and understanding, and this is what drives the banished son/writer, the desire to escape incertitude and impermanence. For the writer, that sanctuary is both the novel he creates to house his identity, and the reader to whom he intends to convey it. But between him and that imagined state of accord with the reader, that promised land just over the horizon, is an open sea teaming with doubts and unknowns.

Decoud and Nostromo head out across the Placid Gulf with their cache of silver ingots, like agents bearing a parcel of glittering truths, seeking a safe place to store them. However, a collision with a steamer amidst the impenetrable darkness disables the craft and leaves them sinking, burdened with the weight of the silver and, with that, the burden of their duty to the people they represent. In the aftershock and the struggle to survive, Nostromo and Decoud become aware of the tenuous and contradictory nature of the ideal to which they devoted themselves.

> There was nothing in common between them but the knowledge that the damaged lighter must be slowly but surely sinking.... This common danger brought their differences in aim, in view, in character, and in position, into absolute prominence in the private vision of each. There was no bond of conviction, of

> common idea.... But this peril ... seemed to act as an inspiration to their mental and bodily powers. (295)

It is this realization of difference and its accompanying sense of isolation that is at the heart of the redemptive narrative response in Conrad's novels--the infantile holistic vision is rent by life's inherent and unavoidable contradictions, and the characters are thrown into the awareness of plurality. They are thereby galvanized by the effort to find some new monolith at the foot of which they can lay their hopes.

Both Nostromo and Decoud are inspired to save themselves from the faltering vessel that had been their secure foundation, a motivation that remains as their original cause. What is revealed beneath the surface of Nostromo's self-belief is the frightening aspect of a world indifferent to his ideals and unbowed by his strength. For perhaps the first time in his life, at least his life as Capataz of the Cargadores, Nostromo's conception of himself as invulnerable and infallible is in jeopardy. He leaves the cache of silver with Decoud back on the Great Isabel and returns to Sulaco, swimming ashore after sinking his boat. After sleeping upon the shore, he reawakens beneath the shadow of a kind of death: "like the end of things.... like a flattering dream come suddenly to an end" (414).

The novel's narrator remarks that "the confused and intimate impressions of universal dissolution which beset a subjective nature at any strong check to its ruling passion had a bitterness approaching that of death itself"

(417); and indeed Nostromo is likened to a "drowned corpse" after climbing aboard the abandoned lighter marked with the stain of Decoud's blood (492). Stripped of "all the realities that made his force" (418), he feels vulnerable and alone, imprisoned with his knowledge of the hidden silver. With the realization that he is now an outlaw from the new reigning powers in Costaguana, Nostromo finds himself removed from the circle in which his sense of self was secure, where his glorious reputation amongst the locals provided a banquet for his ego.

In exile from his identifying community, the Capataz grows increasingly self-absorbed, and "subjective almost to insanity" (525). Whereas Nostromo's focus was always on himself as reflected against the backdrop of his admiring community, it is now turned solely inwards; and the glorious dream of his own heroic exploits is replaced by a "steadied glance fixed upon nothing" (412). The Sulacan society had acted as a surrogate for his own lost parental order, but now separated from it also, he seeks to found his own world-order within himself.

In Nostromo's state of banishment, his hopes and desires become fixed upon a new coalescing ideal, which was in fact the determinant in whose name he and Decoud went forth across the Placid Gulf: the silver. This becomes his new absolute and commodity for salvation--his new godhead: "The treasure was real. He clung to it with a more tenacious mental grip" (524). For Nostromo, the cache of silver is the remnant of his

lost paternal protection, just as the silver mine is for Charles Gould, and it represents his opportunity for a renewed sense of superiority and singularity. "He yearned to clasp, embrace, absorb, subjugate in unquestioned possession this treasure" (529).

Cyril Razumov, the aspiring young academic of Under Western Eyes, is also driven by a sense of exclusion and the need to legitimize himself within the ruling order. Although Razumov is born to aristocracy, his father does not acknowledge the paternity, and so the son strives to confirm his membership through his national heritage: "without a family ... no home influences had shaped his opinions or his feelings.... His closest parentage was defined in the statement that he was a Russian" (10-11).

Razumov intends to legitimize himself through the agency of an essay contest for which the top prize is a silver medal. By this means, he will become "a great reforming servant of the greatest of States" (301), and an executor of the moral order, because "the field of influence was great and infinitely varied--once one had conquered a name" (71). With his pen, Razumov aims to make his mark on the snow-covered landscape of his homeland laid out before him "like a monstrous blank page awaiting the record of an inconceivable history" (33).

Razumov's sense of isolation from the secure circle of descent is partly a feeling of exteriority, and partly of superiority. As he surveys the crowds of "officers, dignitaries, men of fashion, [and] officials" on the

street, he asserts that "Not one of them is capable of feeling and thinking as deeply as I can" (38). In his mind, thereby, his involvement is almost a duty--the ascendant course of history depends on his composing hand.

However, Razumov's carefully constructed scheme for personal ascension is shattered by the appearance of Victor Haldin at his door like the obstacle that strikes the Patna on its course to the promised land. Haldin turns to Razumov because he believes mistakenly that Razumov is sympathetic to his cause, and he arrives bearing confidences after his assassination of a government official. Haldin's foolhardy confession to Razumov becomes, like Jim's leap and Nostromo's failure, an indelible stain on the young academic's reputation, and he discovers that the resulting taint of suspicion cannot be easily removed.

Once back in his room following Haldin's arrest, Razumov is consumed by a sense of vulnerability and solitude, and by "that desire of safety, of an ordered life, which was so strong in him" (71). Later, he finds that his room has been searched by police, and he begins to experience fully the sensation of exile from his supporting principles. Those principles, like the asylum of his room, have failed to protect him against the unexpected and attendant doubts: "What security have I against something--some destructive horror--walking in upon me as I sit here?" (78).

The telling blow comes when he recognizes that his father, Prince K--, was amongst those who searched his room. His paternal foothold has

slipped from beneath him, and he flails about desperately seeking something with which to replace it. "He had a distinct sensation of his very existence being undermined in some mysterious manner, of his moral supports falling away from him one by one" and he reaches out "for something to steady himself with" (76-77).

Despite his efforts to author his own life, Razumov finds that "he has been made a personage without knowing anything about it" (82-3). The script of his life is being written without his control, and he feels increasingly as though his destiny rests in the hands of others, that he is "at the mercy of these lawless forces." Hounded by those doubts and haunted by the lingering ghost of Haldin, like that which motivates Marlow in Lord Jim, Razumov turns once again to the written word and inscribed page as his terrain for redemption. The narrative discovered in his journal is largely his attempt, if not to wash himself clean, then at least to be understood--to rescue himself from the waters of Lethe, and carry his actions "into a light where the struggling forms may be seen, seized upon, endowed with the only possible form of permanence in this world of relative values--the permanence of memory" (NLL, 13).

Later, in exile in Geneva, after he has lost his opportunity to compose his winning narrative on the parchment of his paternal homeland, Razumov turns to the figure of a woman upon which he will inscribe his scheme for legitimization. Razumov believes that, in achieving the devotion of Victor

Haldin's sister, Natalia, he can lay to rest the haunting ghost of her brother which continues to block Razumov's path, reminding him of his lost hopes and aspirations. Razumov is attracted to Natalia by her appearance of vulnerability: "You were defenceless--and soon, very soon, you would be alone" (361). Razumov is encouraged by Natalia's "trustful eyes" and "pure forehead" which he likens to the forehead of "statues--calm, unstained." Natalia becomes symbolic of his need for a fixed, contained state; and he looks upon her in the same way he envisions the Russian landscape which lies before him white and lifeless like a blank page awaiting his conquering hand.

Similarly, Nostromo's avaristic desires are equally centred on Giselle, the young daughter of his surrogate father, Giorgio Viola, and it becomes impossible to distinguish one from the other in his words. With the desire of a hungry animal for its prey, Nostromo "fastened his eyes upon the hollow of her white throat" (Nostromo, 534). Nostromo is attracted to Giselle by her innocence, vulnerability, and malleability, by "her white throat, pliable, silent .... the surface placidity of her nature holding a promise of submissiveness" (524-5), whereas her sister, Linda, who was to be Nostromo's fiancée, intimidates him with her fiery "uncompromising soul" and keen mind. Through Giselle, Nostromo intends to recapture his damaged ideal, and her devotion to him casts upon him a "spell" that fills him with "an exulting conviction of his power" (541).

Nostromo treats Giselle as the raw material with which he will fashion a reflective shield and glittering badge. "He would put her beauty in a palace on a hill.... He would keep her there like a jewel in a casket" (541). Nostromo's descriptive terms for her are all of mineral wealth: "coppery" highlights in "the wealth of her gold hair" and "her smooth forehead had the soft, pure sheen of a priceless pearl," and her voice conjures thoughts of a "silver bell" (534-5). Nostromo considers his chosen female subject as an object to be captured and enclosed, and rendered as a fixed monument to his grandeur.

Like the objects of wealth and prestige, women are also looked upon by these male characters in Conrad's texts as "waste-objects" to which these banished sons turn in answer to the incertitude and solitude that accompanies paternal death and, by extension, their state of self-realization. Similarly, foreign landscapes are also treated as opportunities for the banished sons to execute some measure of power over their surroundings, and thereby put to rest their lingering doubts over their own efficacy. Conrad offers obvious parallels in his works between foreign landscapes and women; both are viewed by these male characters as the blank spaces upon which they may write their names into history, and compose some ordered form of reality. And their actions are justified in their minds by the belief that each acts as a rescuer, an illuminating bearer of truth.

Henry Staten, for example, describes Kurtz's "sadistic project of

mastery" in Heart of Darkness as the epitome of the colonial design wherein the natural world is "imaged as female" (724). Africa is that "dark continent" inspiring "uncontrollable desire" for there it lies, that great blank space, unexplored and unconquered. Like Heyst's primordial reflex, the agents of the ruling order are guided by an imperative to claim and impose a closed, fixed system. It is a drive that Hélène Cixous finds characteristic of male discourse which, she writes, "stems from the opposition activity / passivity, from the power relation between a fantasized obligatory virility meant to invade, to colonize, and the consequential phantasm of woman as a 'dark continent' to penetrate and to 'pacify'" ("The Laugh of the Medusa," 880).

In Heart of Darkness, a youthful Marlow surveys with eager eyes the maps of the explored world, the narrative of his forefathers, and focuses his intentions on the "blank spaces" of the map, those places without "names" where he might make his mark and inscribe his presence. The unexplored lands provide the space for the composition of one's own narrative, and with that the achievement of some independent identity and dependable foundation. "We could have fancied ourselves the first of men taking possession of an accursed inheritance, to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and of excessive toil" (68).

However, Marlow's attitudes to colonial conquest are altered by his experiences in Africa, in particular by his encounter with Kurtz.

Kurtz enters the African Congo as an agent of the True Word: "we approach them with the might as of a deity.... By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded" (86-7). Kurtz is part of what the brickmaker of the Central Station refers to, sarcastically, as "the new gang--the gang of virtue" (55). Colonial interests are no longer merely commercial, but are subsumed in an edifying scheme whereby, as Kurtz proclaims, "each station should be like a beacon on the road towards better things ... for humanizing, improving, instructing" (65). Like stations of the Cross leading to Christ's sacrifice and, in that, man's salvation, each company outpost is thought of by Kurtz and the other cultural, commercial apostles as points on the road to Utopia. As the brickmaker tells Marlow, Kurtz has been sent from Europe as its "emissary of pity, and science, and progress.... We want for the guidance of the cause entrusted to us by Europe, so to speak, higher intelligence, wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose" (55). This moral visa excuses all individual actions as necessities in the advancement of the collective; responsibility is deferred to a remote location and higher purpose.

Kurtz acts with the same protective faith that Jim carries with him early in his life: the faith in the moral superiority of the order he represents, and the obligation to carry forth that standard, to increase the circumference of the ruling circle, and convert all difference to the singular form of the True Word. Kurtz's concept of what he represents is conveyed in a "sketch in

oils ... representing a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch" (54). This female figure represents the ideal in whose name Kurtz and the others in the "gang of virtue" plunder Africa. The suggestion is that the virtues they carry may enlighten those who dwell in the darkness of ignorance. But to appreciate fully the symbolism, we must look to a work that Conrad published the year prior to Heart of Darkness, a short story entitled "The Return".

A central piece of imagery in the story is "a marble woman, decently covered from neck to instep with stone draperies" and holding up "a cluster of lights" (Tales of Unrest, 115-116). That statue is increasingly associated with the wife of the story's protagonist, Alvan Hervey. Hervey is impressed by the "unthinking stillness of [his wife's] features" which, in his mind, mirror the "tranquil dignity of a soul of which he had thought himself ... the inexpugnable possessor" (157). Hervey considers his wife as little more than one of his possessions, his property" (125), and she exists for him as simply an emblem of his social position. As she plainly points out to him, "You loved yourself" (162). The marble woman is referred to repeatedly as "sightless" and "blind" (162, 166), which, on the one hand, represents a kind of virginal innocence prized by men; yet, what is really reflected in this statue is Hervey's own blinkered, stony condition. Hervey is a devoted disciple of the "received beliefs" which he asserts are "the best, the noblest, the only possible" (145). Similarly, Kurtz heads into the Congo with a blind

belief in the European order he represents, and, by the story's end, he is depicted as a statue carved out of ivory--the very thing he sought to possess.

Susan Gubar describes, in her article "'The Blank Page' and the Issues of Female Creativity," the masculine desire for creativity as a finished, solid product, and art as "being" instead of "becoming," free of the corruptible and mutable. As way of illustration, she refers to Ovid's story of Pygmalion, and his ivory statue, white as snow, and more beautiful than any living woman. This misogynist has rejected the impure, flawed quality of humanity in favour of his own conception of perfection, achieved through his art. In so doing he renders life in a lifeless form, and grows increasingly enamoured of his creation.

This is an apt model of the attitudes and desires of many of Conrad's principle male characters, such as Nostromo, Razumov, and Charles Gould. The uniformity Charles Gould achieves with the native Costaguanans in Nostromo, he achieves also with his wife, Emilia. With the death of his father and his own ascension to the paternal role, Charles confirms his position by naming and defining the world that is his inheritance. He takes possession of the family house in Sulaco, and tells Emilia, "You shall be the new mistress of the Casa Gould" (64); that is, she will take over the role formerly occupied by Charles' mother, the keeper of social graces and civilized home order, and she will take on the name of "Gould," which

Charles informs her is a respected "great name" in Sulaco.

Emilia, in effect, exchanges her own life for the cause of her husband-to-be--she relinquishes her individuality to take on the role of the mistress of Casa Gould; and upon agreeing to accompany Charles, "immediately the future hostess of all the Europeans in Sulaco had the physical experience of the earth falling away from under her" (63). She is reduced to an instrument and emblem of the colonial project, an embodiment of virtue, beauty and altruism. She is fixed, frozen, and cast as a sculpted ideal, like a physical manifestation of her husband's "energetic concentration of a will haunted by a fixed idea" (379).

There is, in many of Conrad's male characters, this desire for lifeless subjective forms of beauty, truth, and permanence, a desire that is exposed to be sterile and ultimately destructive. The price is exacted on both the women and the men, and the potential for growth and continuance is lost in the devotion to icons of certainty, as is suggested in Emilia's ceremonial consecration of Charles' grand material scheme. As she stands at the mouth of the silver mine, "the first spungy lump of silver" emerges like a newborn child from

> the dark depths of the Gould Concession; she had laid her unmercenary hands ... upon the first silver ingot turned out still warm from the mould; and by her imaginative estimate of its power she endowed that lump of metal with a justificative

> conception, as though it were not a mere fact, but something far-reaching and impalpable, like the true expression of an emotion or the emergence of a principle. (107)

This silver-cast maxim is a stand-in for the child Emilia will never bear--a living child replaced by this malleable "lump of metal" upon which they stamp the countenance of their faith. She acts as a midwife in the birth of a new godhead, and in so doing, she is stripped of her fecundity and is reduced to the role of a vestal virgin for an empty ideal.

By the late stages of the novel, Emilia becomes increasingly like the stone statue of the Madonna with which she is often compared in the novel. She is described by the narrator, near the novel's end, as reflecting "the charm of art, of an attitude caught and interpreted forever" (520). In effect, Emilia becomes the human manifestation of Charles Gould's redemptive fixation, and she has her correlative in the marble vase that claims Charles' attention when he first takes the news of his father's death to Emilia. In this "Attic shape" (Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn"), Gould perceives faintly beauty, truth, and the now flawed promise of permanence. This "cracked marble urn" reflects the shape of his situation, and time and change are arrested in his intense concentration; he stands "perfectly motionless in contemplation.... as though he had resolved to fix its shape for ever in his memory" (62).

The urn acts as a coalescing fetish or visual reminder of the son's

redemptive cause, the Costaguanan silver mine. Through the recognition of death and before the ashes of his patrimony, the son resolves to "fix" the shape, to repair and confirm the uniformity of the order of things, and render it as a reconstituted ideal. But the urn is equally representative of the paternal gravesite and the death of the father, Charles' motivator and ideal, and this image resonates throughout the novel casting its shadow across Emilia as well.

Unable to accept the mutable, these heirs of the ruling order endeavour to sculpt some tangible form of embalmed perfection as a charm against the haunting form of mortality and the attendant doubts over one's own power to affect destiny. This pursuit has its model in Lord Jim in the collection of mounted butterflies kept by Jim's surrogate paternal figure, Stein. This man who fled the country upon the death of his wife and child, looks upon his dead butterflies as "treasures", as captured images of permanent beauty, "defying destruction as these delicate and lifeless tissues displaying a splendour unmarred by death" (158). Stein's craft reflects ironically upon Marlow's quest, as collector and carrier of Jim's tale: to capture and set Jim "like an impaled beetle ... pierced through and through" (38). By cancelling difference and dissent in uniformity and enforced unanimity, these agents of the inherited faith exorcise the doubts that whisper of the impossibility of truth and meaning. As Gary Geddes points out in his book, Conrad's Later Novels, many of Conrad's characters are

moved by "the terror of unstructured space" (50), and the desire to compose their own lives and the lives of those around them in order to achieve a structured environment, a reliable and familiar model free of contingencies. And in the spirit of the marble statue holding forth a cluster of lights, these agents of the ruling order act in the name of progress and enlightenment.

