

THE AMBIGUITY OF CHARACTER REPRESENTATION IN JOSEPH CONRAD'S NOVEL "LORD JIM"



Twentieth Century and Contemporary Literature

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Abstract

The duration of a character's appearance isn't always as limited as the reader would like to think. Through the use of the narrative device, Lord Jim by Joseph Conrad confuses the existence of two characters, Marlow and Jim. Because Marlow is Jim's narrator, both of their roles in the narrative are unclear. Marlow and Jim are "becoming" representations of themselves as distinct characters and as a single character; they are not yet established as such. Deconstructive insights provide the reader the chance to see Marlow and Jim "becoming" throughout the narrative. This essay examines instances of Jim and Marlow's personal presence as well as the haunting of their combined complex, Jim equal to Marlow. When Jim or Marlow are under duress, Jim or Marlow will occasionally appear in the text as Jim. But it's difficult to categorize when characters desire to become complex and when they want to remain unique. In the same manner as the Lord Jim's character presence is ambiguous, this paper is unable to draw any firm conclusions on the impact of the narrative voice. Can one personality split into two or can two personas merge into one? Characters can connect with one another and meld their personal spaces in fiction. To grasp the character associations, the reader must interact with the text. When a character interacts with other personalities in the text, the interpersonal dynamic between the characters may weaken because of the numerous ways in which they show themselves that hide their true identities. Readers cannot approach the text by isolating the characters from one another in order to allow them to interact with one another's actions. In other words, rather than already "existing," the characters have a chance to "becoming." Character behavior, attitude, or action cannot be reduced to a single adjective. Lord Jim by Joseph Conrad has this appearance of cohesion amongst individuals as a central theme.

I. INTRODUCTION

The story of a young sailor named Jim is told in Lord Jim, which is narrated by another sailor named Marlow. The main conflict of the narrative starts when Jim is appointed as the ship Patna's first mate. After several strange incidents, the crew decides to leave the ship, thinking it is sinking, leaving hundreds of passengers to fend for themselves. When the ship does not sink and vanish from the narrative before they can be prosecuted for desertion in a court of law, the crew feels especially humiliated. Jim goes to trial and is found guilty, which is the opposite of how sailors typically respond when confronted by a power that could destroy their career. Jim spends the rest of his life fleeing and hiding from his history since this verdict causes him such severe agony. When someone recognizes him, Jim moves on to a different place. His separation from his past, both physically and emotionally, allows him to establish a contented routine in Southeast Asia. Jim is well-liked and prosperous in the small village of Patusan, which is exactly what he has desired throughout the entire narrative. The king assassinates Jim in revenge for his bad decision-making over the European stranger who Jim should have stopped from entering the area when a pirate enters his dominion and kills the crown prince, Jim's best friend, upending his

utopian existence. Jim's life may be regarded as one that aspires to be chivalrous but ends up being wasted because of his mistakes and inability to display bravery.

Because Marlow tells the majority of the story in *Lord Jim*, his interactions with Jim should be closely examined to spot inconsistencies in Jim's portrayal. Jim is confined by Marlow's narrative control, limiting his access to the reader, who can only access the story through Marlow's point of view. In her essay "The Last Word" or *The Ambivalence of Quotation Marks in Lord Jim*, Catherine Delesalle points out how "a closer reading of the novel reveals inconsistencies in the narration which call into question the reliability of discourse" because "the use of quotation marks actually participate in the general blurring of the frontiers...calling into question the very significance of quotation marks."

Because Marlow's narration gives him the power to distort the audience's impressions of Jim, it is essential to reject Marlow's account as being wholly accurate in order to understand the text's ambiguities. A narrational voice is never actually a voice, but rather a weaving of inscriptions and articulations, as Julian Wolfreys describes. Such acts of inscription demonstrate how texts are more than just transparent media that allow the reader to hear or physically experience the "author" or subject. Because the book is set in a fantastical realm, the narrative device never fully reveals the plot to the viewer, leaving the entire text unclear. Fictional works like *Lord Jim* are merely a form of pseudo-reality that may defy physical and mental limitations imposed by reality. The fact that Marlow and Jim in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* are either associated as one merged individual or two different individuals, as directed through the narrative mechanics of the book, adds to the narration's ambiguity.

It should be possible to distinguish between Jim and Marlow's presence and voice using a deconstructive interpretation. Close readings of a text are used in deconstruction to spot ambiguities. In light of the aforementioned statement by Wolfreys, it follows that a text is never a finite thing but is instead always "becoming" a domain with social and cultural constructs that communicate prejudices through narration. Deconstruction examines the narrative mode's capacity to represent; the narration's purpose is to represent. *Lord Jim* Marlow is a significant narrator who directs the plot's progression while also taking part in it.

Examining Marlow's dual function in the field is necessary. How to treat *Lord Jim*'s narrative implications leads to the following paradox of deconstruction: Deconstruction is an observational mode; deconstruction is integrated with and, more crucially, driven by a text, in contrast to the majority of traditional literary critical forms that are defined using words like "analysis," "process," or "methodology."

Both openly and implicitly, by the writing's meanings, the text must be understood. Donald Hall introduces the phrase "forms of signification" to describe elements of a work like the storyline, the characters, the symbols, or the surroundings. The kinds of signification are used to construct the society that the text portrays, revealing a dynamic system that is unique. Alleging forms of signification leads to a paradox: although they are always created by a text, they do not

necessarily “signify” the text. The signification patterns are not textual norms; rather, they are parsed characterizations that occasionally conflict with later indicated versions.

However, it is frequently believed that texts only offer signification in “one manner” and that everything else is an “ambiguity.” Biases, stereotypes, and developments that do not confine the text's qualities to a specific domain are revealed via ambiguities in many forms of meaning. (A character that is portrayed as calm but afterwards becomes violent is an example of this kind of ambiguity.) Additionally, Hall points out those significations are “never totally self-contained they are polyvalent, for their intricate meanings are always delayed and difficult.” Any examination of the environment and behavior of signification forms reveals that they behave erratically. This ambivalence can be extended to the quest for a finite definition of deconstruction: it is impossible because the very ideals that sustain deconstructive observations undermine anything “definite.”

Ironically, academics have tried to “define” deconstruction using a list of qualities that it is unable to uphold. Deconstruction, though not a dominant signifier in and of itself, is better described through an anti-relationship of supplements in a binary pair. According to Jacques Derrida, binary pairs are associations of polarized status, such as good versus evil, male versus female, and heaven versus hell; the complement, or the second, “lower” status attribution, can only be sustained in the presence of the dominant sign, the “higher” status attribution named first. In the connected pair, the dominant is the ultimate status holder. Because it lacks any presence that would permit participation in a hierarchical dichotomy, the idea of “deconstruction” is ineligible to serve as a dominant signifier. There is absolutely nothing autonomous about deconstruction. Since the concept of deconstructive observation is flexible and may be applied to any scenario, scholars are reluctant to give “deconstruction” a clear definition for fear that it would be supplemented by something that would limit its scope. Deconstruction can be observed in all of its signification's manifestations, hence it is without bounds.

In this essay, we reflect on some of the key concerns and various facets of this matter, as well as the opinions of some authors. We anticipate that this will help in some small way with future research on this subject.

II. DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEWS OF AUTHORS ABOUT CONRAD’S “LORD JIM”

Conrad's most well-known book, *Lord Jim*, is also his most thorough investigation of a recurring theme: the tension between a person’s inner moral code and their behavior. Conrad's protagonists frequently worry about how their personal values will hold up under the pressure of events across both his short tales and novels. In *Lord Jim*, this condition is made clear.

