Narration in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*: A Postcolonial Reading

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Abstract

This study is an attempt at a colonial and postcolonial reading of Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*. It is specifically focused on the narrative strategies used in the novel. In other words, it investigates the connection between the narrative strategy and a possible tone of imperialism in Conrad's novel. For the introduction, a brief review of Conrad's manner of writing and his peculiar ambiguity is presented. Then, there is an analysis of the overall politics in *Lord Jim*. Finally, the study considers the employment of narrative devices and several narrative voices in *Lord Jim*. It goes on to distinguish between Marlow (the character-narrator of the story), the frame narrator, and other voices in the novel in order to shed light on the narrative structure and its relation to the colonialist discourse in the novel. In parallel with this examination, Conrad's role as the writer, as reflected in Marlow's voice and other voices, is analyzed to see where he might stand in the narration of *Lord Jim*.

***Keywords*:** Colonialism; Imperialism; Joseph Conrad; Lord Jim; Narration; Narrative voices

1. Introduction: Ambiguity in Conrad

Most critics, while affirming the appropriateness of linking the names of Conrad and Kipling together, point to the paradoxical fact that Conrad, in spite of his firmer rootedness in the colonized world, was in a sense a spokesman and literary representative of the colonizing world. Raskin quotes this very telling comparison made by Conrad himself(Conrad, 1946, p. 51 as cited in Raskin, 1971, p.28):

> I am a thoroughly English writer, extremely difficult to translate into another language. A national writer like Kipling is easy to translate. People read him for his subject matter, people read me for the effect my work produces.

> Kipling speaks of his countrymen. I write for them. Foreigners are very much interested in his work. It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, for them to be interested in my work.

Here the underlying distinction must be understood, not merely in literary terms. As McClure (1981) points out:

> Indeed, Conrad's whole perspective on imperialism differed fundamentally from that of other English authors of his time and provided him with a uniquely broad view of the issues. Alone among writers like Kipling, Haggard, Henley, and Stevenson, Conrad lived both as a native of a colonized country and as a member of a colonizing community. Thus he achieved what they never could, although some, like Kipling, tried a view from the other side of the compound wall. (p. 92)

In other words, Conrad alone was both a native and a colonizer at the same time, and this is precisely what made him a more adept practitioner of the colonialist discourse.

Subsequent commentators continue to foreground this artistic duplicity of the Conradian situation. Although with Kipling the key question was, in the end, the objective one of imperialist rule, with Conrad it was ultimately the subjective one of colonialist identity. As Darras (1982) has aptly put it, "this foreigner converted to English late in life" was "certainly a beloved spoiled child of the British Empire, but also a child spoiled by the founders of the colonial enterprise to whom, as an orphan, he had come seeking his identity" (pp. 5-6).

In Conrad, the question of identity is inextricably woven into the whole literary fabric of his works; it is ultimately also a device that serves to illuminate a central position in the colonialist discourse, a position, moreover, that in Conrad's case also had an unavoidable biographical aspect. Perhaps, the most well-known statement regarding identical duality is in Marlow's correspondence with the "privileged man" (Conrad, 1968, p. 205) to whom he addresses his account of the last stage of Jim's life in Patusan (Griffith, 1995, p. 51):

> Self-sacrifice, the privileged man tells Marlow, is predicated upon an unqualified belief in racial superiority, or what Kipling famously called the "white man's burden." Paradoxically, the imperialist must maintain an

> identification with his own people while he serves, the interests of another culture; thus the imperialist must be a "homo duplex." Marlow's debate over "giving your life up" to the ethical system of an alien culture is carried on, in heterodox forms, throughout Conrad's fiction.

There is, of course, a mass of biographical evidence, down to minute details and phrases, to warrant a very close identification of Conrad with Marlow. Yet, in the end, Marlow remains, strictly speaking, a fictional character and a secondary narrator who cannot be absolutely identified with the author, regardless of how much of a spokesman for him he remains.