In Conrad's first novel, Almayer's Folly, Captain Lingard is a representative figure of European authority, and in this role, he conquers a band of Malaysian pirates and discovers amongst them a female survivor whom he "rescues." However, like Crusoe's rescued companion, or the colonized lands, Lingard's adopted ward is hardly liberated in this declared act of salvation. Instead, the salvation becomes more a conversion of beliefs and lifestyle.

This woman, who is later given to Lingard's assistant, Almayer, as a wife, is stripped of her identity and becomes known strictly as a function of others, in her role as wife or mother. She is sent off to a western convent where she is to be taught a new language, a new faith, and how to bear it all "with calm submission, concealing her hate and contempt.... Perhaps had she known of the high walls, the quiet gardens, and silent nuns of the Samarang convent ... she would have sought death in her dread and hate of such a restraint" (22). She is to be converted, closed, and tamed, as is Nina, the daughter born to her and Almayer. Nina is similarly indoctrinated in the ways and beliefs of the dominating European patriarchal world which

wraps her "young soul" in the thin coat of "civilized morality"--a Protestant upbringing far removed from the world of her maternal descendants. The ruling European order attempts to assimilate both women, and strip them of their individual identities--silenced and converted to serve the unitary model of language and culture.

Charles Gould attempts to fashion that kind of dependable closure in Costaguana, as does Jim in Patusan, and Axel Heyst on the island of Samburan amidst the ruins of his failed mining company. Heyst, in Victory, is stranded in the pit formed by the twin deaths of his father, Heyst Sr., and father-figure, Morrison, and the burden of guilt he carries due to his sense of the contradictory relationship between the law of the father and the requirements of life, and with that his Oedipal sense of betrayal. Heyst contravenes his father's edict of noninvolvement in the affairs of others by responding to the financial predicament of the trader, Morrison. This surrogate paternal figure offered for Heyst the same opportunity the Gould Concession offered Charles Gould in Nostromo--that is, a chance to recreate the lost state of unity, and in effect remove the stain of the father's death. However, Morrison also dies, and now, for the second time in his life, Heyst is haunted by the "shadow of [the paternal figure's] death" (40).

Julia Kristeva, in her study of Beckett's works, suggests that women provide the only possibility for release from this omnipresent shade of doubt and sin.

> Racked between the 'father' ... and 'Death' ... a man has a hard time finding something else to love. He could hardly venture in that direction unless he were confronted with an undifferentiated woman, tenacious and silent ... whose name remains equally undifferentiated ... exchangeable for another ... with only one right: to be inscribed. (Kristeva, 149)

Lena, the white slave of Zangiacomo's all-woman orchestra and travelling brothel, is Heyst's undifferentiated woman through whom he may achieve self-actualization. Like the "first ancestor" with whom he is compared, Heyst names those who are to share his demi-Eden (Victory, 149). He not only intercedes to help liberate Lena from her servitude, but also provides her with a name where previously she was known more by reputation and the conceptions of others. More to the point, he singularizes her two common titles, Alma and Magdalen.

Axel Heyst's attraction to his female companion is based partly on her wounded state which offers him the opportunity to play the part of saviour and protector, and the taste of a tear falling from Lena's eye acts as an aphrodisiac. Heyst admits that "it was like another appeal to his tenderness--a new seduction" (181), and he proceeds to make love to her. It may well be that in this women living on the margins of life he recognizes his own situation; and thereby his rescue of her is in a way an attempt to rescue himself from his state of estrangement and "banishment," a word Kristeva

utilizes to describe the state of the fatherless characters in Beckett's works. But, as with Crusoe, Jim, and Charles Gould, Heyst is also motivated by the haunting spectre of sin and the need to expunge that through some redemptive act.

Lena becomes Heyst's confessor, and he is so absorbed in his own concerns that he fails to recognize Lena's growing fear and sorrow as he describes his relationship with his former partner Morrison. Lena realizes that Heyst, while telling her about his father, is "really talking to himself" (Victory, 167). As Kristeva says of the "banished son": "Living close to a woman who helps him survive in this banishment from the father's Death, he does not allow himself to be concerned about her own experience" (Kristeva, 152).

Schomberg, the innkeeper in Victory, is also stimulated by the vulnerability of Lena, his intended sexual conquest: "her shrinking form, her downcast eyes, when she had to listen to him, cornered at the end of an empty corridor, he regarded as signs of submission to the overpowering force of his will" (89). Herein is the autoerotic delight of seeing oneself reflected in the eyes of another in heroic proportions, and the accompanying woman acts the part of a justifying principle, or even a carnival mirror.

In The Rescue, Edith Travers becomes, for Tom Lingard, the reflecting jewel in which he can admire his own vainglorious exploits. When Edith, Martin, and their fellow passengers on a European pleasure cruiser become

stranded in Southeast Asian waters, Lingard finds himself straddling two worlds and two allegiances. He protests to Edith Travers that he has nothing in common with "you yacht people.... I left home sixteen years ago and fought my way all around the earth. I had the time to forget where I began" (128).

In response to being ostracized by the ruling class of that world, Lingard has established for himself a domain in the Malay Archipelago. From his position of power aboard his ship, The Lightning, he dispenses justice like a Jove from beneath "the gilt thunderbolts suspended over his head" (373). And as Edith Travers remarks, "he is known on a certain portion of the earth's surface as King Tom" (228). In this capacity, he undertakes a grand mission to arm the deposed prince Hassim and his foliowers, to help them regain power in Wajo, and thereby restore the rightful lineage of power. As the sagacious Spaniard, d'Alcacer, puts it, Lingard intends to "make a king out of an exile" (335). The exile d'Alcacer has in mind, however, is both Hassim and Lingard who sees himself as an outcast from the paternal order of the European world in which he was raised.

Yet, the sight of those on the yacht is "like a home-coming" to him, and he feels the tug of his duty to "that circle which race, memories, early associations, all the essential conditions of one's origin, trace round every man's life" (99). Lingard has never really left that circle; his governing spectre remains the ideal and inaccessible paternal order which never

acknowledged him as one of its own and yet to which he remains devoted; his identity remains tied to it: "I am a white man inside and out" (32). As Michael Siedel says in his book, Satiric Inheritance--Rabelais To Sterne,

> The home order or the normative order is the basis of measured value so that, in the voyage out, there is both a psychological and intellectual pressure to move back in, to acclimate, familiarize, adjust, and in one way or another come home. (212)

Lingard's sense of justice and righteousness is founded upon his belief that he acts as a noble defender of those home values, and so, in answering the call of distress from the yacht-load of Europeans, "King Tom" acts to defend the throne of his identity.

> That was the fundamental and unconscious emotion on which were engrafted his need of action, the primitive sense of what was due to justice, [and] the proud conviction that of all the men in the world, in his world, he alone had the means and the pluck 'to lift up the big end' of such an adventure. (87)

Significantly, the call which draws Lingard back to that circle of race and origins comes in the form of a letter from the "Schooner-yacht Hermit" (26), like the entreaties of Peter the Hermit for the Crusaders. This is, in fact, the characterization Edith Travers gives to Lingard when she conceives of him in a dream outfitted in "chain-mail armour and vaguely recalling a Crusader" (379). In her mind, as in Lingard's, he has gone forth as a valiant

warrior in pursuit of a holy cause, the holy war against the infidels for the restoration of the right order, in this case, the rule of the deposed prince, Hassim, but equally as a champion of the values and beliefs of the home order. Like his Christian forefathers, Lingard's quest is full of self-aggrandizing egotism excused by the idealistic rhetoric of the Fathers.

Edith becomes a repository for Tom Lingard's confessions in a monological relationship, and an emblem for his quest of self-confirmation. In saving the Europeans, and in particular Edith, Lingard can achieve prestige amongst what he considers his own kind, and thereby legitimize himself within the home order. He has made a vow to Edith that "not a hair on her head shall be touched" and his belief in his ability to fulfil this promise acts as his own talisman against doubt--"at the recollection of these words there seemed to be no trouble of any kind in the world" (138).

Lingard glows in the warmth of his self-conception as the consummate hero and protector of the damsel in distress. "She stood by his side! Every moment that fatal illusion clung closer to his soul--like a garment of light--like an armour of fire" (187). That illusion of personal grandeur becomes so blinding that Lingard is unable or perhaps just "unwilling to face facts" (187). Edith attempts to steer his attention onto the specific requirements of the plan to free the captured Europeans: "we forget what is going on. We mustn't.... I have to confess something to you" (345). However, before she can deliver Jörgenson's urgent message, Lingard cuts her off,

refusing entrance into their private world to anyone or anything else: "Who's Jörgenson? You came to me because you couldn't help yourself." He will permit no stain upon his own heroic self-conception and romantic ideal of their destined love.

Whereas Jim intends to establish his demi-Eden in the land he has rescued, Tom Lingard intends to do the same in the adoring embrace of the woman he has rescued, and he guards jealously "a waking dream of rest without end, in an infinity of happiness without sound or movement, without thought, without joy; but with an infinite ease of content, like a world-reverie breathing the air of sadness and scented with love" (356). In this romantic fantasy of a paradisal stasis, the banished son senses the kind of lost certainty, singularity and permanence of the paternal structures, "the inviolable shelter" for which Jim pines: "that quiet corner of the world as free of danger or strife as a tomb, and breathing equably the air of undisturbed rectitude" (Lord Jim, 257).

Marlow's comments on Roderick Anthony in Chance apply equally well to Tom Lingard. Marlow notes that such heroic characters are a confused mixture of "chivalrous instincts, with a great need for affection and great stability of feelings. Such men are easily moved. At the least encouragement they go forward with the eagerness, with the recklessness of starvation" (Chance, 177). Roderick's appetite for a stable, dependable order emerges as an attraction for Flora de Barral which is both "perverse

and exciting"; and he grips her arm tightly with a claiming desire that rivals Schomberg's actions with Lena in Victory:

> It was obvious the world had been using her ill. And even as he spoke with indignation the very marks and stamp of this ill-usage of which he was so certain seemed to add to the inexplicable attraction he felt for her person.... It gave him the feeling that if only he could get hold of her, no woman would belong to him so completely as this woman. (190)

Marlow recognizes in Roderick's face a "rapacious smile that would come and go on his lips as if he were gloating over her misery. But her misery was his opportunity and he rejoiced while the tenderest pity seemed to flood his whole being" (189). In other words, Flora's dilemma enables Roderick to fulfil his "ideal conception" of himself--to be the "rescuer of the most forlorn damsel of modern times"--a chivalric fancy derived straight from the "perverse sort of refinement" of his father's sentimental poetry. In this sense, Flora becomes his instrument for the fulfilment of his quest for the ideal, just as the silver mine is for Charles Gould, and Patusan for Jim.

Ironically, Marlow is also stirred by the hunger for conquest as he interprets Flora's abused state as his own invitation to enter:

> I perceived then that her thick eyelashes were wet.... She looked unhappy. And--I don't know how to say it--well--it

> suited her. The clouded brow, the pained mouth, the vague fixed glance! A victim. And this characteristic aspect made her attractive. (48)

Marlow drapes himself in the robe of the saviour of the fallen and endangered, and like his namesake in Lord Jim, he is motivated initially by the need for rescue work, to pull from the fading light some lost soul. As Gary Geddes states in Conrad's Later Novels, "Marlow engages in imaginative rescue work; in fact, one might argue that the subject of Chance is not so much the story of Flora de Barral as the rescue of the story of Flora de Barral from the dust and ashes of obscurity" (Geddes, 22). Marlow, however, pursues his goal with the missionary zeal of a Crusoe, Travers, or Kurtz; he attempts to appropriate and possess the essence of the character and her tale.

Marlow confesses to the external narrator that his involvement in the events of the story grew out of his "curiosity" over the enigmatic young girl whom he first encounters as she walks alongside the precipice of a cliff. This is the point of origin of Marlow's sense of duty, because he believes he prevents her from leaping over the edge, despite her insistence that the only thing that actually prevented her from jumping off the cliff was her concern that the little dog at her heels would jump after her. And when she tries to correct him, he condescends, "Well, have it your own way" (171). Convinced of his role as preserver, Marlow plays out this part over the course of

the novel, as guardian of both the life and story of Flora de Barral. He pursues the reasons behind her sudden departure with Captain Roderick Anthony, and with that the character of the person herself.

Throughout the novel, a series of characters try to claim sole responsibility for Flora's care, although none show any compassion or even regard for the girl herself. In each case, her warden sees her as a means to the achievement of some reward or ideal, and each attempts to wrest her from the control of the others. She passes from the hands and control of her father, her relatives, Mrs. Fyne, her brother Roderick, and ultimately Marlow who becomes her confessor and keeper of her tale.

Both Marlow and Roderick, like Jim in Lord Jim, seek to confirm their dearly-held fantasy of being valiant heroes who come to the rescue of the damsel in distress, fantasies derived from a romantic tradition wherein women are glittering symbols of the questing hero's glory. In Chance, Roderick's father, Carleon, is the voice of such traditions. Marlow explains that Roderick

> resembled his father, who, by the way, wore out two women without any satisfaction to himself, because they did not come up to his supra-refined standard of the delicacy which is so perceptible in his verses.... The son had set up a standard for himself with that need for embodying in his conduct the dreams, the passions, the impulses the poet puts into arrange-

ments of verses. (272)

Carleon Anthony endeavours to formulate in his verses an artistic ideal which will embody the virtues of character and conduct, the "supra-refined standard" which he demands of life, "his object being, in his own words, 'to glorify the result of six thousand years' evolution towards the refinement of thought, manners, and feelings'" (42). He fashions an ideal form of the female in his courtly love poetry--a reverence which has no application in his everyday life. The gilded body of his poems is his means of achieving self-apotheosization, to "make his own self appear sublime in the eyes of other people, and even in his own eyes" (Chance, 272).

Carleon Anthony and his daughter, the high priestess of a feminist sect, are like two outgrowths of Peter Ivanovitch, who appeared a couple of years prior to them in Under Western Eyes. Ivanovitch is both a doctrinaire for the revolution and preacher of a "feminist" gospel referred to sardonically by the Teacher of Languages as "the cult of the woman" (125) based on "the conviction of woman's spiritual superiority" with the tenets of "the sacredness of self-sacrifice and womanly love" (121).

Ivanovitch's reverence for women grows out of his escape from a prison camp aided by two different women, first the woman who provides him with a file to remove his shackles, and then the young woman who takes pity upon him and hides him from his pursuers. Later, in exile in Geneva, Ivanovitch sets himself up as the self-styled champion for the cause

of women. He presents himself as a "missionary"--the author of "books written with the declared purpose of elevating humanity" (125), but as with the colonial agents looked at earlier, the mission is more the subjugation and conversion of others to the single truth of his beliefs.

In his writings, like Carleon Anthony, Ivanovitch typifies and idealizes women, and just as women helped him achieve liberation, so too does the espousal of female moral superiority enable him to consummate a position of mastery: "he must direct, inspire, influence. It is the breath of life. There can never be too many disciples" (237). That observation is offered by Tekla, his long-suffering secretary whom he uses and abuses with little evidence of the reverence for femininity that his writings, which she transcribes, promotes.

Under the guise of promoting feminism, Ivanovitch scripts a defining text for women that serves his own ruling cause, and his concept of the idealized woman acts as his altar for self-deification. The written word is Ivanovitch's instrument of control, the alluring convincing word, and through its service he attempts to recruit the sister of the revered martyr of the revolution, Victor Haldin. Natalia's value to Ivanovitch lies primarily in her name and relation to the executed lamb of the cause. In truth he seeks to wear her as a badge.

Both Ivanovitch and Carleon Anthony share a philosophical resemblance to the Victorian poet, Coventry Patmore, who defined in his manual

for the ideal wife, The Angel In the House, the virtues of women in terms of social grace and silent support for the male champions. As Patricia Stubbs explains in her study of the role of women as depicted in the Victorian and early Modernist novel, women were presented as the guardians of culture, "custodians of the moral conscience, the repository of all virtue" (32). Carol Dyhouse elucidates that women were portrayed as embodiments of "the spirit of devotedness," and "patient suffering" ("The Role of Women: From Self-Sacrifice to Self-Awareness," 174-95). Whilst the men are the ones to conquer and impose, the women in this scheme are the ones to provide the justification--the moral support and certitude, the religious adornment of virtue and rectitude. They, in effect, embody the spirit of the redemptive cause which protects the heirs from ethical self-examination and doubts over their own ascension to keepers of the moral paternal power.

This is the role played by Marlow's aunt in Heart of Darkness who daintily sips tea "in a room that most soothingly looked just as you would expect a lady's drawing room to look" (38). She acts as the perfect suppliant and supporter of the conquering man, not only helping to secure Marlow's position with the African Trading Company by singing his praises to "the wife of a high dignitary," but also by anointing him as one of the "labourers" for the esteemed ideals, "something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle" (38-9). In her mind his task is part of the great mission of "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid

ways." Marlow's aunt is part of the sheltering dock back home which protects his rectitude and heroic self-image. His power to act is drawn from this, and this is the shelter of certitude from which the banished sons are removed, and which they attempt to renew through the dependable adoration and compassion of their female companions.

Conrad's most detailed portrait of the woman as "the spirit of devotedness," and "patient suffering" is Tekla in Under Western Eyes who proclaims, "I am quite willing to be the blind instrument of higher ends. To give one's life for the cause is nothing. But to have one's illusions destroyed--that is almost more than one can bear" (148). Victor Haldin is a hero and role model to her because, in her eyes, he has made the ultimate commitment, he has "made the sacrifice of his life" to a cause in a glorious "act of abnegation.... The mere mention of his achievement plunges me into an envious ecstasy" (157-8). "Plunge" suggests her fall from a position of individuality to one in which she is swept along by events. Furthermore, in the same scene, her adoration of the name "Haldin" is paired with the complacent purring of a lap-cat.