Conrad was all about innovation, and as a non-British person (he was Polish), he gave the literature of the British Empire a distinctive and international viewpoint. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that *Lord Jim* examines topics that appear in almost all of Conrad's other books,

including social mores and customs, masculinity, national identity, imperial politics, life at sea, and what it means to lead an exciting, passionate, and occasionally tumultuous life in the empire.

Every day, we are faced with proof of people's dubious, dishonest, or just insane behavior. People acting dishonorably have allowed entire media conglomerates to rise (we're looking at you, *Real Housewives*). Additionally, YouTube ensures that no social faux pas or irate outburst goes undetected.

What does Lord Jim have to do with any of this, then? In any case, Joseph Conrad's book is a reflection on guilt, disappointment, and the implications of dishonorable behavior for both the community and the person. Even though improper behavior may be tougher to hide in today's 24-hour news cycle and live-blogging culture than it was in the past, problems with reputation, gossip, and secrets are nothing new. Jim might not have to deal with immediate replay and viral recordings, but he still has to deal with the age-old instinct to gossip and never let a problem go away peacefully.

But Jim's actions are more cowardly than insulting. It contradicts conventional notions of what "gentlemen"—or white British men of a particular social station—should be. Lord Jim challenges us to analyze not only the consequences of inappropriate behavior, but also the reasons why certain behaviors are deemed scandalous in the first place and what that can reveal about the culture that is passing judgment.

2.1 How It All Goes Down

Professional sailor and aspiring storyteller Captain Marlow makes the decision to host his own open mic night and tell an audience about Jim's tragic experience. Back then, Jim and other crew members jumped off the perishing ship. Jim surrendered to the authorities and was put on trial for desertion of duty. Despite being exposed, Jim found Marlow to be a sympathetic friend. Marlow made an effort to assist Jim over the following few years after Jim told him his entire, regretful story. Jim was given employment by Marlow, but he always left them after a short while in an effort to escape his embarrassment and disgrace.

Jim eventually finds his way to the island of Patusan, where he rises to prominence among the indigenous populace. Even better, he gets a girlfriend. But the good times don't last. When a pirate by the name of Gentleman Brown arrives and causes havoc on the island, Jim takes some poor decisions that lead to a death. Yikes. Jim surrenders himself to the authorities once more, this time to the island's tribal elders. Jim is fatally shot by the father of the man Jim unintentionally killed. In a letter to an unidentified recipient, Marlow describes this experience.

2.2 The Darker Side of Man

According to some, we don't fully understand ourselves until a crisis arises. It is through those split-second, life-or-death choices that we find out who we truly are. Our bravery? Are we

being timid? A better or perhaps a worse thing. These are the issues that Lord Jim by Joseph Conrad centers around.

Lord Jim, regarded as one of the most significant works of English literature, addresses the ominous issues that plague the human soul but which we dare not bring up in conversation. In addition to examining the nature of courage, it also examines the long-lasting effects of mistakes made in the heat of the moment, the universe's indifference, the difficulties of stating one's truth, and the impossibility of ever completely knowing oneself or another.

2.3 Novel Summary

Lord Jim, which is set at the height of the British Empire, tells the tale of a young sailor and the mistakes he commits in a panic that affects him for the rest of his life.

Jim has naive illusions of living a life of heroic adventure early in his career, and his quick success at sea seems to guarantee the realization of all of these hopes. That is, until the *Patna*, the ship on which he is chief mate, runs aground and starts to sink one day. However, instead of acting as the hero as he had always imagined, Jim decides in the heat of the moment to abandon ship, leaving the onboard pilgrims traveling to the Muslim holy city of Mecca to their fate.

The passengers do live, though, and the ship does not go down, but Jim and the rest of the crew are prosecuted for negligence. Jim receives a formal censure and has his officer qualifications revoked.

Jim meets Marlow during the trial, the narrator of *Heart of Darkness*, the novella that Conrad is most well-known for. Marlow and Jim develop a tense friendship that is mostly motivated by his compassion for the young man. Who better than someone who has been there to comprehend the horrors of the water and the eerie recollections of one's own worst moments—times one's of weakness? Marlow believes that a sailor must first understand sailors, and he does so with regard to Jim.

Marlow finds Jim a number of jobs, but Jim immediately rejects each one as if he can outrun the memory of his own timidity because of his failure on the *Patna*. The only time Jim's recuperation appears to be in the cards is when Marlow manages to land him a job as the postmaster in the isolated colony of Patusan. When Jim is safely settled in this remote area of the earth, he temporarily believes that the memories of his prior failures can be forgotten. At Patusan, Jim creates a new persona and quickly rises to the position of a renowned leader. He is revered by the locals as a powerful spiritual and political figure who serves as their guardian and akin to a father.

Unfortunately, Jim's fame and tranquility in Patusan are transitory. Jim is the target of an uprising organized by an avaricious pirate, Gentleman Brown, a disgruntled group of Patusan locals, and Cornelius, the post manager Jim previously held the position of and the father of Jim's

lovely fiancée, Jewel. Jim gives Gentleman Brown and his allies' permission to pass through the region, unaware of the covert uprising he is facing. But instead of departing amicably, the rebels attack the camp of Dain Waris, the son of Doramin, Jim's most significant friend and ally. Jim is grieving the loss of Dain Waris.

Jim, who is once more plagued by the memory of the Patna, assumes responsibility for the death of his friend's son, viewing his failure to identify and quell the revolt as another proof of his own weakness, bad judgment, and lack of leadership. Jim shows up at Doramin's property offering his life as a type of blood debt owing to Dain Waris' mourning father, who then shoots Jim to death in retaliation for the life that has been taken.

2.4 Why Lord Jim Matters

How can we ever genuinely know ourselves or others? is only one of the many topics that Conrad's book explores. Is it possible to truly forget our darkest experiences? How long will we continue to pay for our errors—and do we ever truly pay alone, or do we have to place the blame for our mistakes on the shoulders of those we care about?

As with many of Conrad's writings, the background of Lord Jim is undoubtedly autobiographical. Jim's upbringing is described by him in exact terms of the seagoing and masters and mates test experiences that Conrad himself had.

Jim is the "Patna's" first mate, but when danger approaches, he flees the vessel in a panic, leaving his crewmates in the dark. As he searches for atonement or, to use the language of a religious author rather than a humanist, redemption, this one act of cowardice starts to define his life. He strives to reclaim his lost honor, even at the cost of needlessly risking his own life in retaliation for a broken pledge, after finding himself a white man in the tropical jungle—the Lord Jim of the title.

Conrad is a writer incomparably superior to that, possibly the greatest English novelist in history and unquestionably the best of his era. Wells, Conan Doyle, Ford/Hueffer, James, Galsworthy, and Bennett were some of his contemporaries. He was acquainted with all of them, incidentally, and many of them formed a group of writers who all resided nearby on the south coast in towns like Sandgate (for Wells), Rye (for James), and Winchelsea (for Ford/Hueffer and, at various times, Conrad). Conrad, in my opinion, has the strongest claim to grandeur, even though Galsworthy would win the Nobel Prize for Literature, a decision that today seems impossible to justify, and Conan Doyle would sell more books than all of them together.

Conrad wrote in paragraphs rather than sentences, according to T.E. Lawrence, and his writings usually seemed much larger than they actually were. Because of this, he has always been a novelist's novelist. In addition to his contemporaries, who recognized his brilliance right once, his admirers have included Graham Greene, Anthony Powell, Evelyn Waugh, Kingsley Amis,

A.N. Wilson, and Evelyn Waugh. In fact, Greene was so fixated with Conrad that he purposefully sought out hotels where the author had been and insisted on being given the same room while on the road.

Conrad conveys the fundamental human situation to us through the years. Jim attempts to create a new universe for himself after practically jumping ship from the previous one. In this new world, he plays the role of the “tuan,” the “Lord Jim” of the title. Conrad was aware that life is made up of new beginnings and changes in course as people work to repair their lives and get past their problems. Usually, of course, they fail in the end, as undoubtedly is the case with Jim.