It is worth pointing out here that Conrad's ultimate identification with Britain and British imperialism, although still not recognized and acknowledged fully by all, has never escaped the notice of astute contemporary critics like, for example, Terry Eagleton who explains (Eagleton, 1976, pp. 133-34):

> English society itself offered Conrad an ideal resolution of the conflicting ideological imperatives he inherited from his Polish context … England, Conrad believes, is "the only barrier to the pressure of infernal doctrines born in continental backslums" . . . . This ideological conjuncture in Conrad's texts is determined in the last instance by the imperialist character of the English capitalism he served.

Yet, in a further ironic twist, the postcolonial discourse of hybridity and fluidity and its rejection of any unified subjectivity, links hands with the Conradian loss of identity, to appear as another voice of contemporary neocolonialism. This is much similar to Bhabha's discussion of Conrad. He refers to Conrad as "a Polish émigré, deeply influenced by Gustave Flaubert, who, writing about Africa, produces an English classic"—and then generalizes it to come up with the "thesis" of the unity of the colonial subject, that is of the colonizer with the colonized, and the ambivalence of colonial discourse, through what he calls the state of hybridity that is described as "the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities" and defined as "the revaluation of the assumptions of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects" (Bhabha, 1985, p. 150).

The key work behind Bhabha's assumptions is Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). The subtext inherent in Said's defense of Conrad is that, like him, Conrad "belonged to both sides of the imperial divide":

> As against this optimism, affirmation, and serene confidence, Conrad's narratives—to which I have so often referred because more than anyone else he tackled the subtle cultural reinforcements and manifestations of empire—radiate an extreme, unsetting anxiety: they react to the triumph of empire the way Hirschman says that romantics responded to the triumph of an interest-centered view of the world. Conrad's tales and novels in one sense reproduce the aggressive contours of the high imperialist undertaking, but in another sense they are infected with the easily recognizable, ironic awareness of the postrealist modernist sensibility. (p. 385)

The idea of duality proposed here will be of use when this study introduces the idea of irony in Conrad and *Lord Jim* in order to decide on the question of imperialism in the novel. Actually, the irony in *Lord Jim* is originally caused by the ambiguity found in its author's mind about the theory of imperialism and its practice by nations of power.

2. Politics of *Lord Jim*

Lord Jim, the climax of Conrad's early development, not only in his art but in his political imagination, resolves the limitations of the work ethic and of colonial adventurism by leading its hero to find his identity in political action. It portrays the political life of a community, no longer as a conflict of tribal groups but as a conflict of social classes. Prefiguring Conrad's later novels, it establishes the possibility of political activity not merely as an expression of egoism but as the social realization of the otherwise hollow self.

Patusan, as described by the half-caste captain of the ship that takes Jim to the mouth of its river, is at the outset, a society close to precivilized animality. When Marlow visits there, this state of affairs is ancient history; indeed, history at Patusan begins with Jim's arrival. The war at Patusan is not an example of ingrained native factionalism but is specified as a trade war between the Malay population under Rajah Tunku Allang and the immigrant Bugis people from Celebes, under Doramin.

Jim settles down all the atrocities and brings peace to Patusan. Indeed, he comes to stand as a virtual symbol of civilization (note that the natives call him Tuan Jim—almost equivalent to *Lord Jim*), as Marlow suggests (cited in Conrad, 1968):

> He dominated the forest, the secular doom, the old mankind. He was like a figure set up on a pedestal, to

> represent in his persistent youth the power, and perhaps the virtues, of races that never grow old, that have emerged from the gloom. I don't know why he should always have appeared to me symbolic. Perhaps this is the real cause of my interest in his fate. (p. 162)

It would be possible to find in deserting eight hundred brown-skinned people to save one's own white skin, a basis of racial prejudice, but Jim's attitude toward the Malays is carefully distinguished from that of the others like the German Captain, for whom they are "cattle" (Conrad, 1968, p. 10), or the chief engineer for whom they are "brutes" (Conrad, 1968, p. 33). Jim's identification with the native community is, in fact, made easier by his alienation from the white maritime world.