Tekla has become a docile servant of the revolution, and the cause has become her replacement for the parental order she rejected. Her father was "a clerk in the Ministry of Finances with no position at all" (149). But the sight of "a ragged little girl ... begging from men in the streets at dusk" brings her to a realization of "the crime of the upper classes" (150), and so

she rejects her father and his courting of favours and promotion from the governmental powers. Instead she commits herself to the cause of the "proletariat"--the "revolution"--but she in fact becomes that little girl, a servant of the ruling voices in her new order. Tekla relinquishes her identity and severs all familial ties: "My parents don't even know I'm alive. I have no use for a name, and I have almost forgotten it myself" (235). She vows herself to silence in devotion to the movement: "What's the good of speech to me? Who would ever want to hear what I could say?" (237).

Lena and Flora, of Victory and Chance respectively, are also in flight from pasts scarred by abuse and manipulation at the hands of others, and yet, like Tekla, they submit themselves to inscribing hands out of a need for guidance, protection, and meaning. Lena is trying to escape the abusive control of Zangiacomo's all-woman orchestra, and the lustful advances of the inn-keeper, Schomberg, but also from a history of misery: "How I should like to forget everything that has gone before" (84). In her bid for a rebirth, she asks him to name her.

Like so many of the men already discussed, what Lena seeks is both independence and the unity of an identity and existence within a redeeming cause. For some, that ideal is located completely within themselves; others situate it in some figure of the ideal. Lena's redeemer is Heyst, to whom she submits herself with the devotional trust of Jewel and her companions in Patusan. She "abandons to him something of herself" and is stirred by

"an irresistible desire to give herself up to him more completely by some act of absolute sacrifice" (170).

Flora, of Chance, also seeks her salvation in the arms of a heroic male figure, Roderick Anthony. She gives herself up to the protection of Anthony partly as a replacement for her missing paternal support--her father is incarcerated for embezzlement and, as Heyst becomes a guardian to his surrogate father, Morrison, so too does Flora take over the protective parental role from her father. However, in this act of preservation of the father and herself, Flora imprisons herself in the stereotypical role of the silent supportive female in Roderick's idealistic world conception. Indeed the theme of imprisonment is a prominent one in Flora's story, as she spends much of her time on his ship cloistered away with her father in the captain's cabin. As Gilbert and Gubar point out, confinement and escape are common aspects of women's plots wherein women's lives are like those of slaves and prisoners with time measured out from meal to meal, chore to chore. "Patriarchy and its texts subordinate and imprison women" (Madwoman in the Attic, 13).

Winnie Verloc, in The Secret Agent, is prompted by a cruel past and the intention of redeeming an inherited charge. She was raised by an abusive father, an "irascible licensed victualler" (219), and her decision to marry Adolf Verloc is influenced by her desire to remove her brother and herself from a violent world in which she is labelled by her father as a

"wicked she-devil" and her brother is beaten for being "a slobbering idjut" (sic, 220). She chooses the seemingly placid, safe existence with Verloc, and hides behind the protective veil of nescience, "that distant and uninquiring acceptance of facts which was her force and her safeguard in life" (155).

Winnie and Tekla have been used by some critics as proof of Conrad's disdainful and condescending attitude towards women. Christopher Cooper, for example, feels that Tekla embodies Conrad's concept of "woman's function in society" (76). Meanwhile, Allan Hunter sees in the character of Winnie evidence of Conrad's membership in a tradition of writers who treat women as self-sacrificial creatures. He says that Conrad "tended to treat women as weird altruistic creatures who live by weird moral criteria" (206). Helen Rieselbach, C. B. Cox, Bernard Meyer, and Thomas Moser are but a small sampling of other critics who have taken Conrad to task for his portraits of women--in some cases labelling him a misogynist.

This seems to me more revealing of these critics' own gender myopia; they overlook the fact that just as many male characters follow the clear, well-travelled narrative line blazed by the agents of authority with the belief that it leads to utopic certainty and understanding. And it seems clear to me that Conrad is not applauding such a course, but instead laments this tendency to surrender.

The eager pursuit of some refuge of confidence is the parent of trust,

and many of the characters in Conrad's novels, of both genders, place their trust blindly in those figures, human characters and gilded icons, they conceive of as their opportunities for salvation. In the desperate pursuit of some redeeming cause to free the banished sons and daughters from the sensation of discontinuity, each finds sanctuary in some surrogate godhead, a "waste-object" (Kristeva, 150) of the former order. Moral doubts expire on the cross of servitude as disciples subsume themselves in the higher purpose of serving the greater good.

The Secret Agent is populated by characters who become willing subjects of the machinations and control of others. Each dutifully undertakes his task confident in the belief that someone higher up knows what is going on, and faithful to the belief that they are serving a greater cause. Verloc himself embodies both the characteristics of the controller and controlled; he is one of the novel's many pathetic figures who attempt to achieve some measure of sovereignty over their own lives through the manipulation of others, "exploiting the poignant miseries and passionate credulities of a mankind always so tragically eager for self-destruction" (Conrad's "Author's Note" to Secret Agent, 39).

The representative of mankind here is the retarded boy Stevie who plays a role similar to that of Jim and Nostromo in their novels: the symbolic form of the active influences and impulses in that novel's world. And in The Secret Agent, Stevie's doting devotion to his surrogate father, Verloc,

renders him the instrument and victim of the terrorists' destructive plan. He follows like a puppy at Verloc's heels, carrying the bomb that is supposed to destroy the Greenwich Institute, but which claims instead only this ignorant trusting child.

Like Razumov and Tom Lingard, the "innocent" and simplistic Stevie holds onto obtuse notions of justice, and depends on the rigid, dependable structures of the paternal order. To this end, he spends hours "drawing circles, circles; innumerable circles, concentric, eccentric; a coruscating whirl of circles that by their ... uniformity of form ... suggested ... the symbolism of a mad art attempting the inconceivable" (76). And Adolf Verloc, the husband of Stevie's sister, becomes Stevie's surrogate father, the authority figure he admires, trusts, and follows blindly to his own destruction.

The Secret Agent portrays an entire society that prefers nescient faith in governing voices and controlling hands, like the paternal faith upon which Jim's society depends: "Jim's father possessed such certain knowledge of the Unknowable as made for the righteousness of people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerring Providence enables to live in mansions" (Lord Jim, 10). This was the supporting faith that backed the Patna pilgrims on their voyage to Mecca, a voyage interrupted by the desertion of the authorities to whom they had entrusted themselves.

That same devotional surrender is repeated throughout Lord Jim; for

instance, the natives of Patusan entrust the fate of Gentleman Brown and his followers to "Tuan Jim." Bowing to his knowledge of white men and white ways, they agree, at his urging, to set the murderous pack free. "In this simple form of assent to his will lies the whole gist of the situation; their creed, his truth; and the testimony to that faithfulness which made him in his own eyes the equal of the impeccable men who never fall out of the ranks" (296). In their eyes as well as his own, Jim is a deity who ensures their protection and virtue, although his decision results in Brown's sudden massacre of a group of Jim's believers, including his dearest friend, Dain Waris.

Just as Martin Decoud's written bid to escape the surrounding sense of solitude and silence occupies the centre of Nostromo, so too is there at the heart of Conrad's texts a desire to be understood and the need for some sanctuary of agreement--the confirmation of a shared vision. This is really what Jim goes in search of after his leap from grace, a longing for just "a bit of shelter" (Lord Jim, 66). Therein lies the germ of Jim's life including his time in Patusan; it is a yearning for some refuge of confidence, and some dependable accord: "I would like somebody to understand--somebody--one person at least!" It is almost a prayer for absolution, and he turns to Marlow for release from his isolating mark of Cain: "You can understand. Can't you? You see it--don't you?... Can't you see it? You must see it?" (97). It is as though he sees Marlow as his opportunity for forgiveness and benedic-

tion, a sanctuary from the doubts that haunt him. But Marlow also provides his point of reentry into some sense of belonging--Marlow secures Jim's position at the trading station of Patusan.

Marlow himself has a similar dependency on his "privileged reader" (254). Initially Marlow's audience is an anonymous group of listeners in after-dinner repose; but he grows sceptical over the success of his account: "Frankly, it is not my words that I mistrust but your minds" (172); and so in his quest for some "exorcism against the ghost of doubt" (44), he turns to his pen and through that the "sheltered pool" of the privileged reader's reading lamp as a safe harbour for his narration of Jim's lifestory. "'You alone have showed an interest in him that survived the telling of his story'" (254). This privileged reader acts as Marlow's refuge of understanding, and in that the preservation of his own identity.

The narrator of Under Western Eyes, the Teacher of Languages, also writes his account supported by his belief in the safety and certitude of fixed, shared values and a sovereign position of interpretation. "The Western readers for whom this story is written will understand what I mean" (112). With a nod, nudge, and a wink, the Western narrator addresses those he considers his kin, his secure insiders, with the unquestioning expectation of comprehension and unanimity. The validity and force of the narrator and the order he represents depends upon this implied agreement, and he locates it in his origins, like Lingard the Crusader does in The Rescue

and "Lord Jim" does in his novel.

Guiding beliefs are founded upon the faith in some ideal figure to which people turn for some sense of agreement and shared vision, and the eager pursuit of these qualities encourages a kind of blind and deaf trust, as shown in the aforementioned examples, and in numerous scenes in Under Western Eyes. Victor Haldin, for example, flees to Razumov armed with a set impression of Razumov's beliefs and convinced of his fidelity to the cause. But his mistaken reading of Razumov's sentiments towards his aims leads to Victor's confession to Razumov, and the subsequent betrayal of that confidence with deadly consequences.

Later, in Geneva, Razumov seems on the brink of letting the truth of his deceit show through to Sophia, but she interrupts him repeatedly with her already sealed beliefs. She has received a letter from one of Razumov's fellow students in Russia, whose gross misconceptions of Razumov's beliefs and acts lead to Sophia's own created fiction of his character.

Razumov comes even closer to confessing the truth to Victor's sister, Natalia, but once again preconceptions blind and deafen her to any reality beyond the walls of her carefully constructed illusion: "Utterly misled by her own enthusiastic interpretation of two lines in the letter of a visionary, under the spell of her own dread of lonely days ... she was unable to see the truth struggling on his lips" (354). Natalia unknowingly reveals the underlying reason for her readiness to believe, and that of the others, when she tells

the Teacher, "what I am afraid of is incertitude" (109).

The preconceptions of these characters rob Razumov of his intention to develop an identity of his own conception, and this character who had attempted to be an author becomes more and more the created fiction of others. Like Jim, who is in constant flight from the prejudiced view of others and in pursuit of some renewed innocence and unstained condition, Razumov also is compelled by the allure of the blank space. As he looks across the snow-covered landscape of his homeland, he sees not only the opportunity for his own redemptive narrative, but also the kind of embalmed perfection that remains at the core of these characters' nostalgia for a former state of purity and certainty, for there it lies

> like a monstrous blank page awaiting the record of an inconceivable history.... It was a sort of sacred inertia.... A voice seemed to cry within him, 'Don't touch it.' It was a guarantee of duration, of safety.... What it needed was not the conflicting aspirations of a people, but a will strong and one: it wanted not the babble of many voices, but a man--strong and one! (33).

While he looks upon this homeland as the terrain for his self-realization, he finds a comforting stasis, and a model for his own acquiescence.

Razumov is equally that blank page awaiting destiny--nameless, storyless, and open to inscription by one conquering hand. And he devotes

himself in a kind of religious conversion to the "faith of the fathers" and in "the man who would come at the appointed time.... the great autocrat of the future" (34). The "faith of the fathers" provides a notion of definition and constancy. It is a bonding agent that provides both a sense of belonging and an assurance of efficacious action and communication.

Razumov is repeatedly lured by the promise of understanding and the suggestion of stability, and this is what propels him to his actual father Prince K-- after Haldin's dissembling appearance in his room. Prince K-- then takes Razumov to General T-- where Razumov discovers the same sort of hermetically-sealed permanence as Jim locates in memories of his father's study: "the silence of the room was like the silence of the grave" (43). Razumov finds this strangely discomforting however, and his aspirations and fears are coalesced in the form of Spontini's sculpture, "Flight of Youth." As he admires it, he becomes "worried by a sensation resembling the gnawing of hunger" (43). Like Gould's Grecian Urn, this piece of art conveys both Razumov's desire for escape as well as his sense of the enervation of his own innocence and life-force. He begins to appreciate that this state in which he has chosen to intern himself is the site of his own corruption and extinction.

Repeatedly, Razumov flings himself eagerly into the arms of the paternal figures of the state, like Councillor Mikulin who enlists Razumov as a spy. In his "moment of great moral loneliness" (307), Razumov answers

Mikulin's summons like Lingard's response to the plea of those on board The Hermit in The Rescue. "Mr. Razumov, certain of relief, went to meet Councillor Mikulin with the eagerness of a pursued person welcoming any sort of shelter" (304).

What Razumov seeks is "a moral refuge--the refuge of confidence" (32). Most of all, he wants

> 'to be understood.' The universal aspiration with all its profound and melancholy meaning assailed heavily Razumov, who ... had no heart to which he could open himself.... Razumov longed desperately for a word of advice, for moral support. (39)

Initially, Razumov believed that his salvation rested in his own hands through the mastery of the pen, his equivalent of the sword and shield taken up by Charles Gould in Nostromo. For Razumov, as with other banished sons in Conrad's works, the mastered word offers him the only safe haven against the assailing doubts: "The idea of writing evoked the thought of a place to write in, of shelter, of privacy, and naturally of his lodgings" (289). But with the invasion of his protective plans by the unexpected, he grows increasingly dependent upon inherited paternal structures and forms, and his reliance on them becomes more and more obvious as the contingencies mount.

The doubts which sent the son in flight from the loss of the father

send him in retreat to the memory of that lost refuge, that sheltered dock of fixed meanings and defined causal progressions to utopic harmony. In essence, he retreats to the security of stereotypes, and the established beliefs and faith of the fathers. The original home promises a release from the fears and doubts that rise up in the lives of these sons once they are removed from the protective fortress of the inner circle. For this reason, Nostromo's thoughts, during his crisis of exile, retreat to his boyhood home in Genoa: "Under the sense of loneliness, abandonment, and failure, the idea of return to these things appeared tolerable" (Nostromo, 416). And the thoughts of the banished Jim circle back to the soothing memory of the "inviolable shelter" of his paternal home.

Mikhail Bakhtin refers to this sort of reflective reverence as "historical inversion" whereby "such categories as purpose, ideal, justice, perfection, the harmonious condition of man and society and the like" are located in the past (147). "Everything affirmative, ideal, obligatory, desired has been shifted ... into the past" along with "a corresponding assumption of 'beginnings' as the crystal-clear, pure sources of all being, of eternal values and modes of existence that are ideal and outside time" (148). And Razumov, who already feels a tenuous connection to that dependable paternal order, becomes increasingly desperate for its support when his original plan crumbles around him.

Razumov's paternal nursery was built with the bricks of autocracy,

and therein remains his sense of belonging and a common basis of values and beliefs. As his protection against uncertainty over his own legitimacy, Razumov wraps himself in the blanket of "History, Patriotism, Evolution, Direction, and Unity" (71). These tenets of the state become his chosen words of supplication, his founding charter for his salvation of self, and the patrilineal pattern of causality becomes his model: "the true Razumov had his being in the willed, in the determined future" (77).

The bomb-throwing Victor Haldin and his fellow revolutionaries represent a threat to Razumov that is similar to that of the revolutionists for Nostromo and Decoud in Nostromo, and to Jim's desertion for Marlow. As Razumov says to Haldin, "I have no domestic tradition .... My tradition is historical. What have I to look back to but that national past from which you gentlemen want to wrench away your future?" (61). Not only do Haldin's acts endanger the state which is the seat of Razumov's only identity, but Haldin's philosophy of anarchism challenges Razumov's very conception of the safe rational course of time.

Razumov is attracted to the sense of an irresistible flow of time running through the constructed aqueducts of the paternal structures, the feeling of firm ideas and the promise of certainty, as is suggested evocatively in a scene later in Geneva when Razumov stands on a bridge staring down into the flowing current of a river, "captivated by the smooth rush of the blue water." The Teacher of Languages, who is with him at the

time, writes that "some brains cannot resist the suggestion of irresistible power and of headlong motion" (197). This is an apt depiction of the course of Razumov's life--compelled by the sensation of strength, progress, and destiny. And it is played out a few pages later where and when Razumov meets the fervent revolutionary, Sophia.

Despite protestations that he "would scorn to be a slave even to an idea," he is swayed by the appearance of surety and strength: "she slipped her hand, by a sudden and decided movement, under his arm and impelled him gently towards the gate of the grounds. He felt her firmness and obeyed the impulsion at once" (242).

Razumov sacrifices himself to the guarantees of singularity, the promise of the "one faith" that guides Jim on board the Patna. The concept of a monotheistic universe offers the promise of absolute meaning and providential guidance to both the banished son/writer and the recipients of their narratives who bow before the totem of certitude and understanding. And Razumov's reverent regard for the blank landscape before him suggests his fall from an authorial agent composing his own narrative to a mere subject of the narrative of others.

Razumov discovers with bitterness that individual identities are formed, not by one's own intents and actions, but by the interpretations of those by observers. He finds his attempts to found a fixed identity of his own conception, a unified self in harmony with the progress of the state,

increasingly thwarted by the misconceptions and expectations of others. The intended weapon of his ascension becomes the instrument of his downfall. Whereas he had looked upon himself as master of the word, he sees himself now as its subject. He finds himself repeatedly saying things which he regrets in the very instant of uttering them, and discovers also that language itself is corrupted.