Then Jim got it. He had withdrawn from one world due to a careless jump, and now the other, something he had created himself, had crushed him. Without saying a word, he left his room and sat down in front of the large table at the head of which he was used to running his world's business, everyday announcing the truth that undoubtedly resided in his heart. The girl he loved entered and spoke to him, but he made a symbol with his hand that was an obtuse request for silence, and she was astounded by it. She exited the house onto the veranda and sat on the threshold, as if to protect him from perils outside with her physical presence.

Conrad's distinct language style is perfectly displayed in this passage. It discusses straightforward, almost banal activities, but does so in a way that highlights the underlying futility of the human situation, turning the banal into the tragic and the mawkish into the overwhelming.

Some believe this shows a largely pessimistic perspective on the world, one in which there are not many joyful outcomes. A world in which there is only one final, predetermined outcome—one that is rarely happy for anyone—and in which the only solace one can find in the possibility that one might do so at least without having discovered the terrible horrors of which man is capable.

Keep in mind that Lord Jim Conrad had already completed *Heart of Darkness* by the time he wrote it, making it possibly the most influential piece of literature ever written in the English language. Kurtz's famous final lines, “the horror, the horror,” are repeated at the end of the book.

Conrad's perspective on the world is not as pessimistic as some may think. We can infer that, like Goethe, Wagner, and Schopenhauer, he believes in the redeeming power of human love from the female characters in both *Lord Jim* and *Victory*. Jim is a fantastic example of a man of the species who consistently rejects their last opportunity at happiness without even fully understanding why they are doing so. This is one of Conrad's greatest accomplishments.

Additionally, he is aware that life is fragmented in addition to being fleeting. Any one life is only a fleeting instant in the grand scheme of things, yet even that life is broken up into many shards that may or may not seem connected and that simply blend together. When it occurs, death is just another such moment.

“There is never time to say our last word – the last word of our love, of our desire, faith, remorse, submission, revolt.” (Lord Jim)

Conrad stands out because of this perspective and his masterful literary style's ability to convey it very subtly. As a result, he will forever be remembered as the foremost interpreter of the fundamental human condition. Forget about the exotic foreign locales, the seafaring stories, and the colorful locals since they are merely stage props. What counts is his capacity to make the point that life is ultimately insignificant, that the chances of a person succeeding are extremely slim, and that depravity or simply random chance is always more likely to prevail than attempts at bravery, nobility, or greatness. However, none of this really matters because that one predetermined ending will suddenly just stand in for the subsequent moment and arrive and go once more. There is never a final statement made.

According to John Stape, a biographer of Joseph Conrad, he states that Conrad's voice, a century and a half after his birth, remains powerful and authoritative because he speaks for an awareness of fragmentation that is so quintessentially modern. His essential loneliness and sense of the horror of existence (found) existence in highly wrought prose and in fiction of coruscating insight.

Lord Jim is an intriguing story with historical underpinnings, but that deserves its own blog entry at some point. In a nutshell, Jim is the first mate of the Patna, a ship that is crammed with pilgrims sailing towards Mecca. A rusty bulkhead that is shakily supporting itself in the lower levels is the only thing stopping the ship from sinking like an anvil after some floating debris tore apart the ship's hull. Only the crew of the ship is aware of the circumstances, and when a squall threatens them on open water, they become terrified of drowning.

This book is largely about things that never happen. To the crew's great shame, the Patna does not actually sink in the storm; instead, it is eventually salvaged. Unlike the other officers, Jim also does not flee and avoid the wrath of the courts; instead, he accepts full responsibility for his actions.

We won't go through the rest of the story, which takes place in a wilderness area of Indonesia, but we will briefly discuss the structure of the story because it provides the book an intriguing effect. Jim's narrative is never told directly to us; instead, we hear it in fragments from many different sources after the fact.

The reader is compelled to evaluate as he reads and piece together the story and Jim's mental state on the spot rather than focusing on the sequential order of events.

In numerous of his other writings, Conrad's alter ego Captain Marlowe, who also serves as the narrator in this one, tells a frame story. Jim's evidence in court, his talks and confessions to Marlow, accounts of conversations or interactions that other people had with Jim and later recounted to Marlow, and even some letters that assist fill in the blanks are all included in that

surface story. This haphazard technique transforms Lord Jim from a straightforward adventure story into a challenging psychological analysis. Along the way, you encounter the value judgments of other characters, which force you to think, “Sheesh. What would I do if I were Jim?”

Thus, it is believed that this is the reason the book has established itself as having such enduring literary significance. It's a novel that actually makes you think, in addition to serving up heaping servings of adventure, the mystique of strange ports, and life on the high seas. Do not deny yourself the enjoyment of reading it.

2.5 Plot summary

Young British seaman Jim (whose last name is kept a secret) is appointed first mate of the *Patna*, which is carrying pilgrims to Mecca for the hajj. Jim leaves the ship and its passengers along with his captain and other crew members. They are rescued by a British ship a few days later. But later, the *Patna* and its passengers are also spared, and the crew's despicable behavior is revealed. Jim is brought before the court alone because the other participants avoid the judicial court of investigation. He loses his navigation command certificate as a result of his negligence, according to the court. Jim feels upset with himself for his moment of weakness as well as for passing up the chance to play the “hero.”

At the trial, he meets Charles Marlow, a sea captain, who, despite his initial concerns about Jim's moral questionability, develops a friendship with him since he is “one of us.” Later, Marlow discovers Jim working as a clerk for a ship chandler. Jim makes an effort to blend in, but whenever the backlash from the *Patna* event catches up to him, he leaves his location and heads even further east.

Finally, Marlow's buddy Stein offers having Jim work for him in Patusan, an isolated inland community with a mixed Malay and Bugis population, where Jim's past may be kept a secret. He gains the title “Tuan” (literally, “Lord”) while residing on the island. By rescuing them from the attacks of the bandit Sherif Ali and defending them from the dishonest local Malay chief, Rajah Tunku Allang, Jim gains the people's esteem and emerges as their leader in this situation. When Jim falls in love with Jewel, a woman of mixed ethnicity, he is “almost satisfied.” A few years later, when “Gentleman” Brown, a marauder, attacks the town, the story comes to a conclusion. The son of the Bugis community's chief, Dain Waris, is killed despite the fact that Brown and his gang are chased away. In retaliation for the loss of his son, Jim goes back to Doramin, the chief of the Bugis, and voluntarily accepts a lethal bullet in the chest from him.

Heart of Darkness, Youth, and Chance, three other works of Conrad, are also narrated by Marlow.

2.6 *Critical interpretation*

The book is divided into two main sections: a story about Jim's mistake aboard the *Patna* and his subsequent fall, and a second story about Jim's ascent and the conclusion of the tale in the hypothetical nation of Patusan, which is assumed to be a part of the Indonesian archipelago. The main themes center on young Jim's potential (Marlow, the narrator, says, "...he was one of us"), which heightens the drama and tragedy of his fall, his subsequent struggle to right himself, and Conrad's additional hints that, given the right trigger, personal character flaws will almost certainly surface. Conrad described Jim as a romantic figure in his novel *Lord Jim*, which is undoubtedly his most romantic work. Conrad was speaking via his character Stein.

The novel is notable for its complex structure in addition to the lyricism and beauty of Conrad's descriptive prose. The conclusion is presented in the form of a letter from Marlow, while the most of the book is given in the form of a story recited to a group of listeners by the character Marlow. Other characters also share their own stories in layered dialogue within Marlow's narration. As a result, the novel's events are frequently narrated out of sequence and from multiple points of view.