Jim's development is not from racial prejudice to missionary benevolence toward the natives but it is a progress from egoistic isolation to political solidarity. (Fleishman, 1967, p. 110) A clue to this is Marlow's explanation of the jump, "He was not afraid of death perhaps, but I tell you what, he was afraid of the emergency" (Conrad, 1968, p. 54), an also:

> A certain readiness to perish is not so very rare, but it is seldom that you meet men whose souls, steeled in the impenetrable armor 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. Which of us here has not observed this, or maybe experienced something of that feeling in his own person—this extreme *weariness of emotions*, the vanity of effort, the yearning for rest? Those striving with unreasonable forces know it well—the shipwrecked castaways in boats, wanderers lost in a desert, men battling against the unthinking might of nature, or the stupid *brutality of crowds.*

When Brown appeals to him on the grounds of their common moral failings and status as outcasts, Jim does not challenge him, who is to him the image of his own prior self. This results in his second isolation. In his final act, Jim comes back to society by submitting his life to it. Thus, if there is anything like original sin in Conrad's morality, it might be the temptation to stay outside the society, whether it be white or nonwhite. In this way, Conrad lets his readers assume that colonization is a viable form of imperialism, not so much because it improves the worst

conditions of native life but for the commitment to social progress allows the individual to discover himself in the community formed by his efforts.

Relying on a two-part distinction of *Lord Jim* in general, how can one distinguish the two different Patna and Patusan parts of *Lord Jim*? Ruppel (1998) answers this question by referring to Conrad's "magic naturalism." He asserts that "Patusan becomes the naturalist's laboratory created by the colonialist discourse of the late nineteenth century, and it is magical because within the terms and conventions of that discourse, it is a place where Jim's romantic imagination can have free rein" (p. 55).

If imperialism is taken as equal to romantic idealism, it then will fail in Conrad's view, though it may have a temporary success (as Jim has for a while in Patusan). White (1993) puts it quite simply, "the colonizer's ideal may seem noble, but the ideal can never be achieved" (p. 104).

2.1 Lord Jim's Marlow

Whereas a few facts emerge during the omniscient narrator's presentation of the inquiry, the critical fact—Jim's jump—is only revealed once Marlow begins his narrative. One way of understanding this decision is to believe, as the narrative encourages us to, that only Marlow can present the jump in its full complexity because, with this first narrative shift, the novel has clearly established the need for Marlow to steer the inquiry into Jim away from the "superficial how" to the "fundamental why."But there is another way of understanding this moment: The facts are enveloped by Marlow's struggle with interpreting Jim perhaps because that struggle allows Jim's jump and its possible commentary on imperialism, to recede into the background, in order that the ostensibly larger questions on the nature of heroism and of duty come to the forefront (Mongia, 1992, p. 32). Before further elaboration on this issue, some details about the narrative of Marlow are needed to be covered.

When Marlow's spoken narrative ends in chapter 36, the listeners drift off "without offering a remark" (Conrad, 1968, 204), only one man of this group ever hears the end of Jim's story. This "privileged man" (Conrad, 1968, p. 205) is apparently the only one of the listeners who expressed an interest in Jim "that survived the telling of his story" (Conrad, 1968, p. 205). Curiously, despite his choice of writing, Marlow conducts more of a dialogue with this man than he does with his listeners. When Marlow is speaking to the guests at Charley's, he neither demands nor is offered much response. With the privileged man, though, Marlow begins his letter with a reminder of an old conversation and its applicability to the end of Jim's story.