Razumov begins to recognize the obscure and inscrutable nature of humankind, and the impossibility of achieving a paradisal state of understanding. After confiding in the state authorities, he discovers that his motives and allegiances are placed in suspicion; and during his interview with Mikulin, he notes that every utterance invites a variety of interpretations coloured by each person's own expectations and fears. While Razumov tries to retreat behind the veil of irony as a further attempt to utilize language to his own ends, Mikulin's remarks also carry double meanings, and as such, both men pick their way through the overgrowth of communication in a world without supreme values.

Marlow has a similar realization in Lord Jim when Jim comes to him looking for understanding and its attendant promise of forgiveness. As Jim pleads his case to him, Marlow muses, "It is when we try to grapple with another man's intimate need that we perceive how incomprehensible, wavering, and misty are the beings that share with us the sight of the stars and the warmth of the sun" (138).

It is before such uncertainty that Razumov succumbs finally to the pessimism and fatalism that has always played around the borders of his character: "it was no use. He would be always played with. Luckily life does not last for ever" (268). Abandoned by "hope, courage, belief in himself, [and] trust in men," the young man who sought to be the author of his own narrative becomes merely another sterile text for the ruling voice. "It was no use struggling on.... Everything was gone. His existence was a great cold blank, something like the enormous plain of the whole of Russia" (303).

Lured to the "superstition of an active Providence" (350), Razumov executes his final surrender by renouncing the pen--tossing it into a corner of the room. In effect, he gives up his instrument of self-will, the tool with which he was to write his name upon the face of the future. Tomorrow is eclipsed by his negating cynicism, and he becomes "the puppet of his past.... the facts and the words of a certain evening in his past were timing his conduct in the present" (362). He submits himself to the rule of "the power of destiny," confident in "the absolute necessity of his errand." Independent thought and its attendant doubts and suspicions no longer speak to him as he allows himself to be swept along "by a fitful gust of wind," like a wind-tossed leaf (363), "at the mercy of these lawless forces" (77). Like Tekla, Razumov abrogates all responsibility and control of his life to the ruling currents in a final languid surrender.

The tension between one's own self-conception and the interpretations of others is a prominent dynamic in Conrad's texts, and the hamartia of many of these banished sons / writers is their inability to accept any view that is contrary to their own. As Samuel Beckett states in his essay on Proust, "the creature of habit turns aside from the object that cannot be made to correspond with one or other of his intellectual prejudices" (Proust, 11-12). Living in fear of awareness of solitude, characters insulate themselves from the perils of awareness with impenetrable faith and reliable habit. Razumov, for example, with his composure shaken by the intrusion of Haldin and the ditficulties the young revolutionist brings to his life, finds solace in the vision of the everyday commonalities of his neighbourhood, the habits of the locals: "The trivialities of daily existence were an armour for the soul" (53). In Proust, Beckett writes, "Habit is ... the guarantee of a dull inviolability, the lightning-conductor of his existence. Habit is the ballast that chains the dog to his vomit" (Beckett, 7-8).

In The Rescue, Martin Travers lives his life in a static condition not unlike that of Lingard's romantic enclosure, except his is a ritualized adherence to society's structures and values. Martin Travers is an extreme example of the refined English gentleman, anaesthetized by his "sense of his own importance" and "perverse loftiness" (376), and vitriolic in his racism and sectarianism. He arrives in the Southeast Asian waters convinced of his rights of supremacy, and shielded by fortitude of "habits" and "strict

method" (279). His careful adherence to habit is evident in his winding of a watch whose hands are broken off.

As events become more critical and demanding, Travers grows increasingly indolent. His is the languid repose of the intellectually remote and disinterested, divorced from any concern for humankind by their utter belief in their own position above it all. Travers lies motionless on his back within his cabin, overcome by "great fatigue .... the very embodiment of helpless exhaustion" (376-7).

These agents of the paternal order insulate themselves from difference with the waste-objects of the father, rituals and archetypes, out of an all-consuming fear of the doubts that wait just beyond the gates of their demi-Edens. In Victory, Axel Heyst enacts a devotional vigil within the bare bones of his perished paternal order. After the deaths of first his father, then his surrogate father-figure, Morrison, Heyst forms a sanctuary for himself on the island of Samburan where the fragments of his life remain: the cadaver of their mining company, The Tropical Belt Coal Company. Axel Heyst returns to the "inviolable fortress" of his past even though, as Davidson remarks, "all this is as dead as Julius Caesar" (38).

Heyst sits amongst "the decaying bones of that once sanguine enterprise" (149), surrounded by the immortal remains of his father,

> books, tables, chairs, and pictures.... It seemed as if in his conception of a world not worth touching, and perhaps not

> substantial enough to grasp, these objects familiar to his childhood and his youth, and associated with the memory of an old man, were the only realities, something having an absolute existence. (151)

Out of these "waste-objects fallen off from the father," as Kristeva puts it, the banished son fashions a sort of altar to the lost paternal world, with the father's printed word as the testament, and the chair beneath the father's portrait is his place of worship.

Like Gould before the cracked marble vase, Heyst's focus remains fixed on the lost innocence, on the point of descent, and like Jim he carries with him the stain of his transgression. It is this "failure of his apostasy" (152) which holds Heyst to Samburan--the site of his and Morrison's collapsed venture. But even in exile he is pursued by the opinions of others about his dealings with Morrison, and the rumour that Heyst in fact murdered him. Heyst becomes a popular topic of conversation back on the mainland, and like Razumov, Heyst struggles against the hands and voices that would appropriate his character for their own purposes.

Like one born into the House of Atreus, Heyst begins to feel that every act carries within itself the germ of one's own undoing and the possibility of misunderstanding, and so he commits himself to a discipline of inactivity. Like Razumov's renunciation of the written word, Heyst rejects its physical companion, action. But, as in the fictional universe of Thomas

Hardy, characters of Conrad's novels discover that humankind cannot divorce itself completely from the natural world for they carry the seeds of creation and corruption within themselves.

Heyst's archetypal paradise is invaded by the sudden appearance of Jones and his followers, like the sudden arrival of Haldin and all his political baggage on the doorstep of Razumov's academic sanctuary. And just as Nostromo is "ready to become the prey of any belief, superstition, or desire as a child" (Nostromo, 417) after the loss of his ruling principles, Heyst is also claimed by a new resolve, "as if an outcast soul ... had come in stealthily to take possession" (Victory, 493).

In Victory, Jones is the embodiment of that outcast soul, "ejected, he said, from his proper social sphere because he had refused to conform to certain usual conventions, he was a rebel now" (258). Jones emerges from beneath Heyst's dock like Hamlet's father from beneath the stage, "an insolent spectre on leave from Hades" (Victory, 105) embodying the negating philosophy that has been Heyst's inheritance. Axel Heyst, like Razumov, remains ruled by what Byron calls, "the dead but sceptred sovereigns" (Manfred, Act 3, sc.4). Heyst can still hear the chilling whispers of his father's cynical philosophy, and he holds the "half-belief that something of his father dwelt yet on earth--a ghostly voice, audible to the ear of his own flesh and blood" (184), like the lingering voice beneath the stage to which Hamlet swears allegiance: "Thy commandment all alone shall

live / Within the book and volume of my brain" (Hamlet, I, v).

The voice of the father resonates with authority and meaning from a temporal and spatial location that seems superior. Mikhail Bakhtin explains in The Dialogic Imagination that

> the authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already acknowledged in the past. It is a prior discourse. (342)

The son's only reality is that leftover from the former paternal source--all value resides within that sealed tomb and the resonating word. The longing for understanding and effective communication compels the writer/son towards accepted, dependable forms, and so he turns to the artifacts of the former paternal order: conventions, stereotypes, preconceptions, a causal fatalism, and the only word with efficacy, the word of the Father.

Heyst Sr. espoused a philosophy of detached observation with only a pitying regard for the pathos of humankind, and this upbringing fosters in the son a disbelief and cynicism that cancels all creative impulses. The father is referred to as "that bitter contemner of life ... the destroyer of systems, of hopes, of beliefs" (150-1), and Jones arrives as the living form of this negating spirit.

"Hard facts Heyst" (22) has been raised on a diet of cynical disregard

for "dreams and visions" (186), and his education in strict realism leaves him reliant upon the stable foundation of the known and knowable. As a result, he is incapable of apprehending life's diversity of meaning and purpose. Hindered by a myopic vision and a prosaic soul, he is completely unprepared for an existence that requires an imaginative flexibility, and Jones' ghostly appearance echoes the ghost of doubt that rises in Marlow's world after the fall of his faith in Lord Jim.

Whereas Marlow sought to "exorcise" that ghost with the remedial form of his narrative, Heyst surrenders to the hint of stability and certainty, and agrees to follow Ricardo back to Jones' bungalow--an invitation intended, in Ricardo's mind, to separate Heyst and Lena, and deliver Heyst to the control of Jones. As Ricardo conveys the message, Heyst mistakenly "fancies" that Lena nods in assent. In the midst of his confusion, he finds the scent of certitude there: "in this strange complication invading the quietude of his life, in his state of doubt and disdain and almost of despair with which he looked at himself, he would let even a delusive appearance guide him through a darkness so dense that it made for indifference" (294).

Heyst, like Razumov, gives himself up to languid resignation, and allows himself to be swept along by the tides of destiny. Both surrender to some surrogate authority as an alternative to the troubling aspect of doubt and diversity. Both prostrate themselves before the icon of singularity and death as a final devoted act to the godhead which is, as Kristeva observes,

the paternal corpse.

Like the writings of Heyst Sr. which Axel takes with him into exile from the world, Jones carries with him all the prejudicial beliefs and biases of the former home order. He bears a resemblance to Lingard of The Rescue in the way he maintains a firm conviction of the superiority of the race that has rejected him and yet with which he continues to identify himself: "Do you believe in racial superiority, Mr. Heyst? I do, firmly" (306).

Jones is characterized as a kind of fallen angel, and his detached attitude and emaciated condition suggest the potential future of Heyst who, upon the death of his father, takes on "the detachment of an impermanent dweller amongst changing scenes.... He meant to drift altogether and literally, body and soul, like a detached leaf drifting in the wind-currents" (86-7). Much like Martin Travers, Jones embodies the wilting, decaying effects of this condition--the enervated moribund spirit of the intellectually disengaged, and in his meeting with Schomberg, he is described closing his eyes "wearily" and looking "remarkably like a corpse for a moment" with a voice "indifferent, as if issuing from a tomb" (102-3). He is the final diseased wheeze of lives enervated by a faith turned solely within. To borrow a line from Brecht's Mother Courage, he is "like a corpse on leave" (Sc. 1).

The final form of the quest of these banished sons and daughters who seek salvation in concrete paternal edicts and the code of singularity is a

palsy that accompanies the loss of all belief in one's self and others. Each becomes a spectre of doubt and pessimism haunting Conrad's narrative landscapes, the voices of mere lamentation cataloguing that which is lost, the yellowed doctrines of the purely cynical artist who, Conrad writes in one of his letters, presents a "mere declaration ... of the utter futility of existence. Pessimism can go no further" (LL, II, 77-78). The only words to be spoken are laments gently whispered so as not to disturb the beloved silence where once was the father's voice.

Faced with a language riddled with uncertain meanings and the suggestion of violation, the banished son / writer renounces the word in favour of blessed silence and paradisal ignorance. As Axel Heyst says of his father in Victory, "there is something of my father in every man who lives long enough. But they don't say anything. They can't.... they wouldn't speak if they could" (167).

This pattern of pessimistic descent is set out in Marlow's opening address to his audience on board the Nellie in Heart of Darkness when he speaks of ancient Romans venturing into the savage wilderness of First Century England. Forced to exist "in the midst of the incomprehensible," the explorer is overcome by "the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate" (31). This pattern unfolds in his tale of Kurtz, but it applies equally well to other bearers of the conquering faith, such as Razumov, Heyst, and others.

In her reading of Beckett's short works, and through that her observations on monotheistic religion, Julia Kristeva traces the slow collapse of the banished son. Left "questioning and waiting. Will he come?" he ends up emulating the resonate concept of the father, his corpse:

> The sons have given up any hope of either annexing, incorporating, or introjecting the father's power and/or Death. They will remain forever separated from him; but forever subject to his hold.... The only possible community is then centred in a ritual of decay, of ruin, of the corpse-universe. (Kristeva, 155)

In Conrad's universe, as in Beckett's, humankind remains caught in the stasis of a perpetual Saturday, between the loss of the Father-figure and the Resurrection. On this, the third day, the banished sons await their salvation, patient and inert, and cloistered in doubt.

Conrad offers up a vision of this reverential decline in his very first novel, Almayer's Folly. Kaspar Almayer is another disciple of the paternal order who acts in the name of the authoritative word of a father-figure. He is appointed to his position as the manager of a Malayan trading post by Tom Lingard to whom he pledges allegiance: "'I--of course--anything you wish, Captain Lingard.' 'Call me father, my boy.... I always get my way, so it would have been no use [to refuse]'" (13).

Captain Lingard possesses secret knowledge of a river inlet which allows him entrance to the continent, and thus an unchallenged supremacy

in trade. Like Jim's father's knowledge of "the Unknowable," Lingard's privileged information provides him with an unchallenged authority, and makes him renown as the "master of the mysterious inlets" of the river, "that river whose entrances only himself knew" (10). This knowledge has established Lingard as "the King of the Sea" in the eyes of Malays, and "as a hero in Almayer's eyes" (11).

Under the promise of this legacy, Almayer places his faith in Lingard, and becomes his acolyte. Obediently, he marries the Malayan woman captured and "adopted" by Lingard, and goes off to live in the remote river trading post of Sambir. Here he lives a life of anticipation, awaiting his release from "this infernal place" (116) through the agency of his patriarch.

Almayer's hopes centre on the promised wealth, but Lingard's material promises never materialize, and Lingard himself disappears, never again to be seen by Almayer. The heir apparent is left to dream of his mentor's return, holding fast to a belief in his power, clinging to his faith and comforting himself with resilient dreams of wealth and deliverance.

A replacement for the loss of Lingard's support arrives in the form of the dashing Malayan trader, Dain; and like the cast-off daughters discussed above--Winnie, Tekla, and Flora, for example--Almayer is quick to stow his dreams of liberation and prosperity in this new heroic form. Once more, he dedicates himself to an existence of waiting--a passive subject of fate with "an instinctive clinging to old life, to old habits, to old faces; that fear of

finality which lurks in every human breast and prevents so many heroisms and so many crimes" (123).

When Almayer's plans with Dain also fail, and Dain departs with Almayer's beloved daughter, he grows increasingly enervated and falls eventually into a state of opium-clouded immobility. He descends from the active life as a young sailor to the reclusive existence of an embittered old man. At the end, he lives within the skeleton of his dream, the unfinished house known as "Almayer's Folly," wishing only for forgetfulness: "the tenacity of his memory filled him with dread and horror of death" (163)--to borrow a line from Byron's "Manfred:" "Loathing life, and dreading still to die" (A.2, Sc. 2). His story can be read in the "countless generations of trees" that lie on the surrounding grounds, "entombed and rotting" whilst "their successors stood as if in mourning ... immense and helpless, awaiting their turn" (Almayer's Folly, 135).

Almayer's fate is set out in the novella's opening pages as he stands on the shore watching for Dain's return, and like Razumov on the bridge in Geneva, Almayer contemplates with envy the swift downstream descent of a drifting uprooted tree, "rolling slowly over, raising upwards a long, denuded branch, like a hand lifted in mute appeal to heaven" (8). Almayer sees in these waters a reflection of his own condition, uprooted from his home, and slowly perishing with only a silent lament and unspoken plea to a departed deity.

As Martin Decoud of Nostromo stares in to the silent indifferent waters of the Placid Gulf after Nostromo leaves him alone with the cache of silver, he also finds only a reflection of his own faithlessness. Left "questioning and waiting. Will he come?" (Kristeva, 155), he begins to doubt that Nostromo will ever return, and all accompanying hopes wane. Decoud is devoid of the tools necessary to answer that claiming silence and darkness, the redemptory capacity of creativity and imagination. "The man with no faith in anything except the truth of his own sensations" (229) is dependent upon a confirmed reality, a strict realism that relies upon the stable foundation of knowledge and immediate phenomena. While adrift with Nostromo on the lighter without any light with which to measure their progress, Decoud relies upon the sensation of the water streaming through his fingers to assure himself that they are in fact advancing. Now separated from the visible awareness of Antonia's adulation, Decoud loses faith in her love for him, and thus his inspiration for action.

Like an author confronting the undefined terrain of his imagined reader and the expansiveness of the blank page before him, these men who sought to be authors of their own destinies find themselves claimed by a doubt so all encompassing, it claims even their will to live. Decoud, the journalist, loses all confidence in the efficacy of the word, and Conrad expresses similar scepticism in one of his letters:

> All is illusion--the words written, the minds at which they are

> aimed, the truth they are intended to express, the hands that will hold the paper, the eyes that will glance at the lines. Every image floats vaguely in a sea of doubt--and the doubt itself is lost in an unexplored universe of incertitudes. (Garnett, 155)

Decoud's negating cynicism leaves him in a state of "utter unbelief... Decoud lost all belief in the reality of his action past and to come" (497). As he looks across the indifferent darkness of the Placid Gulf, he sees only the "utter uselessness of all effort" (500). He imagines himself to be suspended by "a tense, thin cord" above "a great void" (498). He soon begins to long for the cord to break, to be engulfed in the void. In his state of "disillusioned weariness" (501), his faith becomes nihilistic; he now believes only in "nothing" (500). As his name suggests, he becomes 'découdre', unstitched, and he chooses to cancel all further doubt by embracing two of the silver ingots and drowning himself in the Placid Gulf.