The reader is allowed to infer Jim's internal psychological state from these many outside perspectives. Others counter that there is an absolute reality the reader may comprehend and that Jim's acts may be ethically assessed, while some critics (using deconstruction) claim that this is impossible and that Jim must always remain a mystery. Marlow's observations on the case "They required data. Facts! They requested information from him, as if information could resolve any issue." In the end, Jim is still a mystery, as seen through a mist: "He appeared as a floating silhouette in that mist, which was intriguing though not very large. He was a straggler who longed bitterly for his lowly position among the ranks. We only realize how unfathomable, illusive, and hazy the beings that share with us the warmth of the sun and the sight of the stars are when we try to understand another man's deep need." The link between the two men motivates Marlow to "tell you the narrative, to try to hand over to you, as it were, its actual being, its reality - the truth unveiled in a moment of delusion." As a result, Jim only comes to life for us through Marlow's narration.

Though less thorough than *Heart of Darkness*, postcolonial interpretation of the book highlights themes shared by the two works: the protagonist of the book sees himself as a part of a "civilizing mission," and the story takes place during the height of the British Empire's hegemony and involves a "heroic adventure." Literary critic Elleke Boehmer sees the book, along with *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, as part of a growing suspicion that "a primitive and demoralizing other" is present within the governing order. Conrad's use of a protagonist with a questionable history has been interpreted as an expression of growing doubts about the Empire's mission.

Lord Jim by Joseph Conrad was originally printed in England in 1900. It's been known for a while that this book is incredibly challenging for readers to comprehend, especially on the first

read. However, those who have invested the time to comprehend the book agree that it was worth the effort. Conrad started writing *Lord Jim* as a brief sketch, but it eventually developed into a novel known for its modernism—its propensity to defy the accepted storytelling tendencies of the day. The reader hears a story from one narrator at first, then another, and lastly from a variety of different stories. This shifting kind of narration is the most evident literary device that Conrad employed. In the novel, a young man named Jim is preparing to be a naval commander, but his certification is revoked when he abandons his ship in the middle of a crisis, sending eight hundred Moslem pilgrims to what he believes is certain death. Despite his cowardice, the pilgrims survive to tell the tale. Jim eventually ends up on Patusan, a lonely island in the Far East, after running away repeatedly from his history. Jim makes a fresh start here, garnering the respect of the locals who refer to him as Lord Jim and believe that his various triumphs are the result of magical abilities. However, Jim must confront his concerns from his previous life, and it is only until he is finally able to do so that the novel's tragic and confusing conclusion occurs.

Jim becomes the commander of a small trading post in the East Indies after a public navy scandal disqualifies him from serving as a seaman any longer. He eventually must come to terms with what having authority over the Indians actually entails. Jim was raised on sea stories. When he receives his seaman's certificate and a position on the *Patna*, a ship transporting Muslim pilgrims up and down the Red Sea, he believes this is the start of a magnificent new life. He had always dreamed nothing more than to be a brave sailor traveling the world's huge oceans.

The *Patna* begins to swell with water. Assuming that the ship is sinking, Jim and the crew bravely evacuate the *Patna*, leaving hundreds of people behind. To make matters worse, the ship actually doesn't go down. After a few days, the *Patna* is towed into a nearby port while Jim and the crew are hauled out of the water. A crew action inquest is called, but the captain and eventually the majority of the crew leave, leaving Jim to face punishment alone. His seaman's certificate is revoked for his cowardice, disqualifying him from performing official duties aboard any British ship. Even worse than losing this credential, which has left Jim devastated, is the realization that he might not actually possess the heroic characteristics he always thought he did. He had the opportunity to step up and save the day, but instead he ran away to protect himself.

Soon after, Marlow (the main character and narrator of *HEART OF DARKNESS*, among other Conrad works), runs across Jim, and he immediately empathizes with the young ex-sailor. Marlow offers to help Jim get employment thanks to his many connections. Marlow has Jim deployed to a number of trading stations dispersed over the South Sea since he won't go back to England or any other populous region where his shame would be recognized.

But at every new place, just as Jim is beginning to prosper and carve out his own small niche, word of the *Patna* scandal finds him and he must go. In an effort to escape his past, Jim continues this pattern for a while, finding jobs in farther-flung locales. Finally, Jim is appointed trade post head in Patusan, one of Indonesia's most isolated stations. It appears that he has finally put his reputation behind him.

Since he treats the villagers fairly and with respect, he eventually gains the title of "Lord" in the local language. Even a local warlord who had long been harassing a neighboring town is overthrown by him. Jim adapts to his new existence. He takes a native woman as his wife and feels like he has at last arrived home. But a British criminal named Gentleman Brown, who managed to get his hands on a ship and started raiding in the East Indies, enters this perfect existence. He stumbles onto Lord Jim's tribe while searching for a new target because he is low on supplies. After a few brutal clashes, Jim confronts Brown and seems to convince him to leave. The locals lower their guard because they have faith in their "Lord." But Gentleman Brown isn't done yet. He simply makes a fake exit. The natives are completely caught off guard when he reappears and launches an all-out assault. They manage to drive him away, but at a price that includes the eldest son of the village chief's passing. Jim feels his shame sweeping over him once more. He finally acts to allay this shame after betraying the confidence of the indigenous. In an act of penitence, Jim gives the chief a gunshot to the heart. This is his last act of bravery and the pinnacle of his guiltlessness.

Nobody can turn these late-colonial settings into potently mythic landscapes quite like Conrad, and LORD JIM is no exception. This is why the plot's finale is its strongest point.

The last moment, in which Jim bares himself to the chief for execution and takes full responsibility for all his faults and life's worth of remorse, is the best sequence in the narrative. It is as moving as it sounds.

Observation of the protagonist Young Jim is fairly realistic and has a great sense of adventure. He grows up hearing tales of bravery and self-promotion and learns in a shockingly accurate way how untrue these tales are and how difficult real bravery is.

The story of a young man who has fallen from grace and is unable to accept it is told in *Lord Jim*, Conrad's most well-known work. There are two distinct sections to the book. In the first section, Jim makes a crucial mistake for which he suffers shame for the rest of his life. Jim strives to put his past behind him and start over in the second section. He makes an effort to improve his perception of himself and start fresh: "I always considered that if a fellow could begin with a clean slate." But it is shown to us at the end of the play whether he is capable of doing so or whether some flaw in his character stops him from doing so.

Social and historical setting: The Jim narrative raises several important moral and social ethics issues. When it came to saving one's life in the dark, one didn't care who else went—three, thirty, or three hundred people, according to Brown. People who fail to uphold this trust while entrusted with the life of others face severe social ramifications. But exceptional heroism is needed to overcome the seed of self-survival. How many of us possess this? So, if Jim thought he could sacrifice his life for another person, is he really a hero? And should he be shunned for falling short of this standard?

Writing Style: Marlow, a seasoned sailor, tells us the Lord Jim story in the style of a narrative. In the book, Marlow serves as Jim's godfather and occasionally serves as an effective critic of Jim's actions and personality. Marlow makes arrangements for Jim to have access to the coveted "clean slate." In the opening lines of the second section of the book, the author forewarns the reader: "The day was coming when I should see him adored, trusted, admired, with a reputation of power and prowess developing around his name as though he had been the stuff of a hero." Marlow also continuously helps the reader comprehend Jim's character. He has the talent of discovering a unique significance in everything that occurred to him.

Other characters in the novel, such as Captain Brierly and Brown, also share brief passages of the narrative with us. The reader appears to gain numerous insights on Jim's character from these side stories that Marlow weaves into his larger narrative.

III. THE IMPERIALIST LEGACY, THE IN-BETWEEN ROMANTIC, AND NARRATIVE METHOD

The late nineteenth-century issues surrounding European colonialism and its role in the East Indies are examined in *Lord Jim* (1900). Despite the fact that the Dutch, French, and German characters are also present, the responsibility of ideological and cultural dominance during the height of imperialism is distributed across a larger geographic area, extending from Aden in the Arabian Sea to Manila in the Philippines, despite the fact that the main characters are all English. The story also tackles one of Conrad's favorite themes—moral restoration through suffering and renunciation—and is quite dramatic.