This act of suicide is not an expression of passion, but in fact, the opposite. In Chance, Marlow expresses an idea of suicide as just such a resignation from life: the "outcome of mere mental weariness--not an act of savage energy but the final symptom of complete collapse" (157). And in Lord Jim, Marlow foreshadows Jim's final fate as he speculates over Jim's inaction aboard the Patna amidst the emergency:

> A certain readiness to perish is not so very rare, but it is seldom that you meet men whose souls, steeled in the impenetrable

> armour of resolution, are ready to fight a losing battle to the last, the desire of peace waxes stronger as hope declines, till at last it conquers the very desire of life. (71)

This is the reason behind Razumov's surrender to Ivanovitch and the revolutionaries. Weary of the weight of his deceit, and drained of all belief in himself and the faith of the fathers, Razumov commits a kind of suicide: "Confess, go out--and perish" (361). In some respects, Razumov's act is not that different from Heyst's suicide at the close of Victory--it is partly a final acquiescence, but also an act of purging, and a repudiation of the self he sought to script onto history.

Ivanovitch's devoted secretary, Tekla provides an ironic shadow of what Razumov has become, and her submission to the tide-flow of the ruling forces of the revolution has its companion in Razumov's own surrender to the whims of the state. She discovers there is no salvation in surrender, and Tekla grows disenchanted in her awareness of what she has become and what Ivanovitch really represents. When Razumov says to her that she surely hears everything that is said within the meeting rooms of the revolutionaries, she replies "so do the tables and chairs" (235). She is in her mind little more than part of the furniture, supporting the weight of the revolution.

Her experiences with Ivanovitch and his followers lead Tekla to warn Razumov against bringing Natalia to Ivanovitch, "unless you want her to

become like me--disillusioned!... You had better tie a stone around her neck and throw her into the lake" (232), a comment which echoes with irony her earlier submergence in devotional ecstasy. It also however relates to the meeting between Ivanovitch and Natalia when the pamphleteer's voice is likened to a swelling flood: "The deep sound seemed to rise from under the floor, and one felt steeped in it to the lips. Miss Haldin's interruption resembled the effort of a drowning person to keep above water" (128). As such, Tekla provides a portrayal of what Natalia may become if she falls under the influence of Ivanovitch and the propagandist voices of the revolution.

Through Razumov and Tekla, the two responses to the loss of the supporting principle are illustrated. While the former attempts to take control of his life from behind the screen of cynical irony, the latter chooses a devout surrender to the promises and illusions of the paternal stereotypes. In the end, however, neither Razumov's clear-eyed scepticism nor Tekla's self-delusions and sacrificial nescience save them from the final enervating awareness of life's bitter riddles.

The pairing of the cynical Decoud and the man of dreams, Nostromo serves a similar function. And although Nostromo's unfailing egotism keeps him from committing suicide like Decoud, he in fact also dies clutching silver ingots, shot in the dark by Giorgio Viola, who mistakes him for someone else. Nostromo has grown dependent upon the silver and Giselle's empow-

ering faith in him. Her adulation represents his replacement for the lost devotion of the Sulacan community, and as he holds her, he is "lost to the world in their embraced stillness" (538). She and the silver become one and the same in his mind, and both command his fidelity and service. "He had two masters now." In effect, Nostromo dies trying to hold onto the glorious self-conception that has always been his sustaining ideal: "weighted with silver, the magnificent Capataz clasped [Giselle] round her white neck in the darkness of the gulf as a drowning man clutches at a straw" (545).

The longing for affection, stability, and the promise of a privileged affinity which motivates many of Conrad's banished sons becomes their downfall. In the desperate struggle to clutch some suspending ideal, they in fact surrender themselves to the kinds of fictional fantasies that formed Jim's impossible heroic self-image prior to his failure. As the Abbot counsels Manfred in Byron's poem, Manfred, "even those who do despair above, / Yet shape themselves some fantasy on earth, / To which frail twig they cling, like drowning men" (Byron, Manfred, Act 3, sc.1).

The keepers of the True Word cling to Arcadian dreams of closed, fixed, and secure gardens. Once exiled from that sense of belonging and concord, the banished son tries to recreate the lost certainty in a community of two, which is in fact a society of one, for the female companion is conceived of as merely a projection of himself, a fleshed-out rib of his own. But these novels, and others in Conrad's canon, show this paradisal stasis to

be a shared abandonment of life's creative potential, a realization that is there in the eyes of Nina Almayer as her beloved Dain Maroola revels in his own romantic fantasy.

Like Lingard's closed communion with Edith in The Rescue, Dain finds his satiety in Nina's look of regard and devotion:

> Men that had felt in their breasts the awful exultation such a look awakens become mere things of today--which is paradise; forget yesterday--which was suffering; care not for tomorrow--which may be perdition. They wish to live under that look for ever. It is the look of woman's surrender. (139)

Dain is so enamoured of his own conquering greatness and the impenetrable charm of Nina's adoration, that he falls at her feet, and "embracing her knees. hid his head in the folds of her dress, murmuring disjointed words of gratitude and love."

As Nina begins to realize that Dain's love for her has become rapturous idolatry, she sees in him a reflection of her father and his desperate devotion to a ruling ideal. This man whom she thought above the petty passions and obsessions that destroyed the lives of her parents was now "her slave."

> As she glanced down at his kneeling form she felt a great pitying tenderness for that man she was used to call--even in her thoughts--the master of her life. She lifted her eyes and

> looked sadly at the southern heavens under which lay the path of their lives--her own and that man's at her feet. (139)

Dain bows before the suggestion of an arrested state of being wherein permanence may be grasped, and doubt and regret barred. But Nina's lamenting gaze to the days ahead reflects the wisdom of one who has seen the consequences of eager reverence for constructed ideals.

In The Rescue, Tom Lingard tries to hang on to his sustaining ideal, and in so doing becomes incapable of responding to the contingencies that confront him. Like Roderick Anthony, "Lord Jim," and Axel Heyst, to name just three, Tom Lingard has cast himself in an archetypal role that limits him to an inflexible code of conduct which has little application to the shifting requirements of life outside the walls of the fictional conceptions of the world. In essence, these heroes embody the desire for consistent fictional forms with conditioned responses and prototypical plots. But the attempt to follow these patterns leads to the weary collapse of the potential that glimmers at times in the stories and th ir characters.

Lingard's simplistic, almost parabolic conception of life and love leaves him entirely incapable of dealing with the contingencies that he must face, and he finds himself

> in the state of a man who, having cast his eyes through the open gates of Paradise, is rendered insensible by that moment's vision to all the forms and matters of the earth; and in the

> extremity of his emotion ceases even to look upon himself but as the subject of a sublime experience which exalts or unfits, sanctifies or damns--he didn't know which. (342-3)

Now confronted with diversity of significance and varying tones of morality, this simple hero is overwhelmed until he relinquishes "possession of himself, his old self which had things to do, words to speak as well as hear."

> He was seduced away by the tense feeling of existence far superior to the mere consciousness of life, and which in its immensity of contradictions, delight, dread, exultation and despair could not be faced and yet was not to be evaded.... Surrender was better, the dreadful ease of slack limbs in the sweep of an enormous tide and in a divine emptiness of mind.... without speech, without movement, without heat! (357)

Lingard abandons himself to the condition of Razumov, Almayer, and the rest of the participants in the ritual of decay; in fact his valued form is a human rendition of the embalmed perfection of Stein's butterflies.

Lingard finds himself unable to respond to the diversity of life and its emotions, and like Razumov and Heyst, gives himself up to the suggestion of certitude. "With the sublime indifference of a man who has had a glimpse through the open doors of Paradise and is no longer careful of mere life" (358), Lingard is increasingly the subject of the machinations of others.

The exit from Eden marked humankind's entrance into difference and change, and these progenies of the paternal order, devoid of imaginative flexibility, appear entirely unprepared for the world beyond the gates of paradise. They respond by clutching some waste-object, some piece of the lost paternal home or even the former virginal form of life as embodied in Eve, or in Razumov's vision of the frozen Russian landscape. This is what Lingard tries to hang onto as he holds Edith's hand and fixes her with "his fascinated gaze." Finally she is forced to "disengage her hand to which he clung ... giddy like a man falling out of the world" (247).

Edith Travers' friend and constant companion, d'Alcacer tries to alert Lingard to the likely outcome of his final awareness when he warns that men and women participate in "a sort of ritual dance, that most of us have agreed to take seriously. It is a very binding agreement.... Woe to him or her who breaks it. Directly they leave the pageant they get lost.... in a maze.... They end by hating their very selves, and they die in disillusion and despair" (340).

D'Alcacer's warning here acts as a forecast of Lingard's potential future, a course also evident in the lifestory of Lingard's associate, Jörgenson; "the restless shade of Captain H. C. Jörgenson" casts a "shadow" across the course of Lingard's life (86; 80). Jorgenson provides a dark contrast to Lingard's steps, from the past and to the future. "I was like you once," he tells Lingard as he cautions him to abandon his plans to aid

the dispossessed Hassim (82). Like Lingard, Jörgenson was an influential figure in native politics, and counted himself a devoted servant of "that race"--that is, the whites--but he evidently broke free or was cast out, and now scorns the world that was once his own.

Jörgenson shares characteristics of both Jones and Heyst Sr. of Victory. He is another incarnation of negating cynicism, "the embodiment of that inner voice that speaks in all of us at times and ... is offensive and difficult to answer" (307). He is filled with the "mistrust of the life of men" (370), and is described as "that man who had done with life so completely that his mere presence robbed it of all heat and mystery" (306). And like the Janus-faced look to the future and past that Jones provides for Heyst, Jörgenson's story provides a glimpse at the possible life of Lingard beyond the novel's conclusion.

After the failure of his mission in support of Hassim, Lingard diminishes to an incarnation of the pessimistic voice of futility. This man, once so confident in his mastery of his own destiny, now believes that "the real cause of the disaster was ... somewhere in the unexplored depths of his nature, something fatal and unavoidable" (272). When d'Alcacer refers to the detonation of his stronghold of arms, the Emma, as an "accident", Lingard wearily and bitterly replies, "What is an accident?... Where did you hear such a thing? Accident! Don't disturb me, Mr. d'Alcacer. I have just come back to life and it has closed on me colder and darker than the grave

itself" (367).

As with Nostromo, the fall of Lingard's self-assurance marks the death of his ruling principle and paternal pillar, and he considers himself "abandoned by the All-Knowing God." And at the novel's end, Lingard stands in silence aboard his ship "with his eyes fixed in the southern board where the shadows were creeping stealthily toward the setting sun" (387). In his mind, "now the world is dead" (383). The unwritten chapters which lay ahead are, it would seem, merely the retelling of Jörgenson's tale, with Lingard now in the role of the "adventurous soul longing to recross the waters of oblivion."

With his eyes set on the corpse of his old friend, Jaffir, and the remains of his fallen plans, Lingard comments sarcastically that "Paradise is the lot of all True Believers" (373). But he recognizes now that those Elysian Fields offer little more than eternal languor: "Paradise! I wonder what it will be for him! Unless he gets messages to carry through the jungle, avoiding ambushes, swimming in storms and knowing no rest, he won't like it.... And all the time he will be sleeping on that sandbank" (373). In the final repository of his dreams, Lingard glimpses with jaundiced eyes the bitter reality of the sterile state he once sought for Edith and himself.

When Edith departs to return to the yacht, she leaves Lingard kneeling beside Jaffir's grave, staring at the repository of his failed faith and the only

possible notion of permanence, although ironically it is a grave dug in sand, and therefore not likely to last beyond a high tide or two. "She saw him sitting near the mound of sand, his back bowed, his hands clasping his knees, as if he obeyed the invincible call of his great visions haunting the grave of the faithful messenger" (385).

Standing at the site of the father's grave, the son glimpses stability and unity, and it is a sight which never leaves him. As Kristeva writes, "As long as a son pursues meaning in a story or through narratives, even if it eludes him, as long as he persists in his search, he narrates in the name of Death for the father's corpse" (151). This image of certitude, unity and independence remains the banished writer's dead centre, and his notion of love is merely the desire for the consummation of this ideal, for the realization of the embalmed perfection. The progeny may leave the site, but not the sight of the grave which remains their sacred relic and the shrine of their identity. The hollow beckoning of the void is the only sound in which they identify their name. "Death... is the meaning of the narrative of the son, who never enunciated himself as anything else, save for and by virtue of this stretched out void of paternal Death, as ideal and inaccessible to any living being as it might seem" (Kristeva, 150).

In Under Western Eyes, Victor Haldin is also a metaphor for the ideal, and a Christ-figure for his followers. In the wake of his death, the revolutionists locate their dead-centre of identity, purpose and hope in his

memory. Paradise is seen wrapped up in the burial cloth of "that dead man. The ideas, the hopes, the aspirations, the cause of Freedom, expressed in their common affection for Victor Haldin ... all this must draw them to each other fatally" (347). This is the Teacher's mistaken appraisal of the association between Nataiia and Razumov, but it is an accurate depiction of what Haldin has come to represent for the revolutionaries. "The spirit of the heroic Haldin" represents the "promise of universal redemption from all the miseries that oppress mankind" (156). Haldin's act of self-abnegation serves as the totem for the revolutionaries, like the "small black cross" by which the faithful aboard the Patna measure their progress "towards the holy place, the promise of salvation, the reward of eternal life" (Lord Jim, 21). There is an element of necrophilia to Christianity, as conveyed in Under Western Eyes with not only Haldin, but also the baroness, Madame de S---, another corpse on leave who resides within her "temple" where she marshals "the dead" (247).

That devotion to the dead-centre is presented in Nostromo's opening chapter with the tale of the perished dream-chasers, the gringo prospectors, whose souls remain fastened to the point of their realized dreams and of their death, the site where they discovered their treasure and in turn died. That story resonates throughout the novel in such forms as Nostromo's attachment to the cache of silver after the demise of the grand scheme for its safe-keeping, and in Gould's obsessive service to the Gould Concession.

"The mine had got hold of Charles Gould with a grip as deadly as ever it had laid upon his father" (400). The mine, this provider of wealth and "abstract justice" (402), is Gould's remnant of the paternal order from which he is exiled, just as the castaway cache of silver ingots is for Nostromo. Both represent the now-cursed carcass of the paternal order to which each is chained, and the currency of inheritance with which each hopes to achieve self-restoration.

In this, the immortal remains of the father, the fetish for the paternal corpse, the son locates his identity, purpose, hopes, and beliefs. Like Victor Haldin for the Russian revolutionaries, the Sulacan mine becomes the coalescing ideal and idealistic focal point for the entire community of Sulaco, the "rallying point for everything that needed order and stability to live" (110). This argent totem is invested "with a protecting and invincible virtue as though it were a fetish made by their own hands" (398). The sacrificial devotion evident in such characters as Winnie Verloc and Tekla drives the indigenous Costaguanans who march reverentially into the gullet of the mine: "the mountain would swallow one-half of the silent crowd, while the other half would move off in long files down the zigzag paths leading to the bottom of the gorge" (100). This is the fatal attraction to the aspect of destiny, and the sensation of headlong motion to a higher order, which carries Razumov to the state officials--the pursuit of an ideal state which is in fact a retrogressive course to the original narrative inspiration--the silence

and emptiness that was glimpsed in the paternal grave--a processional march into the void, for there remains the trace of certainty and meaning.

In Lord Jim, as Marlow listens to Jim's distressed anxious longing for "a bit of shelter" and "a chance to get it all back again," he muses that

> it is from such as he that the great army of waifs and strays is recruited, the army that marches down, down into all the gutters of the earth. As soon as he left my room... he would take his place in the ranks, and begin the journey towards the bottomless pit. (138)

Although Marlow assures Jewel that "neither a call nor a sign" (240) would ever lure Jim away from her, Jim does in fact respond first to the deceitful manipulations of Gentleman Brown, and after the resulting carnage that costs the life of his friend, Dain Waris, Jim submits himself to execution at the hands of Dain's father. One of the characters in Conrad's novel, The Rover, the old aunt, Catherine, declares that "a man who has received a sign from death--nothing can stop him!... Even those to whom it is made do not recognize it for what it is. But they obey all the same" (173). And Jim's willing submission to the vengeance of Doramin in Lord Jim is similar to the confession by Razumov, and the suicides of Decoud and Heyst, the final embrace with the holy form of the lost father.

Marlow reminds the "privileged reader" of his letter that this confidential sharer of Jim's tale once argued that faith in the standard allows one "to

make a worthy and conscious sacrifice of our lives." Marlow asks, however, whether, in the end, Jim "had not confessed to a faith mightier than the laws of order and progress" (255). The faith to which Jim submits is what Marlow calls

> blessed finality ... for what else is it that makes the idea of death supportable? End! Finis! the potent word that exorcises from the house of life the haunting shadow of fate .... While there's life there is hope, truly; but there is fear, too. (136)

Like Byron's Manfred, Jim goes forth to embrace "oblivion, self-oblivion" (Manfred, Act 1, Sc.1).

Charles Gould and Jim are both overcome by withering suspicions and nullifying pessimism. Gould suffers under the "conviction of irremediable folly" (Nostromo, 364), and he comes to see his situation as hopeless and predestined. "There is no going back now. I don't suppose that, even from the first, there was really any possible way back" (208). He has committed himself to a course from which there is no return, much like Jim's leap from the Patna, after which he considers himself to be irremediably fallen into a grave: "there was no going back. It was if I had jumped into a well--into an everlasting deep hole" (Lord Jim, 89). The developing belief in fatalism is both the surrender of an enervated spirit, and the chosen certitude of a fixed course; the comfort of a predictable narrative pattern, and the assurance of finality. This is ultimately what Decoud grasps in his hand

with the silver ingots that carry him to the bottom of the Gulf.

Charles Gould also seeks the certainty of finality when he dynamites the mine to keep it from the hands of the Ribierist Republicans. He turns to destruction to cancel doubt and obliterate the turbulence which has shattered his careful construction of unity and independence. This is the culmination to Gould's desire for concord and legitimization, the final execution of his power to effect.