3. 1 Narrative method

Charles Marlow, the former sea captain, served as the primary narrator of *Lord Jim*, the first of Conrad's long books. Marlow gathers the information for the tale from a variety of sources, including acquaintances and information that has been forwarded to him by others. The information is then given to the audience Marlow is addressing, and then to the reader. To have the greatest dramatic impact, they are rearranged rather than being repeated in chronological sequence. Marlow knows the entire story's conclusion from the beginning, and he occasionally gives tantalizing hints as to what will happen. But for the most part, he keeps important details from the audience, which heightens the dramatic tension and fosters a gloomy expectation.

Severely disjointed successions of events make up the story. A typical introduction describes Jim's time as the *Patna's* chief mate up until the moment of the ship's catastrophe in the Arabian Sea. However, the story abruptly skips ahead to the judicial inquest before being taken over by Marlow, who recalls Jim from a time long after the dramatic events of the *Patna's* fate and the scandalous behavior of its crew have come to an end.

Jim has abandoned the *Patna* along with the rest of the crew, but Marlow only gradually reveals this in between sketches of other individuals and tales of other occurrences. As a result, the

story widens and narrows in terms of the psychological interest that Conrad gives each of his characters. For example, the short seconds that make up Jim's concerns and fears when the ship is abandoned are spread out across more than twenty pages, and the dinner conversation at which Jim tells Marlow about these events lasts for more than fifty pages.

Similar to *Heart of Darkness*, *Chance*, and *Youth*, Conrad uses literary trickery to have Marlow narrate the account nearly as if he were an eyewitness to the events, despite the reality that he has only heard about them from other people's testimonies. In the Patna's collision episode, Jim and Marlow exchange narratives back and forth about what transpired (who is relaying the story to his audience at a much later date).

I'm unsure of how long the man waited motionless by the hatch, waiting for the moment when he would feel the ship sag beneath him and be thrown like a chip by the rushing water. Not too long—maybe two minutes.

Here, you may see literary wizardry in action. Conrad simultaneously conveys the appearance of sincere accuracy (“two minutes”) while acknowledging the lack of assurance in the narrative of the events (“I cannot say... perhaps”).

The story Marlow tells is as much about him as it is about the individuals he meets. He has no cause to be sympathetic to Jim other than the fact that he characterizes him in overtly homoerotic terms describing him as follows: His fair, sun-burned skin immediately turned a darker shade of crimson, invading his cheeks, his forehead, and even the roots of his curly hair. The rush of blood to his head caused his ears to turn an intense shade of red, and even the bright blue of his eyes darkened considerably. He appeared to be about to start crying as his lips pouted a little and trembled.

Unobservant readers could assume that Marlow is recounting Jim's acts in the story—activities he only knows about because of Jim—but most of the time, he is actually speculating about Jim's emotions. In the drama he is rebuilding, he is pleading with his audience to identify with Jim's plight.

This is comparable to Marlow's treatment of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, when he already harbors negative feelings for the character. He projects his ideal self onto his acts and gives them an air of grandeur. Marlow is the only source of information we have, thus we can only draw conclusions from his words.

3.2 The narrative chain

The story is presented to readers in what seems to be a traditional third person omniscient narrative mode at the beginning of the first section of the book. Jim's past is revealed, and we follow his involvement in the events leading up to the Patna incident. The story is subsequently given to an unknown coworker of Marlow who later exposes himself to be the narrator. The

narrative then appears to be Marlow recounting events to a group of people who are sitting and smoking in the shadows, a tactic Conrad would subsequently employ in his two years later novel *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow's recounting of the events fills the following three-quarters of the book. When Marlow visits him at his station in Patusan, Jim first tells him what happened on the Patna and then updates him on his subsequent life.

The unidentified outer narrator, who is a member of Marlow's audience, informs us that just one listener in the group—the “privileged reader”—has access to the rest of the narrative. Documents and an explanation letter that Marlow supplied to him contain the information. The main text is a report that Marlow wrote about an account that Gentleman Brown, a dying man, gave to him.

This novel's ending has a variety of logical holes, contradictions, and credibility issues, however it should be noted that Conrad struggled with constructing satisfying endings for other novels as well.

The ending document, for instance, describes the confrontation between Jim and Gentleman Brown as the competing factions compete for power in Patusan. Brown manages to escape and survive the battle, only to fall ill and come dangerously close to dying in the Indian Ocean. Fortunately, Marlow is present when Brown passes away, and as a result, he hears Brown's description of the decisive battle, which he naturally repeats as if he had really witnessed the action.

Conrad fairly implausibly claims that Tamb' Itam, Jim's devoted bodyguard and servant, told Marlow about these incidents since Brown escaped before the concluding moments of Jim's moral breakdown and suicide. The man in question could hardly speak English earlier in the book. More crucially, even if Marlow, the "privileged reader" of the documents, and the outer narrator were all there at the 250-page meeting that contains the first three-quarters of the novel, we are not told how the "privileged reader" relays the tale to the outer narrator.

I get the impression that Conrad just makes issues for himself that may have been avoided. It would have been far simpler to tell the story in a straightforward third-person omniscient narrative mode, or even through Marlow's account of events with fewer coincidences and plot twists.

It is frequently asserted that Conrad was able to portray persons and events from a variety of perspectives because to his sophisticated narrative style. But the reality is that practically everything we are aware of—including the people, places, and events—is filtered via Marlow's perspective. Through both traditional description and a layer upon layer of philosophizing about the moral nature of man (rarely woman) in society, he portrays characters and tells us what to believe about them.

Additionally, it must be noted that Conrad makes very little effort to create any separation between Marlow, his invented narrator, and himself as the author. The perception among readers is that Marlow serves as Conrad's spokesperson. His thoughts are so similar to those that Conrad recounts in the prefaces and notebooks that they are hardly identifiable. Marlow also frequently switches between the omniscient first-person and third-person narrator roles. It seems as though Conrad loses himself in his own (albeit riveting) plot and fails to recognize the logic of the story structures he has created for himself.

3.3 The imperialist legacy

It should be emphasized that the work also includes many of the clichés of English Imperialism, handed to us directly from King Solomon's Mines, despite all of the lofty sermonizing and ad hoc philosophical insights that Conrad inserts into Marlow's remarks. Jim, the main character, is a young, attractive Billy Budd-like character with blue eyes, curly hair, and all-white clothing. He finally becomes worshipped by the locals as a symbol of unquestionable justice. He even has a native guard who is so unfailingly devoted to Jim that he even plays dead so as not to concern his master, a mixed-race lady who falls in love with him.

3.4 Plot summary

Jim is a young English sailor who harbors idealistic notions about displaying bravery in the face of peril. His ship, the *Patna*, collides with another ship while carrying pilgrims from Singapore to Jeddah in the Red Sea. Jim and the crew left the ship because they believed it was sinking. The ship is saved by a French boat and towed to safety rather than sinking. The German captain flees the scene of the incident in Bombay, and Jim is dishonorably stripped of his seaman's certificate as a result.

At the inquest, Marlow runs into Jim and expresses sympathy for his predicament. Marlow gets Jim job in a remote area after recognizing his need to distance himself from the scandal. Despite his accomplishment, Jim leaves his job as a new instance of the *Patna* scandal comes to light. The sequence of occurrences continues, as Jim continues to distance himself from civilization.

Eventually, a friend of Marlow's named Stein offers him a position as trading station commander, and Jim finds himself in Patusan, a remote area in the East Indies. He is initially viewed with suspicion by the locals, but after toppling a war lord, he wins over their favor. After two or three years, he feels that he has effectively regained his self-respect and shed the stigma of the *Patna* incident. He then marries his common-law wife.

However, "Gentleman" Brown, a thieving English marauder who has run out of supplies and a ship, sails into Patusan and makes the decision to pillage the locals at all costs. He establishes a makeshift camp and assaults the locals. Jim bargains with him and convinces him to

go away amicably in order to prevent future conflict. However, he betrays Jim and attacks the locals once more, killing the son of the native chief. When Jim realizes he has betrayed the people who looked up to him, he allows the local chief to shoot him as a sort of suicide.

3.5 The in-between romantic

One of Joseph Conrad's books, *Lord Jim*, had me think both “Come on, get on with it, would you!” and “This could be the best writing I’ve ever read.”

Conrad’s place in what we believe to be a transitional period of literary history, together with a few other British and American authors like Thomas Hardy, Samuel Butler, and Henry James, accounts in part for this ambivalence. He transitions us from the slow, opulently detailed writing of Dickens and other nineteenth-century luminaries to the typically more restrained, psychologically nuanced style of well-known twentieth-century geniuses.

Nearly the ideal illustration of a novel in between is *Lord Jim*. First and foremost, the theme is on the “old” side. The tale of how young Jim, via a cowardly deed performed at sea, lost his honor, his integrity, and his childhood dreams of himself as a noble man, and how he attempted to regain it by eventually taking control of a primitive people. Sounds like a traditional story on character development in the colonies.

The narrator Marlowe's and probably Conrad’s own ambivalence over Jim’s search for redemption, however, falls within the “contemporary” category. While he does not support his subject's decision to abandon passengers on a ship that appeared to be sinking, he is aware of the psychological factors that contributed to the novice sailor’s rash decision-making. He is quite skeptical of the investigation’s scapegoating of Jim while disregarding worse offenders.

Marlowe doesn’t share Jim’s constant self-flagellation as he assists the humiliated young man in finding employment in remote regions of the globe. Marlowe serves as a good proxy for the contemporary reader who is both perplexed and drawn in by this demonstration of antiquated ideals. He approaches Jim with awe and frustration at the same time.

With his first naive trust in his own noble fate, which is immediately destroyed, and with his continuous pursuit of some ideal that is out of place in these times and in those places, Marlowe/Conrad makes an effort to portray the lad as a representation of Romanticism. The jaded writers of the future will return to anti-romanticism numerous times.

The story's presentation comes next. The natural comparison is to be peeled like an onion. Long before Conrad, other authors had used fractured timelines to tell stories, but Conrad elevates the fragmented narrative to a new level. And he accomplishes it with such finesse that it frequently doesn't appear jagged. You become engrossed in the daily human drama that is playing out. When a crucial aspect of the tale from a long time ago is finally revealed, you realize how anxious you

had been to understand this particular detail. This occurs early on, even with some of the crucial specifics of the scandal at sea and its unexpected ramifications, which are revealed far later than anticipated almost as an afterthought.

But other times, the convoluted narration is annoying. Like in many of Conrad's works, Marlowe tells his shipmates the majority of the narrative, ostensibly over the course of one evening. In actuality, no one could ever captivate an audience for such a drawn-out, complicated monologue. But that's okay. Marlowe/Conrad makes an effort to make each scenario as real in the reader's/mind listener's as they can. He feels compelled to paint the perfect picture, complete with exquisite scene descriptions, original character design insights, and delicately wrought psychological complexity. The outcome can be overwhelming, bringing the story to life like never before. When I think "Greatest work ever," this is what we mean. He tries to induce the same event again in the following scene, but he is unsuccessful in obtaining lift-off. It still requires painstaking describing. Between the pieces, details seem to emerge. Despite having read the story before, we still want to move on to the next section and learn what happened, but we know there are still a few detours we need to take before coming back to it. Still a fantastic piece of work, if not the best ever. It has been said that *Lord Jim* (which has a great title, by the way) is an overdone short story or possibly an inflated mash up of two shorter stories: the scandal of the ship's deserting and the tale of Jim's journey as the guy who would be beneficent monarch. Conrad made a few remarks that seem to support this confluence as the novel's starting point. But dang, it actually functions as a whole.

It's true that it's difficult to imagine the tragic "Lord" of his domain as being the same person as the pitiful early shipboard Jim. However improbable it may be, the whole dynamic is fascinating. Putting an end to one person's romantic fantasy and destroying one of the little filthy secrets of the empire. And every so often, that wonderful—incredibly wonderful—writing explodes in an attempt to make it function as well as it does.

The current work tries to critically reevaluate *Lord Jim* by Joseph Conrad. A remarkable practitioner of English language, Joseph Conrad frequently writes about the sea, the Eastern islands, and the English character as it is perceived against an exotic or challenging backdrop. Conrad is intensely involved in the dynamics of good and evil on two dimensions, the personal and the public, as seen by the strength of his love for Jim and the ferocity of his judgment against him. One thing is visible about *Lord Jim*'s depravity, but another is hidden from view. The wickedness of men who have no sense of allegiance to anything is, of course, what it is.

Although many of Joseph Conrad's books are based on the traditional adventure story, they rarely do. He is a master of intricate storytelling strategies, including methods like time dilation and shifting points of view. He frequently places his characters in challenging circumstances where they are both put to the test and fail. According to Cedric (1989):

Joseph Conrad's characters do not always survive that test, one of the most famous examples being Kurtz in Heart of Darkness, who is found to be "hollow at the core" and thus crumbles under intense pressure. (P.45).

Conrad is a romantic writer as well as a modern one; his quest for truth and clarity within a man, his conviction that, in the end, we rely on our own reserves and resources, as well as his love of mystery and nebulous uncertainty, are all romantic. Uncertainty, a feeling of corruption, and a lack of direction and purpose are all very contemporary features.

As stated by Stape 1996: *Conrad is a Romantic author in his search for inner truth, certainty and insight within a man, in his belief that the final count what we all rely on is what we carry within us, and in his fondness for mystery. (P.2)*

Conrad considers loyalty or devotion to be the highest human virtue, and darkness serves as a powerful literary allegory in his works. Roberts (1993) pointed out, correctly: *Conrad stated that fidelity is one of the prime human virtues, though it is open to debate whether or not this always carried through into his novels. (p.78)*

Conrad's romanticism ranges from imprecise and very insubstantial at its worst to a potent, baffling, and symbolic portrayal of contemporary man at its best. According to Cedric (1989), *Conrad's weaknesses are a tendency to present a rather vague, wordy and insubstantial Romanticism, his inability to present effectively love relationships, women, and a slight tendency to oversimplify. His strengths are the taut control he can wield over a novel, his penetrating and mystic insight into the heart of modern man and the sheer power of the vision he can create.*

Contrary to many novelists, Conrad's characteristic subject was the sea rather than Poland. He also wrote in English rather than his native language or his second language, French, which he only learned to speak when he was about twenty years old. Conrad's characteristic subject was the sea rather than Poland. His artistic career is unique and outstanding. When he was around forty years old, his first book was released. He was the author of a large body of work when he passed away at the age of sixty-seven; by that time, he had achieved both moderate popularity and the respect of writers like Henry James and Andre Gide. After his death, for fifteen to twenty years, his reputation suffered.