Many of the inspirations and aims of the banished sons, narrating voices, and moral agents are neatly contained in the tale of the Professor in The Secret Agent. This character can be seen as an exploration of the fatal consequences of the ambition for predictable patterns and perfect closure. He is equally one of Conrad's most vivid characterizations of the manifestation of the doctrine of pessimism--an outlook which Conrad has often been accused of espousing.

This apostle of nihilism who roams the streets of London with dynamite strapped to his body is the product of

> an itinerant and rousing preacher of some obscure but rigid Christian sect--a man supremely confident in the privileges of his righteousness. In the son ... this moral attitude translated itself into a frenzied puritanism of ambition. He nursed it as something secularly holy. (102)

Like so many of the other banished heirs, such as Nostromo, Tom

Lingard, and Razumov, the Professor's faith has been founded on a fanatical sense of justice--one reaps what one sows; and based on his confidence in his own virtue, he envisions himself rising to authority and affluence on the strength "of merit alone" (102). But when his dream is thwarted, his confidence in the just order of things is shattered, and in words reminiscent of Nostromo's own renunciation, he declares the world to be "artificial, corrupt and blasphemous."

There is the stain of a lie in the given word, and the son seeks to correct it or, in this case, replace it with something more permanent and reliable. "Conventional morality" is false and ephemeral, whereas his own moral basis "stands free from everything artificial" (93). Driven by the desire to tear away the mask of social order, the banished son resolves to deliver the truth to the heathens still existing within the darkness of their conventional beliefs--only his morality is true and permanent.

Buttressed by this belief, and motivated by "his pedantic fanaticism" (102), the Professor sets out to become a "moral agent," to take up the stick to teach and punish. Personal desires are clothed in coloured veils of a grand cause--a justifying principle:

> the way of even the most justifiable revolutions is prepared by personal impulses disguised into creeds.... The Professor's indignation found in itself a final cause that absolved him from the sin of turning to destruction as the agent of his ambition.

(102)

As with the actions of Nostromo, Razumov, Tom Lingard, and Jim, the germ of the Professor's desire is his own damaged confidence--a fractured faith in not only the paternal order, but his own efficacy. So his virulent desire for revenge is against the order that sought to exclude him, but also to exorcise the haunting apparition of self-doubt. Driven by this, he labours to craft the "perfect detonator," one which can adjust to "unexpected changes" (92-3). This "variable and yet perfectly precise mechanism" will enable him to cancel all variance and doubt. His will be the perfect all-inclusive dispatch. In pursuit of perfection, this self-declared moral agent formulates a scheme for unity and independence that cancels all else in one final claiming stroke. As Conrad wrote to his friend Cunningham Graham: "If you believe in improvement you must weep, for the attained perfection must end in cold, darkness and silence" (NLL, I, 222).

This ideal of definitive closure is a value that Conrad detects and censures in both writers and readers:

> Why the reading public which, as a body, has never laid upon a story-teller the command to be an artist, should demand from him this sham of Divine Omnipotence, is utterly incomprehensible. But so it is; and these solutions are legitimate inasmuch as they satisfy the desire for finality, for which our hearts yearn.... Perhaps the only true desire of mankind ... is to be set

at rest. (NLL, 18-19)

Conrad suggests that people want to have their doubts dispelled, but there is also the suggestion of mankind's death-wish.

In his personal letters, Conrad openly rejects the call to the still point, and expresses his disdain for "the Middle Ages, that epoch when mankind tried to stand still in a monstrous illusion of final certitude attained in morals, inteliect, and conscience" (NLL, 76-7). And in his novels, Conrad sought to embrace ambiguity and the variety of possibilities that life and language offer. In so doing, he departs the "inviolable shelter" of the paternal order, and, as we shall see in the following chapter, he discovers a sense of play and potentiality in the environs "out there," foreign lands, people, and the hidden realities of women. In this way, Conrad's texts have a feminine dimension that is often overlooked by his critics.

CHAPTER II

STORIES OF OPPORTUNITY

Many critics have focused on the nihilistic or at least pessimistic perspectives in Conrad's novels, and have defined this outlook as the author's prevailing philosophy. Meanwhile, characters such as Martin Decoud and Cyril Razumov have been identified as Conrad's loosely disguised self-portraits. This may well be the case, and surely there is something of the author in every one of the characters, some echoing voice from beneath the stage, but one should be careful not to place too great of an emphasis on this element in his vision, because, in so doing, the affirmative aspects of his works are often overlooked. This may be why so little attention has been paid to the vibrant, active female characters of Conrad's novels, who embody often the creative potential of art and writing. The attractive characteristics of these figures provide the contrary energy to the enervating properties of a purely sceptical view of life.

Julia Kristeva has pointed out, in her analysis of Freud's writings and of Renaissance paintings ("Motherhood According to Bellini" in Desire in Language), the missing maternal body in Western Christian thought, which she incorporates into her study of the predominance of a kind of patrilineal sterility in that heritage. Conrad's texts also are informed by that maternal lack, just as they are influenced by the idea of a lost paternal pillar. After all, to be an orphan is to be without either a mother or father. The banished

son carries with him the father in the form of his word, but Conrad's texts contain also a struggle to reach a feminine element that is essential to the author's conception of art and creativity.

Lord Jim contains a similar suggestion of an opportunity lost or ignored, and Marlow expresses it as he looks upon the grave of Jewel's mother who was abandoned by her husband: "there is visible in its background the melancholy figure of a woman, the shadow of a cruel wisdom buried in a lonely grave, looking on wistfully, helplessly, with sealed lips" (208-9). This foreshadows Jim's departure from Jewel at the end, and thereby his abandonment of his only real opportunity for a life of renewed values or perhaps the discovery for the first time of true creative value.

Marlow states in Lord Jim, referring to the tale of Jewel and Jim, "We have heard so many such stories, and the majority of us don't believe them to be stories of love at all. For the most part we look upon them as stories of opportunity" (208). The processions by the devoted progeny into the swallowing void represent opportunities missed, and, in Conrad's texts, opportunity and potentiality exist within the shadows of loss and hopelessness. Often, those opportunities are located with the neglected female characters.

Emilia is a fading potentiality in the novel, and her developing bitterness is in marked contrast to her earlier vital human spirit. Emilia comes to recognize that the redemptive cause to which she and Charles have devoted

their lives has resulted in little more than the erection of "a wall of silver-bricks" between the couple. Gould's obsession with the success of the mine has exhausted any potential for a fertile growth; before its demands, all creativity expires. They exchanged the possibility of a child for a lifeless ideal and "material interests" (522). Emilia now sees "clearly the San Tome mine possessing, consuming, burning up the life of the last of the Costaguana Goulds" (522). The optimistic vitality that Emilia generated earlier in the novel wanes, and she grows "weary... touched by the withering suspicion of the uselessness of her labours" (520).

The novel's agents of colonial conquest eagerly execute their personal quests oblivious to the humane elements of the world they are utilizing, and Emilia acts as the doorway to appreciation that they pass by. She is the retainer of the memory of the prelapsarian Sulaco amidst the shifting dunes of change, and it is through her eyes that we see the loss of the human characteristics of the village-life: "she remembered the villages by some group of Indian women at the fountain impressed upon her memory" (89). And the "memory of the waterfall," which has been replaced by the ore-shoot, is "preserved in Mrs. Gould's watercolour sketch" (106). That sketch arrests Charles Gould's attention as he contemplates the demolition of the mine, but he fails to embrace what it represents, primarily because he can no longer believe in any possibility of recapturing that lost state.

Repeatedly in the novel, Charles is depicted walking away from Emilia,

from the very beginning when, after proposing to her, he leaves her behind in order to make his preparations; then again in Costaguana he leaves her behind at Casa Gould in order to spend his time in the bosom of his true love, the silver mine. At the very end, he no longer returns, but calls her on the telephone to say that he will be sleeping at the mine.

As Kristeva says in reference to Beckett's play, First Love,

> what the banished man needs most from a woman is simply someone to accompany him into Death's void.... He needs the gentle touch of a mute partner, renunciation of the body, waste, sublimation, and--in order to be faithful to his dead father to the end--a double suicide. (152)

Whereas Heyst's subjective stasis results in the death of Lena, and then his own suicide, characters like Gould, Jim, Nostromo, Decoud, and Kurtz leave as their legacy the mourning, withering forms of women as fixed forms of lamentation. And Emilia's withering acrimony at the novel's end is as much a death as the weary resignation of Martin Decoud, or her husband.

Emilia's overlooked value is suggested also when she is depicted sitting alone in the garden of the Casa Gould amidst "the shade of the big trees planted in a circle.... as if radiating a light of her own in the deep shade of the interlaced boughs" (520). Here again is the suggestion of promise obscured by the sheltering boughs of the European fathers and contained within their structures.

In Nostromo, Emilia provides the point of unity for the community of Sulaco and, by extension, the novel itself. She is the one to whom Decoud, Nostromo, and many others go with their innermost thoughts and confessions, and her home is the place where both the Europeans and locals gather in that novel's one example of a true community. "Dona Emilia's intelligence being feminine led her to achieve the conquest of Sulaco, simply by lighting the way for her unselfishness and sympathy" (67).

Emilia's sympathetic comprehension and "lively readiness of attention" (157) sets her apart from the isolating subjective obsessions of the other characters in the novel, and she shows a comprehension of events and motives unrestrained by the conventions of her upbringing. She possesses a "wisdom of the heart" which has "no concern with the erection or demolition of theories any more than with the defence of prejudices" (67). And her unfettered vision enables her to see through the adornments which veil and justify society's causes--what is referred to in The Secret Agent as "personal impulses disguised into creeds" (102). Emilia recognizes that the political changes in Costaguana are not amendments, but merely "a comedy of naive pretences ... hardly anything genuine" (49).

Nina of Almayer's Folly also sees through the pretence of society's constructs, and as such shows an awareness of the machinations of the patriarchal powers competing in her Malaysian homeland. Greed drives both the Europeans and Malays, but while the colonialists plot "for their own ends

under the protection of laws and according to the rules of Christian conduct," the locals "sought the gratification of their desires with the savage cunning and the unrestrained fierceness of natures as innocent of culture as their own immense and gloomy forests" (38). These are Nina's observations, as is the wisdom which finds the Malays' unadorned actions "preferable to the sleek hypocrisy, to the polite disguises, to the virtuous pretences" of the whites.

Nina also embodies the only real aspect of growth within the details of that story. She escapes the bonds of her past and her father's stagnant dreams, "with its sad thoughts, its bitter feelings, and its faint affections, now withered and dead in contact with her fierce passion" (123-4). She responds to the emotions stirred in her by Dain, "by obeying the voice of the new-born impulses" (123), and goes on to become the wife of a Malaysian prince and mother of a child, while Almayer at the novel's end is the very figure of sterility--immobile and conversing with illusions within the skeleton of his failed dream, the house known ironically as "Almayer's Folly."

The title character of Conrad's short story, "Freya of the Seven Isles" also possesses a keen perceptiveness which sees through the "outward appearance" with which men mask their motives and themselves: "Miss Freya could read 'poor dear papa' in the way a woman reads a man--like an open book" (149). She is empowered with what the narrator refers to as "the sanity of feminine outlook and the frankness of feminine reasoning"

(149) which enables her to act as the situation demands, not according to her own desires. In fact, in this story, she is remarkable as the only one who sees the situation clearly, unclouded by personal aspirations. Her lover Jasper Allen, her father, and Heemskirk, the Dutch authority, all operate under their own illusions and colouring of reality.

The ironic perspective thus afforded to Freya due to her freedom from these prejudices is nicely conveyed in the story through positionality. Freya moves freely, unobserved through the house watching all the others in their folly and seeing them as they do not see themselves. It is a kind of ironic detachment which provides her with a panoptic vision of the events before her, and the motivations driving them. But it is a detachmen which differs from that of Jones or Jörgenson in that she remains committed to life and the promise of tomorrow. Rather than rejecting the multiple perspectives offered her and resigning to pessimism and cynicism, she uses her awareness as an opportunity for involvement.

Edith Travers, in The Rescue, enacts the same sort of engagement. She arrives in the waters of Southeast Asia as Mrs. Travers, the representative Angel of the hearth, wife to the English gentleman, Martin Travers. Trained in "palatial drawing rooms," hers is the discipline of servitude and a "life-long devotion to some unselfish ideal" (123)--the ideal that is manifested in her marriage to Martin Travers. She exists behind "the veil of an immense indifference stretched between her and all men" wherein "the days

went on rapid, brilliant, uniform" (102; 124).

When Edith Travers and her companions aboard a yacht become stranded in the hostile territory of Southeastern waters stirred by tribal revolt, her destiny falls into the hands of Tom Lingard, a white man of legendary status in these parts. Edith finds that her position strips her of all personal control and involvement:

> She felt strongly her isolation. She was so much the only being of her kind moving within this mystery that even to herself she looked like an apparition without rights and without defence and that must end by surrendering to those forces which seemed to her but the unconscious genius of the place.... as though she had been set apart within a magic circle. It cut off--but it did not protect. (236-7)

Edith recognizes that in this drama of life and death, the only role allotted to women is that of supporter and suppliant. She sees herself as "some woman in a ballad, who has to beg for the lives of innocent captives. To save the lives of Mr. Travers and Mr. d'Alcacer was more than a duty. It was a necessity, it was an imperative need, it was an irresistible mission" (178). Her part in "the rescue" is not one of action but of support and placation. Lingard must act as the saviour because, as she explains to him, "don't you see that I have no kingdoms to conquer" (178).

However, after meeting the dethroned Malaysian princess, Immada,

Mrs. Travers feels something stirring within. In a variation on the banished sons' response to the call of the sterile paternal figures, she feels herself drawn to

> that light.... She envied, for a moment, the lot of that humble and obscure sister. Nothing stood between that girl and the truth of her sensations. She could know the truth of terror ... without artificial trammels, without the pain of restraint. Thinking of what such life could be Mrs. Travers felt invaded by that inexplicable exaltation which the consciousness of their physical capacities so often gives to intellectual beings. (124-5)

Immada becomes, in Edith's eyes, a signal-fire prompting her to become engaged in an active existence. As Edith removes her own uniform of civility, represented by the exchange of her European clothes for native dress, she feels exhilarated and liberated. Her European apparel seems now simply a "disguise;"

> because you know in the present more perfect costume I feel curiously at home .... I like freedom of movement. I have had very little of what I liked in life.... It was supposed not to be good form to have much freedom of action. So at least I was told. But I have a suspicion that it was only unpleasing to other people. (251-2)

Edith achieves a state of individuality by removing the restraining layers of custom and convention which have been her inheritance, and embracing instead life's passionate impulses. "She felt alive in a flush of strength, with an impression of novelty as though life had been the gift of this very moment" (133-4). She renews her identity as Edith and moves from life "behind the veil of an immense indifference stretched between her and all men" (102) to an active, engaged state free of the confines of drawing rooms and proper conduct.

In contrast to his wife, Martin Travers becomes increasingly detached, cynical, and inactive as the situation grows more and more dangerously complex. He becomes increasingly confused and obstinate as he realizes that events are unravelling and he can not even hold the thread, let alone keep it all together. Edith sees in her husband "the anguish of a slow mind with an instinctive dread of obscure places wherein new discoveries can be made" (226). The foreign landscapes are the terrain of possibility and the forum of imagination and fear, and one's ability to embrace both under the shadow of doubt determines the creative potential. Characters such as Martin Travers, however, are blinded by and shackled to the inherited values and beliefs that they carry with them. They refuse to let go of their protective habits and beliefs despite the fact that they are ineffective in the foreign terrain where they become stranded.

It has been suggested by a few critics that their imprisonment within

Belarab's stockade is a metaphor for the cultural restraints they carry with them, the "traditions and conventions that inhibit passion and spontaneity" (Schwarz, 116). This is in keeping with the apathetic surrender of Almayer, Razumov, Decoud, and others who are unable to embrace the potentiality offered by change and chance. Significantly, while the others are confined within Belarab's stockade, Edith and Lingard remain free to try and secure their release.

Edith, on the other hand, is thrown into the heart of danger and doubt, alone on a dinghy with Captain Tom Lingard, sailing into the Shallows where her husband and others from the yacht were being held captive by the renegade leader, Daman. Yet she is not daunted by the situation, but animated by it: "In a few hours of life she had been torn away from all her certitudes, flung into a world of improbabilities. This thought instead of augmenting her distress seemed to soothe her. What she experienced was not doubt and it was not fear" (201-2).

In Conrad's novels, women such as Edith show a remarkable ability to live outside the protective fortress of habit and convention. They are imbued with what Keats refers to as "negative capability": "capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason" (Keats, letter of Dec. 21st, 1817). She refuses to play the socially-ordained role of the mute companion accompanying the lost son in the procession of surrender. And it is her refusal to act the part allotted her

that exasperates and bewilders her husband, who tells her, "There is something abnormal in you," to which she fires back, "I assure you that of all the monsters that wait on what you would call a normal existence the one I dread most is tediousness. A merciless monster without teeth or claws. Impotent" (377). The vitality and boldness of "that outspoken woman" actually frightens her husband, the enervated English gentleman, because she refuses to be "normal."

Throughout the novel, Edith radiates a vitality and defiance that set her apart from her male counterparts. She conveys a potentiality that opposes the pessimistic portrait of inevitable decline: "I can't find it in me to behave like a fatalist, to sit down with folded hands" (281). This comment foreshadows the final meeting between Edith and Tom upon the beach marked by Jaffir's grave.

If Jörgenson is the ever-present voice of doubt and pessimism that whispers in man's ears and haunts his every act, then Edith is the clarion call which beckons from outside the circle, calling man to life. As Jörgenson prepares to detonate a ship full of explosives, she calls out "with suppressed passion: 'Are you aware, Captain Jörgenson, that I am alive?... Remember that I am not a shadow but a living woman still'" (306-7). She stands in defiance of his communion with death and cancelling negativity, and refuses to be dismissed and disregarded, to be left "out of it."

Over the course of The Rescue, Edith provides an active challenge to

the male tendency to typecast her and others according to socially-defined positions. She enacts a resistance against the essentializing biases and enervating sterility of the agents of masculine pessimism as embodied by her husband and Jörgenson. For example, when her husband dismisses d'Alcacer as "a mere Spaniard," one of the "decayed races" (225), she quickly defends him. And, when Lingard responds sarcastically to a comment made by d'Alcacer by suggesting that such a comment is typical of "a gentleman" (280), Edith interrupts with "I call you all but by your Christian name." She also warns Lingard not to prejudge her according to convention, according to his "own conception of what a woman like me should be. I am perhaps as strong as you are" (209-10).

Edith feels a kinship with both Tom Lingard and d'Alcacer: the latter because his Spanish nationality makes him, in the eyes of the ruling British and Dutch, a second-class European and somewhat of an outsider. And so, when Lingard remarks, "Spaniard or no Spaniard, he is one of your kind," she replies derisively, "Tarred with the same brush" (213). In Lingard she discovers someone seemingly free from the demands and constraints of the Home Order. "She considered him apart from social organization. She discovered he had no place in it. How delightful! Here was a human being" (136). He has been forced out of European society due to its class-consciousness, and she also feels excluded by her gender. In the presence of this exile of the European world, Edith feels herself "stripped ... of her

position, of her wealth, of her rank, of her past" (136). Here she finds the opportunity for self-realization--the opportunity to be a person instead of a symbol.

Meanwhile, Edith represents for Lingard a kind of liberation. He sees in her the opportunity for understanding, unfettered by the biases and stereotypes he sought to escape. She represents to Lingard what Decoud's sister represents to that young Frenchman, and what the privileged reader is to Marlow in Lord Jim: the only person to whom he can entrust his story with the assurance of comprehension and compassion--his sheltered dock and ideal reader. Lingard tells Edith "what he had told no one on earth" (176), because "she was the only person to whom he could tell the tale himself, as if no one else on earth had the power to draw it from him" (235). It is Edith's understanding, imagination, and alert mind that overcome Lingard's taciturnity.

As with Freya in the story that bears her name, Edith's position on the perimeter of the established order allows her the vantage point of an alert reader, and as Lingard speaks to Edith of his innermost thoughts, she listens with attention, compassion, and an open imagination. "His tale was as startling as the discovery of a new world. She was being taken along the boundary of an exciting existence, and she looked into it through the guileless enthusiasm of the narrator" (132).

Edith shows the capacity for understanding which comes with the

creativity and perspicacity of an imaginative mind. Her freedom is an extension of her outlook on her surroundings and situation. Her refusal to accept blindly the culturally ascribed world vision enables her to appreciate the breadth and "beauty" of the new situation and life of which she has become a part. The narrator credits her with "the faculty of being able to think her own thoughts--and the courage" (135). "Perhaps her hatred of convention, trammelling the frankness of her own impulses, had rendered her more alert to perceive what is intrinsically great and profound within the forms of human folly, so simple and so infinitely varied according to the region of the earth and to the moment of time" (132).

Edith's strengths make her more Conrad's representative female than Tekla, Winnie, or any of the slavish altruists. As d'Alcacer says to Edith,

> Women have a singular capacity for understanding. I mean subjects that interest them; because when their imagination is stimulated they are not afraid of letting it go. A man is more mistrustful of himself, but women are born much more reckless. They push on and on under the protection of secrecy and silence, and the greater the obscurity of what they wish to explore the greater their courage. (259)

In Lord Jim, Marlow also expresses the opinion that "only women ... come nearest to rising above the trammels of earthly caution" (209). And in one of the author's own letters, he states plainly "I believe that only women

have true courage" (NLL, 100).

Axel Heyst, in Victory finds that he is also challenged by his inherited biases and limitations. Like so many of the other sons of Conrad's fiction, Heyst is the product of a stern paternal code that renders him incapable of dealing with the contingencies and "the shock of sharp contradictions that lacerate our intelligence and our feelings" (68); and his inability to respond to the sudden appearance of the Jones gang has its companion in his paralysis when confronted with his own feelings for Lena. The narrator relates that he is "very masculine and perplexed, enveloped in the atmosphere of femininity as in a cloud, suspecting pitfalls, as if afraid to move" (186).

Heyst clearly lacks the creative imagination necessary to understand Lena, and she often appears to him as something "spectral," thus not fully apprehended, or not quite real. And like Decoud whose faith in a hopeful future with Antonia wanes while he is stranded alone with the silver, so does Heyst's belief in Lena and in himself diminish while separated from her. Both Decoud and Heyst are unable to sustain themselves because they lack the imagination necessary to fill the emptiness that reenters once alone. As the narrator of Victory says of Heyst: "Nothing could have been more detached from feminine associations.... this observer of facts seemed to have no connexion with earthly affairs and passions" (61).

Heyst's masculine realism requires tangible forms, and just as Decoud

believes the lighter is moving only when he feels the water streaming through his fingers, Lena exists for Heyst only when she is "before his eyes, under his hand" for "when she was out of his sight," she seemed "vague, elusive and illusory, a promise that could not be embraced and held" (186). She embodies all the "earthly passions" that have been denied him, and in this respect, she is set in direct contrast to the pessimistic philosophy of Heyst Sr.

Troubled by his new-found feelings, Axel retreats to the sheltered dock of his father's writings, and he sits reverentially below his father's portrait reading Storm and Dust, his father's doctrine of noninvolvement and abrogation. When Heyst looks up from his father's book and sees Lena standing before him, she seems to him

> like a script in an unknown language, or even more mysterious; like any writing to the illiterate.... His mental attitude was that of a man looking this way and that on a piece of writing which he is unable to decipher, but which may be big with some revelation. (186)

Confused by the lack of clear definitions and uniform structures, Heyst is incapable of responding to the opportunities available to the imaginative mind. Roland Barthes contends, in The Pleasure of the Text, that "there are those who want a text without a shadow, without the 'dominant ideology'; but this is to want a text without fecundity, without

productivity, a sterile text ... the Woman without a shadow" (32). Lena stands before Heyst as anything but a sterile text; she is pregnant with potentiality--a creative force counterpoised against the elements of sterility and decay that hold sway in the form of the emaciated figure of Jones and the paralytic prose of Heyst Sr.

As Heyst sits below his father's portrait in cold communion with the tenets of sceptical withdrawal, Lena's warm voice draws his attention out and towards her. In so doing, she overcomes his overly-refined manner and inspires their sexual consummation. As such, she offers Heyst the opportunity for life beyond the barren grounds of the paternal gravesite, an opportunity to which he is unable to respond fully, and his final warning to Davidson reveals his recognition of what he has missed: "woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love--and to put its trust in life!" (326).

Susan Brodie considers Lena the best representative of what she terms "the feminine perspective in Conrad:"

> the effort to achieve affinity with another has both practical and creative value, defining the self while concomitantly suggesting the path leading from solitude toward solidarity.... Conrad assigns to woman the clear vision and sense of responsibility that lead men, if momentarily, to a heightened understanding of life's potential richness. (149)

They embody, she writes, the "life-affirming force" in the novels which enables characters "to achieve a heightened state of consciousness" (151). Indeed, through Lena, Heyst experiences "a greater sense of his own reality than he had ever known in all his life" (176).

Lena is not however merely a more positive form of a woman as symbolic figure. In fact, through the course of the novel, she grows from a dependent instrument in Zangiacomo's orchestra, without rights or even an identity of her own, into an active efficacious force. And through her union with Heyst, she discovers a moral basis for her actions: "She was no longer alone in the world... she was no longer deprived of moral support; because she was a human being who counted; because she was no longer defending herself for herself alone" (315).

Lena, like Edith Travers, escapes her imprisonment as an emblem of the home order, an archetypal woman. Linda Ray Pratt suggests that novelists have often used such archetypal characterizations as a way of ossifying females in fiction. "The freer the novelist is from the attractions of Edenic innocence, the greater the measure of human status afforded the women characters.... The escape from the Garden into the fallen world means woman's release from symbolic abstraction into the condition of humanity" ("The Abuse of Eve," Images of Women in Fiction, Feminist Perspectives, 158).

Mrs. Schomberg, of Victory, is another female character in the novel

who transgresses her assigned role as an angel of the hearth, and through that helps convey the text's pervading sense of expansion. She is, for the most part, misinterpreted and often just ignored by men raised on the patriarchal European home values, and as such she appears to them as just part of the furnishings in her husband's inn where she sits silent and motionless on a stool. If they notice her at all, she is dismissed as mousey, cowering, and plain.

Lena, however, recognizes the hidden depths behind that costume of social duty: "she isn't as silly as she looks.... She knows a trick or two of that. She'll help" (84). As a result, Heyst, who had never paid any real attention to her before, sees her in a whole new light, brings her into his confidence, and enlists her aid in getting Lena free of the clutches of Schomberg and Zangiacomo.

This in turn alters the opinion of the merchant seaman, Davidson, whose initial impression of Mrs. Schomberg is of a wooden automaton. But when he realizes the part she has played in the escape, and the fact that Heyst took her into his confidence, his portrait of her becomes considerably more sympathetic and approving. Heyst cautions Davidson that "she is more resourceful than one would give her credit for." To which he replies, "Women often are.... There's a lot of unexpectedness about women" (57). But his "didactic" generalization is ignored by Heyst who steers the topic back to his concern for Mrs. Schomberg's safety and secrecy. Davidson,

however, remains dumbfounded: "Fancy anyone having a talk with Mrs. Schomberg! ... Why she looks too stupid to understand human speech and too scared to shoo a chicken away. Oh, the women, the women! You don't know what there may be in the quietest of them" (58). Again, upon Davidson's generalization and stereotyping, Heyst speaks directly of the woman herself and her very human motives, again with a tone of admiration. Soon after, Davidson also becomes struck with "admiration" for her and the depth of her artifice.

> The insight he had obtained almost frightened him; he couldn't get over his wonder at knowing more of the real Mrs. Schomberg than anybody in the Islands, including Schomberg himself. She was a miracle of dissimulation. No wonder Heyst got the girl away from under two men's noses, if he had her to help with the job! (60-1)

Davidson's admiration for Mrs. Schomberg is not unlike that expressed by Martin Decoud in his letter to his sister: "The women of our country are worth looking at during a revolution. The rouge and pearl powder fall off, together with that passive attitude towards the outer world which education, tradition, custom impose upon them from earliest infancy" (Nostromo, 234). Decoud recognizes the way in which passivity, a characteristic so often attributed to women, is in fact a learned posture imposed by the accepted habit of society. And it is acknowledged that Mrs. Schom-

berg's "invincible placidity of expression" (Victory, 60) is merely a mask adopted as a defence against the abusive treatment of her husband.

In Chance, also, femininity is associated with the capacity to understand, and Marlow enacts the effort to nurture this quality of "'femininity,' that drop of superior essence" within himself (127). As he views John Fyne's struggle to comprehend the reasons behind Flora's sudden flight with his brother-in-law, Marlow notes that Fyne is "very masculine."

> So much so that "hopelessly" was not the last word of it. He was helpless. He was bound and delivered by it. And if by the obscure promptings of my composite temperament I beheld him with malicious amusement, yet being in fact, by definition ... a man, I could not help sympathizing with him largely. Seeing him thus disarmed, so completely captive by the very nature of things, I was moved to speak to him kindly. (128)

While recognizing in Fyne the limitations of the patriarchal constructs which hinder Heyst in Victory and Martin Travers in The Rescue, Marlow endeavours to achieve an amalgamated perspective to convey the areas of experience to which the self-absorbed masculine consciousness is blind.

Marlow's experience with Fyne, and his encounter with Flora's history, challenges his own prejudices and expectations, and he is forced to move outside of them in order to understand and convey the subtle realities of her life and character. In her eyes, Marlow discovers the troubling aspect

of complexity: "It was--how shall I say it?--a night effect when you seem to see vague shapes and don't know what reality you may come upon at any time" (215).

Upon leaving the protective confines of the home paternal port and its insulating routine and stereotypes, the progeny of the paternal order in Conrad's novels must confront the unknown. "To the negation of the habitual, which is safe, there is added the affirmation of the unusual, which is dangerous; a suggestion of things vague, uncontrollable, and repulsive, whose discomposing intrusion excites the imagination and tries the civilized nerves of the foolish and the wise alike" (An Outpost of Progress, 86).

Women, and the very nature of femininity, represent in Conrad's novels the unsettling otherness or foreignness which the male authorial agents seek to convert and assimilate, and in so doing, silence the voices of doubt which whisper in their ears. In Conrad's short story, "Outcast of the Islands," for example, the native woman, Aissa, inspires a fear in the men, Lingard and Willems, that is likened to "being lost among shapeless things that were dangerous and ghastly" (80).

Joseph Conrad and Henry James were criticized by one of their contemporaries, novelist Dorothy Richardson, for what she referred to as the "masculine realism" existent within their texts. In particular, she refers to the "self-satisfied, complacent, know-all condescendingness" of their omniscient male narrators--the voices within the texts operating with an

egotistical acceptance of their own force and verisimilitude (as quoted in Edel, 74). Certainly those voices are apparent in Conrad's novels, and they speak with the confidence of men situated within the ruling circle of the ruling society, the voices of authority, truth and rectitude.

Richardson sought, in her own writings, to offer an alternative to this "masculine realism." She tried to create what Virginia Woolf describes as "a sentence which we might call the psychological sentence of the feminine gender.... capable of stretching to the extreme, of suspending the frailest particles, of enveloping the vaguest shapes" (Woolf, 124-5).

Conrad's texts do, however, offer space for the "vague shapes" and "inscrutable spaces" of life, thereby leaving room for the "conjecture" of the reader, providing the reader with, to borrow from Woolf, a room of his/her own within the novels. As Marlow says in Chance, in reference to his presentation of Flora's tale:

> Dark and, so to speak, inscrutable spaces being met with in life, there must be such places in any statement dealing with life. In what I am telling you of now... this evening confabulation is a dark, inscrutable spot. And we may conjecture what we like. (92)

Flora embodies the irreducible complexity and fecundity of life, and Marlow seeks a place for Flora in "this man-arranged life" and in his own understanding of humankind.

In fact, the Marlovian narrator serves just such a function for Conrad. Marlow's narration is filtered through what we may call the external narrator--that is, the narrator addressing the reader. And, on numerous occasions during Marlow's narration this anonymous, but by no means passive listener, interrupts him to upbraid and even ridicule Marlow's gender generalizations. For example, at one point early in the novel the external narrator raises his hand to halt one of Marlow's discourses on "women" and asks, "'Do you really believe what you have said?' ... because with Marlow one could never be sure" (86). In this way, not only is Marlow's reliability and authority undermined, but the whole notion of authority and the "True Word" (Bakhtin, 280) are placed in quotation marks and punctuated with a question mark.

Conrad utilizes a similar layered narration in Heart of Darkness, and achieves a remarkable, vibrant indeterminacy which provides this work with its constant sense of growth. Here again, at the centre of the story is a void, the dead corpse of Kurtz. As in the cases of Charles Gould, Axel Heyst, and others, Marlow's narrative begins with the death of this figure of authority, almost a father-figure. Marlow travels deep into the African Congo to meet Kurtz like one of the Patna pilgrims on the way to the promised land, aboard a "little begrimed steamboat, like a sluggish beetle crawling .... deeper and deeper into the heart of darkness.... towards Kurtz" (68), towards "destiny. My Destiny!" (112). Upon reflection, while relating

the tale to his listeners on board the Nellie, Marlow describes his fatal attraction: "As I looked at the map of [the Congo River] in a shop-window, it fascinated me as a snake would a bird--a silly little bird" (33).

Marlow finds his life and identity increasingly intertwined with that of Kurtz, and, like Razumov, he finds himself at the mercy of others' preconceptions and expectations. First his aunt characterizes him as something he is not to high-ranking officials in a trading company. And he is given a reputation and name that precedes him from then on. With each new encounter, first with the brickmaker, then Kurtz, and finally the Intended, Marlow discovers that each has already adopted some belief about him; and he begins to surrender to their expectations. To this end, he chooses to let the brickmaker believe that Marlow actually has great influence with the company administrators, "simply because I had a notion it somehow would be of help to that Kurtz" (57). In this respect, Marlow begins to service the ideal that Kurtz embodies, and he furthers his role as keeper of the faith when he goes to see Kurtz's beloved Intended.

The willingness to believe in created fictions is at the heart of the scene involving the Intended. While Marlow has seen for himself the truth of Kurtz's hollow ideals and immoral motives, he finds the Intended comforting herself against remorse by wrapping herself in her belief in his glory and her own privileged communion with him--a romantic reverie gilded with impenetrable fidelity. Like Emilia and the Costaguanans, the Intended has

shaped out of the precious prestige of this man her own "protecting and invincible virtue" (Nostromo, 398). As a result, she remains known only by her association to Kurtz and her role in his life.

Through her, Kurtz has achieved the "permanence of memory" (NLL, 13); he has successfully made "his own self appear sublime in the eyes of other people, and even in his own eyes" (Chance, 272). She has been fashioned into his Grecian Urn, and the room of "cold and monumental whiteness" that houses her within "the sepulchral city" provides Kurtz's mausoleum. Marlow comments that "she seemed as though she would remember and mourn forever.... She had a mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering" (117). To appropriate a phrase from Kristeva, she remains "in the elegance of permanent mourning" (151-2).

The Intended stands before Marlow as a reminder of what Kurtz had been, a symbolic figure and standard-bearer of European patriarchal ideals. He was once the fiction paragon of progress and enlightenment, and she is the archetypal angel of the hearth. Kurtz, however, ends up seeing behind the veil of the ideals, and is crushed by the awareness. Like Almayer, Decoud, and others, Kurtz succumbs to the pattern of pessimistic surrender described by Marlow: "the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate" (Heart of Darkness, 31). Kurtz, who took up the waste-object of the paternal order, the faith of the fathers, becomes that waste-object himself. He becomes the ideal, and his realiz-

ation is that the ideal is corrupt and corrupting. As he is borne on a stretcher to the boat, he looks like "an animated image of death carved out of old ivory" (99). Kurtz ends up like Travers, Jones, and Jörgenson, reflecting the consuming negating pessimism that removes all hope and passion from life: with his "mouth wide--it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him" (99).