IV. RECONSIDERATIONS, THEMES, STYLE, FORMS AND STRUCTURE

4.0 Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim: Reconsiderations

4.1.1 Joseph Conrad and Idea of Lord Jim

As Conrad worked on the book, Lord Jim began to take shape in stages in his thoughts, and the book's emphasis significantly broadened. When he started writing the book in May 1898, he gave it the working title "Jim, a Sketch" and intended it to be a brief story that just covered the

pilgrim adventure (Gordon, 1988, p.34). The story was repeatedly placed on hold as attempts were made to finish *The Rescue*, which took many more years to finish, as well as the writing of other stories (such as “Karain,” “Youth,” and “Heart of Darkness”). Conrad did not resume consistent work on *Jim* until September 1899. In June 1900, the novel was finally finished. Between October 1899 and November 1900, it appeared in *Blackwood’s Magazine* in monthly installments. On October 15, 1900, it was published as a book. The novel was initially unpopular despite warm acclaim from authors like Henry James and William Galsworthy, as well as moderately good reviews in England and America. Conrad was genuinely concerned about the book, aware of its shortcomings, and unsure of its chances of success.

4.1.2 *Lord Jim as Conrad’s most Appreciated Novel*

*Lord Jim is now Conrad’s most well-liked book and many people see it as his most defining creative achievement. Despite any flaws in this “loose and roaming story,” Conrad answered his own most nagging, and ultimately unanswerable, questions concerning the essence of man in it (Gordon, 1988, p.92). The story of Jim, “a simple and sensitive figure,” does, as Conrad envisioned, “color the whole emotion of existence” in its probing, oblique, resonant manner. (Ford, 1997, p.37). Jim is “one of us,” as Marlow reiterates (Lord Jim, p.68). Readers can relate to Marlow’s relentless pursuit of seeing Jim as whole, accounting for both his noble intentions and his cowardice, and rendering an accurate judgment of him. There is no final word on man, according to Conrad and the readers, and while they may long nostalgically for the clear-cut heroes of earlier cultures, readers find their own real heroes and the “sentiment of existence” that is exclusively their own in people like Jim, Leopold Bloom, and Thomas Sutpen, to name just three extreme examples. Lord Jim must, of course, be evaluated in the context of its particular form, but such Conrad’s success. Conrad’s own low evaluation of this excellent work shortly after he finished it is one of the ironies of writing. He wrote Edward Garnett with regret on November 12, 1900: *For what is fundamentally wrong with the book- the cause and effect- is want of power. I do not mean the ‘power’ of reviewers’ jargon. I mean they want of illuminating imagination. (Mudrick, 1988, p.58).**

4.1.3 *The Main Theme of the Novel: At A Glance*

Conrad addresses the themes of remorse and atonement in his depiction of Jim’s Odyssey and elevates the significance of Jim’s deed to a metaphysical plane. Every person in the story is a subordinate to this idea, and every event is meant to further it (Howitt, 1997, p.13). However, it is so intricately designed that it can occasionally be challenging to understand the meaning behind a comment or an incident. And similar to *Heart of Darkness*, one would be tempted to question if Conrad himself was always crystal clear in his intentions or, in this instance, whether there wasn’t some unsolved ambiguity in his personal attitude toward the events portrayed.

Conrad recorded a situation using the Marlow device to capture his feelings on it. He was now expected to eavesdrop on, assess, and comment on another person’s mental states as both a

fictional character in the book and Conrad's spokesperson. Conrad committed the cardinal fault of destroying the illusion by obtruding his own remarks. Marlow served as the main tool for advancing the idea at that time. Conrad also employed a variety of individuals and events as moral compass points for Jim's circumstances (Karl, 1992. p.45).

4.1.4 The Story of the Novel

The title character of Lord Jim, a young Englishman who loses his honor by jumping overboard when his ship appears to be in danger yet atones for his fault by dying bravely at the end, perfectly illustrates the moral tension in Conrad's novel.

4.1.5 The Strength of Lord Jim

The strength of Lord Jim comes in large part from Conrad's tackling of a problem that takes shape in the earlier stories but which may only find its fullest expression in the nocturnal setting of *Heart of Darkness*. The crisis is what is causing Marlow to mull over a problem that, in his opinion, has an impact on how humanity views itself. His concern in Jim extends to the more general issue of applying a single standard of behavior to every individual in every situation, as the fact that Jim fails the norm in his ultimate test on the *Patna* raises doubt on the validity of the standard in general (Zabel, 1988, p.69).

Marlow pursues his question about whether such a standard can be effective at all when a guy, in a case like Jim's, is beyond the check of popular opinion to the utmost, and without success, in this scene with the French officer, which is one of the key reasons it hooks the reader. When the separation is complete, man loses control of the community, as it did for Jim on the *Patna*, therefore the rule must be able to bring the opposing components of the individual together to work together toward the goal of purposeful activity.

The only remaining defense is, possibly, Lord Jim's simple sense of danger, similar to that of Singleton or the native youth Dain Waris, who recognizes Brown's treachery at once and betrays the prophetic Jim. Characters with this basic eye for fact without the benefit of proper cerebral resources start to emerge more frequently in Conrad's early works after *Lord Jim*, at least (Karl, 1992. P.85).

4.1.6 The Depiction of Jim as the Prototype of a Good Boy

Jim is the model for a boy who "makes good," but Conrad debunks the common caricature by ultimately defining "good" in qualitative and spiritual terms rather than material ones. Upon closer examination, we discover that the success tale and the Oedipus myth are not wholly dissimilar. Because Oedipus, like Jim, has "Ability in the abstract" and the ability to save a struggling neighborhood. Jim's "success" comes after he tried to flee the truth by going from port to port, just like Oedipus tried to flee fate by switching locations—both interpretations of the popular story of

“leaving town.” Their deepest skills are finally shown when they have nowhere else to turn; for each, the last act is a paradox, triumph in failure. (Howitt, 1997, p.89)

5.0 THEMES

The following are major themes of *Lord Jim*:

5.1 *The Fixed Standard*

Dostoyevsky proposed in his classic *The Brothers Karamazov*, published twenty years before *Lord Jim*, that if there is no God, then anything is permissible. Conrad, an atheist, makes no mention of God, although this maxim is a major subject throughout *Lord Jim*. Exists a “set standard of conduct” or is anything acceptable? As a result of the officers' actions in Patna and the fact that at least some of them get away with it, Marlow begins to question whether the moral code isn't only a “fix” for our convenience that has no actual foundation in reality.

Marlow is even more disturbed by Jim's example since it begs the question of whether the fixed standard can be broken in some situations.

If there are, the standard is not at all “fixed,” but rather flexible. What kind of truth could it rest on if it is movable? Does *Lord Jim* provide an answer to these queries?

5.2 *A Second Chance*

What type of second chance can you expect after breaking the code of conduct? This question is frequently framed in terms of salvation or redemption. Some contend that Jim isn't purified regardless of the level of glory he finds in Patusan. Others claim that he does find redemption. Others contend that *Lord Jim* doesn't fit any of these definitions because Conrad isn't the kind of religious author for whom they would make sense: Jim may not be “redeemed,” but he's definitely been given a second chance. Jim seems to be the only one who is unwilling to forgive himself because the Patna affair still haunts him. Conrad frequently uses the metaphor of a “veiled opportunity” to describe Jim's second chance, and this image culminates in opportunity lifting its veil upon Jim's passing. If Conrad meant what he said—and it's a big “if”—that Jim's second chance only comes when he faces death head-on and refuses to flee, demonstrating for all time that he's not a coward, then the conclusion is extremely doomsday.

5.3 *Illusions and Dreams*

Jim has spent a lot of his life fantasizing about becoming a hero, which is why he is so hard on himself following the Patna scandal. In the first half of the book, Marlow attacks this characteristic of Jim. Jim's illusions seem pointless and perhaps hypocritical in light of his timidity. Marlow is drawn to Jim's beliefs, though, because they are similar to his own ambitions as a young

man. Jim's beliefs take on a considerably more admirable quality after Stein's declarations in Chapter Twenty. Stein counsels that even if some of your dreams don't come true, you should still pursue them. Stein's comments seem to be supported by Jim's incredible performance in Patusan. Is there a distinction between illusions and ideals?