Marlow recognizes in the Intended's eager desire to maintain her faith a kind of saving grace, although his description of the darkness that fills the room at the end of the scene suggests that her salvation is no more positive than the blind beliefs of his aunt or all the other supporters of the colonial cause. Furthermore, she chooses to provide her own answers to the questions she puts to Marlow, and he realizes that what she demands of him is to be simply the narrator of her dearly-held fiction. In this sense, he serves both Kurtz and the Intended with his veiled answer to her query about Kurtz's final words.

A great deal has been written over the years on the topic of Marlow's "lie." Peter Hyland, in an article entitled "The Little Woman in Heart of Darkness," posits that

> Marlow's response to the Intended is the result of a particular kind of anti-feminism that pervades the novella and may reflect Conrad's own inadequate response to the feminine....

> Marlow's apparently protective attitude towards women is based upon a containing stereotype that may conceal actual fear and contempt. (4)

However I contend that the sneer is not in any way against the feminine, but is instead a disapproving glare at what she represents, a characterization that, as we have seen in the two preceding chapters of this study, is not always cast in women's clothing. But even more so, this is part of Marlow's refusal to be the bearer of the True Word.

For Marlow, the Intended reflects not only what Kurtz once represented, but also what Marlow himself once was, a devoted advocate for Kurtz and all the standard he carried. Mikhail Bakhtin, in his analysis of ideological forces operating within novels, points out that "what is realized in the novel is the process of coming to know one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language, coming to know one's own belief system in someone else's system" (365). Bakhtin explains that this element of self-consciousness in the texts operates as a mediating and disruptive power over the assumed authority:

> Self-consciousness ... is by itself sufficient to break down the monologic unity of an artistic world--but only on condition that the hero, as self-consciousness, is really represented and not merely expressed, that is, does not fuse with the author, does not become a mouthpiece for his voice. (PDP, 51)

Marlow realizes that not only is the Intended in danger of falling prey to the consuming regrets and faithlessness that claimed Kurtz, but so too is he; and his narration to his audience on board the Nellie carries his ironic awareness of what he has been and to what he once committed himself. "I have wrestled with death.... It takes place ... in a sickly atmosphere of tepid scepticism, without much belief in your own right, and still less in that of your adversary" (112).

He has been clearly changed by his experience, and as the narrating listener says of Marlow,

> he did not represent his class.... The minds of [most seamen] are of the stay-at-home order, and their home is always with them.... Foreign shores, foreign faces, the changing immensity of life, glide past, veiled ... by a slightly disdainful ignorance. (29)

Marlow, however, is "not typical" (30); and, as he penetrates the interior of the Congo, Marlow, steps outside his familiar surroundings and knowledge, and finds himself naked and exposed without comforting conventions: "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" (69). Despite his apprehensions, there is a certain respect for this world in Marlow's account, an aspect that is evident also in his response to the sight of Kurtz's native lover, the "savage" woman: "she was savage and

superb, wild-eyed and magnificent ... ominous and stately" (101). Marlow, at this point, is stirred by the paradoxical responses of fear and fascination, and rather than rejecting the latter in deference to the former, he develops a narrative which can accommodate both.

As he views the African coast for the first time, he is fascinated by it, and is attracted to its dynamic state of becoming, "as if still in the making" (39). This parallels Conrad's own attitudes to the mutable, fluid, and irrational aspects of life. As he writes, in a letter to Edward Garnett,

> When once the truth is grasped that one's own personality is only a ridiculous and aimless masquerade of something hopelessly unknown, the attainment of serenity is not very far off.... If we are 'ever becoming--never being' then I would be a fool if I tried to become this thing rather than that; for I know well that I never will be anything. I would rather grasp the solid satisfaction of my wrong-headedness and shake my fist at the idiotic mystery of Heaven. (Garnett, 47)

In the novels, Lord Jim, Chance, and Heart of Darkness, Conrad's narrator-as-character, Marlow, develops from a representative of masculine realism to an impetus to the reader's own engagement with the text. This development of the narrators also helps to convey the expansion of the texts themselves into an active, ever-evolving condition much like Lukacs' conception of the novel as a living form representing the "process of becoming"

(72-3).

In Heart of Darkness, for example, Marlow's narratives are described as "inconclusive experiences" (32). Marlow, himself, says that he is attempting to relate, not the facts or truth, but "the life-sensation," the inner emotional development, "that which makes its truth, its meaning--its subtle and penetrating essence" (57). And the narrator comments that, to Marlow, "the meaning was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze" (30).

The development of Marlow in Heart of Darkness is a function of his growing realizations and self-awareness; and as a result of that, his struggle against the enervating principles of the paternal order to which he was so devoted. This former apostle of the paternal order has benefited from his experience, and his narration acts not as a pedantic speech, but as an opportunity for his listeners to make their own realizations. And his renunciation of the role of keeper of truth within the safe circle of the Occidental ruling order is suggested in his position and posture as he delivers his story. He sits on the perimeter of the circle of sailors, "in the pose of a meditating Buddha" (121).

Rather than acting as sources of meaning and the True Word as some readers and critics have identified them, the Conradian narrators embody the author's sense of the mutable and inscrutable. Paul Coates proposes that Conrad uses the 'Marlow'-type narrator as "a device for placing the narrative

in brackets, for disavowing it," and in that to achieve a certain "detachment" from words which fail to express all he wishes to express (Coates, 83). By accommodating doubt and the "inscrutable spaces" in the narrative, Conrad in effect finds his release from the homocentric crypt of the paternal corpse.

Conrad's texts act as the forum for competing voices and intersecting narrative lines wherein no one authority reigns. Consequently, figures of authority within the various stories are often seen swept in and out of power with no consistent dominion. The narrative development is a growth of awareness achieved through alternative perspectives as the authorial voices are confronted by not only opposing values, but their own as embodied by characters who become the subjects of the narratives. In trying to incorporate these multiple vistas, the narrators are forced to provide a forum for what constitutes the trial of their own values, and the unresolved conflict of contrary aspects of life--a debate of perspectives which undermines the masculine realism Conrad is accused of championing.

This is part of the author's efforts for his own imaginative flexibility. As a novelist, he says that he is "always striving for freedom" which for him is to be "no slave to prejudices and formulas.... A work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion" (NLL, 204-5).

In Lord Jim, Marlow invites the reader into an active, imaginative participation with the material before him by offering no steady central perspective, but instead a clash of views and voices. The narrative of Jim is comprised of collected observations, Jim as seen "through the eyes of others" (255). And Marlow states that "there shall be no message, unless such as each of us can interpret for himself from the language of facts" (255-6).

Like the Marlow of Heart of Darkness, the Marlow of Lord Jim possesses a wider perspective than others in the novel due to his position on the edges of the narrative he relates, with one foot in and one out of the circle. This is where Jim's attention goes in search of some hint of understanding during the trial: "a white man who sat apart from the others, with his face worn and clouded, but with quiet eyes that glanced straight, interested and clear" (30). Marlow's aspect of "intelligent volition" inspires confidence and confidences, and as a result he becomes a "receptacle of confessions" (32).

He also ventures beyond the bounds of his own masculine purblindness, as in his encounter with Jim's lover in Patusan, Jewel. Obviously impressed by Jim's companion, Marlow is inspired to imaginative contemplation:

> I ask myself with wonder--how the world can look to them--whether it has the shape and substance 'we' know, the air 'we' breathe! Sometimes I fancy it must be a region of unreasonable

> sublimities seething with the excitement of their adventurous souls, lighted by the glory of all possible risks and renunciations. (210)

Marlow seems to be the only one of the whites who is capable of recognizing Jewel's true value for Jim. He is struck by their obvious compassionate intimacy whilst others outside Patusan believe mistakenly that Jim possesses some actual gem that he has likely hidden upon her person; after all Jim is reportedly always with her; "they walked side by side, openly, he holding her arm under his.... a strange thing for anyone to do" (213). They cannot possibly conceive of her having any other value.

Feminist critic, Alice Jardine, points out that invoking

> the space outside of the conscious subject has always connoted the feminine in the history of Western thought--and any movement into alterity is a movement into that female space; any attempt to give a place to that alterity within discourse involves a putting into discourse of 'woman' (114-15).

In Conrad's novels, female characters often contain both the possibility for growth as an element within themselves, and as the inspiration for the expanded awareness of others. In Under Western Eyes, for example, Natalia Haldin develops from a minor character in the novel to one of the principal agents of the story, and her growth is in tandem with that of Razumov who achieves an expanded awareness through his association with

both Natalia and her mother.

After meeting with Mrs. Haldin, Razumov becomes aware of both what he has committed himself to, and what he has really lacked in his life. On the one hand, like Marlow with the Intended, Razumov recognizes in Mrs. Haldin's undying devotion to her fictional conception of Victor's heroism a reflection of his own reverential dedication to perished, misshapen ideals. But also he senses a certain value there in this vision of deep mourning. He begins to feel a sense of exclusion; Haldin's immortality in maternal affection is like "a privilege denied to him alone" (340-1), for Razumov has never experienced the love of a mother or another: "I never knew mine. I've never known any kind of love" (360).

Inspired by the same impulse for understanding that provoked Decoud's letter to his sister, Razumov sits down to write a confession to Natalia. Still perplexed by his confrontation with Mrs. Haldin's undying maternal love for her executed son, Razumov finds himself incapable of writing coherently--he feels himself estranged from language. However, his eloquence stumbles back in as he focuses his thoughts on Natalia, his addressee. He enters into a dialogue now; no longer are his words intended to cloak the inner truth.

Natalia becomes Razumov's inspiration to discard his cloaked identity and enter the community of fidelity which he had always sought. The thought of her "trustful eyes" inspires in him a vibrant expressiveness with

the force of a soul in flight from captivity. Her "confidence" forces him out of his shelter of deceit, "his prison of lies," and "back into truth and peace" (358). She "searched my heart and saved me from ignominy.... You alone in all the world to whom I must confess.... the truth shining in you drew the truth out of me" (361).

Affirmation and transcendence are not located within the female characters, but in union with them, just as the success of the novel depends upon both the efforts of the novelist and the active participation of the reader. After all, Charles Gould's vision of Emilia's sketch of the lost waterfall does not save him from his destructive impulse. It only confirms his sense of the irremediable state of things. And Emilia's clear vision of the political machinations in Sulaco as well as her awareness of the cost of her and her husband's cause results in only a weary condition of acrimony. But Emilia's role as that novel's carrier of the artistic spirit, as opposed to the fixed urn-like figure of art she is cast as by her husband and others, suggests Conrad's belief in the affirmative redemptive potential of art; and it is through her inspiration that Dr. Monygham escapes his bitter past. "Only Mrs. Gould could keep his unbelief in men's motives within due bounds" (44). Her compassionate, unselfish character combined with Monygham's unexpressed love for her moves him to an act of heroism which in turn enables him to put to rest the ghost of guilt which has haunted his steps for many years. He is thus saved from the kind of bitter cynical withdrawal of

Jörgenson, Jones, and others.

Natalia's encounter with Razumov in Under Western Eyes also has a freeing effect on her. Although her entrance into awareness comes at a great price--the sudden shock of Razumov's confession to her and the overwhelming emotional pain it brings--she benefits nevertheless from her widened consciousness. The Teacher of Languages unwittingly makes a fitting comment when he looks around the room after Razumov's departure and decries to Natalia, "That miserable wretch has carried off your veil" (356).

Initially Natalia was identified solely as the sister of Victor Haldin, the martyred revolutionary. But gradually she achieves an identity and strength of her own. As the Teacher of Languages marvels, there was "something grave and measured in her voice, in her movements, in her manner. It was the perfection of collected independence" (212). This independence is discovered through a form of unity, the commingling of contrary yet complimentary views. "The strength of her nature had come to surface because the obscure depths had been stirred" (373). She tells the teacher, "My eyes are open at last and my hands are free now" (376).

The old professor has maintained a kind of benign guiding, though not governing, role in her life, and now he senses that she outdistances even his direction: "To my Western eyes, she seemed to be getting farther and farther from me ... but undiminished in the increasing distance" (374).

Throughout his narrative, the Teacher of Languages, admits to his limitations as a Western male trying to comprehend Russian motives and, with Natalia, the mysterious quality of females. Limited by the biases inherent in his occidental upbringing, and "standing by Miss Haldin's side," he likens himself to "a traveller in a strange country" (169). He confesses early on his "ignorance of her modes of feeling. Difference of nationality is a terrible obstacle for our complex Western natures" (116). Herein, he admits the limitations of the narrow frame of references to which Western man is constrained. He feels "altogether out of it, on another plane whence I could only watch her from afar" (170). He admits that he lacks the intuitive faculties for a full appreciation of Natalia and all she represents: "The most precise of her sayings seemed always to me to have enigmatical prolongations vanishing somewhere beyond my reach" (118). But his very position as a lover of languages suggests his openness to the multiplicity of language and life, and his sympathetic interest in her story inspires his observations. Furthermore, his state of doubt and wonder inspires a narrative in which he tries to convey the living elements of the story as opposed to the fashioning of a concrete symbol or monument.

The active ingredient in Conrad's engagement of the reader is the same element that so many Conradian characters seek to escape: incertitude. It is the spectre of doubt that prompts Marlow's first response in Lord Jim to rectify the damaged faith of singularity and uniformity, and it

also acts as an inspiring anxiety for his "privileged reader."

This man resides in an estranged condition from life, in "the highest flat of a lofty building, and his glance could travel afar beyond the clear panes of glass, as though he were looking out of the lantern of a lighthouse" (254). Here in his protected turret he lives far removed from his days of adventure and discovery: "No more horizons as boundless as hope..., in the hot quest of the Ever-undiscovered Country over the hill, across the stream, beyond the wave. The hour was striking! No more! No more!" In fact, his is now a kind of spectral existence in which he leaves no mark and "his footfalls made no sound on the carpet." Marlow's packet of letters, on the other hand, draws him out of his state of indifference. Initially his eyes merely skim across the pages, but then he "checks himself," and "thereafter read on deliberately, like one approaching with slow feet and alert eyes the glimpse of an undiscovered country" (254).

Like Natalia for the Teacher of Languages, Flora and Jewel for the Marlows of Chance and Lord Jim, or Marlow's account of Jim's life for the "privileged reader," Edith provides for d'Alcacer, in The Rescue, a challenge to his understanding, and thus an inspiration to his imagination: "She had awakened his curiosity, which he thought nothing and nobody could do any more" (101). He agreed to accompany the Traverses on the voyage specifically because it provided him with the "opportunity of studying the various shades of scorn which he suspected to be the secret of her acquies-

cence in the shallowness of events and the monotony of a worldly existence" (100).

D'Alcacer is described in the novel as "an acute and sympathetic observer in all his secret aloofness from the life of men which was so different from Jörgenson's secret divorce from the passions of this earth" (235). And, as a companion and confidante to women, d'Alcacer is differentiated from Decoud who, we are told in Nostromo, does not believe that men and women can ever really understand each other. "It was part of what Decoud would have called his sane materialism that he did not believe in the possibility of friendship between man and woman" (223), the only exception being between brother and sister.

The narrator of The Rescue credits d'Alcacer with a "natural gift of insight" which enables him to see through the veils of mere appearance. He is imbued with a vision unobscured by the limiting blinkers of social conventions and biases. His judgement "is altogether independent of class feeling. He believed Lingard to be an honest man and he never troubled his head to classify him, except in the sense that he found him an interesting character.... He found in him also the distinction of being nothing of a type. He was a specimen to be judged only by its own worth" (256-7). This "observer of shades" (277) is attentive to the obscured and hidden, to the variety and degrees of difference, to the aspects of reality not clearly defined by compass points.

D'Alcacer's position as somewhat of an observer moving on the periphery of the European order sets him apart from the Keepers of that order with their fixed ideas, and provides him with an artistic vantage point, removed from the point of singularity. His position is partly a product of his being not English, nor French, but Spanish; thus European but not of the first order--a kind of second-class European at that historical time, and especially while in the company of a boat-load of Englishmen. It is a position to which Conrad himself could certainly relate being a Pole living in Great Britain and writing in English.

Despite being a celebrated and respected author, Conrad nevertheless felt somewhat excluded by his nationality and hindered by his imperfect grasp of this, his fourth language. And yet, in these characters he shows how this position of partial exile provides one with a certain liberty and scope of vision--an ironic viewpoint.

Edith, d'Alcacer, and Lingard all occupy a position on the border between worlds. Edith and d'Alcacer are both part of the world of European aristocrats, and yet partly excluded from its inner circles of power. Lingard also moves along the borders between worlds, a renegade sailor outcast from the world of his boyhood, and now a respected and feared trader in these southern seas, but nevertheless not quite at home here either.

All three characters act as mediators between opposing camps in the novel. Edith becomes a kind of link between the two ships and, in that, the

two classes, and she intercedes between her husband and Lingard to ensure the aid of the Captain. Lingard, meanwhile, stands between the whites and the natives, both in his allegiances and in negotiations. And d'Alcacer, "that friend of women" (277) provides a middle ground between the sexes, helping the men to appreciate Edith's needs and thoughts, and providing to Edith insights into the male psyche.

The reason for the panoptic perspectives conveyed through these characters may well be their positions on the border of the two intersecting worlds, either as characters of mixed race, like Nina, Jewel and others, or as Europeans forced to the sidelines by their class or gender. Bakhtin suggests that "discourse lives on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context" (Bakhtin, DI, 284), and often these characters on the boundaries in Conrad's novels act as the mediums to discussion. In a sense, this is where Conrad locates himself and where he invites the reader to join him, outside the obscuring walls of social conventions and preconceptions. This is the position of flux and possibility, and in that dynamic condition, the creative agency exists.

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