5.4 Butterflies and Beetles

Stein is a naturalist who enjoys collecting beetles and butterflies. These two bug species also serve as a metaphor for another issue, the duality of human nature. Jim may be intriguing because of his confusing behavior (more so in the first half than in the second), but the other characters can be divided into two categories fairly easily. The ones who aren't tainted by the filth around them are the idealists, the romantic dreamers, and the butterflies. The bugs represent the pessimists, such as Chester and Brown, and the cowards, such as Cornelius and Jim's fellow Patna officers. Despite his reservations over the fixed standard, Marlow is unafraid to criticize other people's actions since he is sure that morality is founded on some sort of reality. Are his conclusions valid?

5.5 Friendship

The subdued topic of friendship permeates the entire book. Jim quickly strikes Marlow as a member of the family, and he frequently calls him "one of us" (see the note to Chapter Five). In Jim, he also sees a reflection of his more impressionable, youthful self. Marlow doesn't deliver a sermon on the benefits of friendship. However, he makes a special effort to support Jim and spends a lot of time thinking and talking about him. This theme is somewhat subdued due to Marlow's tendency to be unflinching, if not downright gruff, and the fact that the narrator-subject relationship can occasionally mask his love for Jim. It remains the fundamental story device of the book. The companionship is what makes the book possible.

6.0 STYLE

"By the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel- it is, before all, to make you see," stated Conrad in a famous declaration about his role as an artist. He jams image after image onto his pages to accomplish this. The style of Conrad is intricate, sensual, and complex. It often errs on the side of excess. Because he relies on sense perceptions to construct his imagery and argue his views, he has earned the distinction of being an "impressionist" author. Such dependence is appropriate for an agnostic novelist since such a person is more inclined to rely on what his senses can directly observe than on universal truths or to be certain of the existence of God.

Conrad uses a diverse vocabulary; much of it is derived from marine life or the exotic eastern locales that serve as the novel's backdrop. Victorian novels were known for having extensive vocabulary, but since English wasn't his first language, Conrad no doubt took particular delight in his command of the language. By the time he began writing *Lord Jim*, he had attained such fluency that he could enjoy experimenting with the language, as he does, for instance, in the various non-

English accents (like Stein's) that make an appearance in the book or in the slang from Jim's public school days ("bally" this and "bally" that).

To attempt to highlight every interesting photograph would be laborious. A lot of the pictures, like the moon above Patusan, have deeper symbolic meanings. However, a lot of the enjoyment you'll get from reading *Lord Jim* will simply come from the book's hundreds of beautiful, odd, or shocking word pictures, so you should keep an eye out for them as you read.

6.1 Point of View

Lord Jim's first four chapters are written in the omniscient narrator's voice, which is a narrator with the power to eavesdrop on a character's thoughts, in this case, Jim's. Thus, Conrad gives you a fast introduction to Jim, and it soon becomes clear that Jim is a dreamer whose heroic ideas are far removed from reality.

Marlow takes over the story at Chapter 5, after which you are only allowed to learn as much about Jim as Marlow is aware of. This difference in perspective, however, isn't as important as you might anticipate, save from the fact that you can no longer hear Jim's thoughts as they are being thought. The fundamental benefit of the impersonal narrator's omniscience, which Marlow recognizes after just a few hours of conversation with Jim, is a comprehensive understanding of Jim's fantasies. Other benefits enjoyed by the conventional omniscient narrator are not available to this omniscient narrator. For instance, he doesn't tell you it was an old shipwreck when the *Patna* hits whatever it is she strikes at sea. This assumption is really made later, by Marlow, and it is merely a hunch.

Conrad is a "skeptical" author who has doubts about the kinds of knowledge that are available to people. Conrad the novelist holds that what a narrator (or anybody) can know is what he can see, hear, taste, touch, and smell—and extrapolate from that evidence—much like Conrad the agnostic rejects the existence of general certainties. He thereby restricts the narrative to Marlow's perspective. (The first four chapters' narrator resembles Marlow in all respects except for his omniscience.) Due to Marlow's similarity to Conrad in terms of personality and viewpoint, Conrad can talk through him more or less in his own voice (but without the Polish accent).

However, since Marlow must interact with everyone who has crucial knowledge about Jim, Conrad must perform some structural acrobatics to limit Jim's story to Marlow's point of view. Marlow needs to skulk around obtaining the accounts of Jim's employers as he quits job after job. Conrad has to set up an interview between Marlow and Gentleman Brown so that he can fully recount the circumstances leading up to Jim's death. Although beautifully portrayed, this discussion with Brown while he was dying is one of the less believable passages in the book.

7.0 FORM AND STRUCTURE

Marlow weaves back and forth between Jim's life events and his own life events (such as meeting the French lieutenant) that have an impact on Jim, as opposed to strictly following a straight timeline. Think about what happened in Chapters Twenty-six through Twenty-eight, for instance. They follow the following chronological order:

1. Jim and Jewel start dating.
2. Jim is in charge of the attack against Sherif Ali.
3. Marlow hears a report about Jim possessing a priceless Jewel as he approaches Patusan.
4. Marlow converses with Jim (a) and Doramin while in Patusan (b).

But the following order is given for these four occurrences: 2-4a-2-4b-1-3. One of Conrad's most significant contributions to the novel's growth was the fracture of the chronology, though he didn't go as far with it as later authors like William Faulkner. The book actually follows a traditional chronological order, starting with Jim's early years, continuing with the Patna incident, Jim's time working as a water clerk in various ports, his eventual success in Patusan, and ending with his passing. Even though the chronological sequence is drastically changed within individual chapters or groups of chapters, the general chronology is preserved.

The novel is divided into two halves that can be dubbed "Patna" and "Patusan" structurally, with Chapters Eighteen through Twenty serving as a loose connecting thread. The halving, according to Conrad, was a "plague patch" in the book. A two-part structure has nothing inherently wrong with it. However, many have suggested that it is difficult to view the Patna and Patusan episodes of Lord Jim as a cohesive whole because of how dissimilar the tone and fundamental assumptions they make about dreams and heroism.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Conrad's most well-known book, *Lord Jim*, is also his most thorough investigation of a recurring theme: the tension between a person's inner moral code and their behavior. This book is an examination of shame, disappointment, and the effects of dishonorable behavior on both the individual and the community. In addition to examining the nature of courage, it also examines the long-lasting effects of mistakes made in the heat of the moment, the universe's indifference, the difficulties of stating one's truth, and the impossibility of ever completely knowing oneself or another? Is it possible to truly forget our darkest experiences? How long will we continue to pay for our errors—and do we ever truly pay alone, or do we always have to exact our failures on the people we care about? It's been known for a while that this book is incredibly challenging for readers to comprehend, especially on the first read. The Jim narrative raises several important moral and social ethics issues.

Lord Jim is not the story of a romantic young man who overcomes a horrific act of cowardice with later bravery and selflessness, nor is it the story of a helpless young man whose

conceit prevents him from accepting his helplessness. Nevertheless, each of these descriptions makes some logic and is partially accurate. Even if Jim's final act of giving up his life was courageous, it was also showy and pointless. Additionally, his failure aboard the "Patna" wasn't necessarily a simple act of treason or cowardice. His overactive imagination, which is the empathetic faculty that killed the crew's morale aboard the "Narcissus," contributed to the problem. Jim allowed himself to believe that it would be best for everyone concerned if they sank quietly and asleep with the ship. Jim vividly imagined what would happen if the packed body of sleeping pilgrims were to awaken to a sense of their inevitable doom. He saw in his own lively mind the panic and horrors. The ship didn't sink, though, and Jim's choice was proven to be a flagrant breach of duty in the cold, hard reality. Jim will never own that he made a choice; he will always claim it happened to him.

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