Marlow's encounters with numerous characters, who help him learn the details of Jim's life, only emphasize its obscurity. These narrative stumbles are

meant to suggest varied possibilities of seeing as well as the inherent limitations of each perspective. In Mongia's idea (1992), Marlow's narrative authority in *Lord Jim* is repeatedly destabilized, primarily through Conrad's use of several narrative voices. "That Conrad means us to respond to these numerous frames as alternative viewpoints seems clear both through responses to the novel and through an understanding of the modernist project as a whole" (1992, p. 26).

Mongia (1992) draws his readers' attention to what Marlow says to the privileged man, "the point, however, is that of all mankind Jim had no dealings but with himself, and the question is whether at the last he had not confessed to a faith mightier than the laws of order and progress" (Conrad, 1968, p. 206). He, then, draws two peculiar conclusions from Marlow's words: First, Marlow does not perceive Jim as a colonizer in Patusan because his task is self-appointed; his dealings are only with himself. Second, Jim is, if anything, one of the colonized, for Marlow has stated,"…in fact, Jim the leader was a captive in every sense. The land, the people, the friendship, the love, were like the jealous guardians of his body. Every day added a link to the fetters of that strange freedom" (Conrad, 1968, p. 160). Jim's childishness, insisted upon throughout the narrative, also adds to his "colonized" state (Conrad, 1968, p. 27).

After all, to whatever group Jim belongs, it is evident that the only people in this novel who share an affinity with and an understanding of Jim, are all described in terms of the imperialist urge to further boundaries and discover what lies beyond. Stein and the privileged man are the only ones from whom Marlow desires a response, the only ones in the novel chosen to know Jim's complete story. When Marlow dimly realizes that Jim needs "something in the nature of an opportunity" (Conrad, 1968, p. 122), Stein is the only man he can turn to for help. Stein immediately diagnoses Jim's problem,'He is romantic" (Conrad, 1968, p. 129) and further explains,"the way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up" (Conrad, 1968, p. 130).

According to Stein, the only way for a romantic "to be" is "to follow the dream, and again to follow the dream" (Conrad, 1968, p.131). He diagnoses Jim as "romantic"—the cure for that condition requires the imperialist backdrop to find expression. It seems that for Jim to express his nature, a region such as Patusan needs to be available. His urge for heroic fulfillment can only be satisfied once he becomes Stein's agent in Patusan. None of the "opportunities to earn his bread" (Conrad, 1968, p. 122) that Marlow has created earlier appease Jim's desires. To fulfill one's romantic nature, then, the colonial world appears to be necessary.

In this way, an imperialist tone clearly underlies *Lord Jim*. Thus, to read the novel just as an unbiased account of man's life and heroism is to ignore how Conrad's narrative techniques are ideologically associated with European

imperialism. Accordingly, one major imperialistic motif in *Lord Jim*is discussed below.

2.2 One of us

"One of us" is a complex phrase Marlow—Conrad's sailor-narrator—uses to characterize Jim in *Lord Jim*. It is usually taken to refer to national or racial identity or perhaps even to membership in the merchant service. Brudney (2003) refers to a biblical resonance; Genesis 3; 22 says, "Behold, the man has become like one of us knowing good and evil", in order to claim that the reason one can be "one of us" is that he knows good and evil (p. 319). One can clearly realize that this attitude expresses an imperial prejudice from Marlow toward the other. It does not lose strength even though Marlow may have statements such as "we exist only in so far as we hang together" (Conrad, 1968, p.136) because they just emphasize the point that just reciprocity between the dominant white European and inferior non-European may exist.

The concept of "one of us" has inspired many critics to study the novel through the interpretation of that concept. Hawthorn (2005), discussing the concept of self-knowledge and self-deceit in Conrad's *Lord Jim*, refers to Aristotle's view of tragedy:

> All of us have our hidden flaw or flaws, and as we know from Marlow's repeated reminders, Jim is certainly "one of us"; finding out what these flaws are is a never-ending process . . . . One must be tested, and one must learn from the results of the test. Jim fails . . . . (p. 222).

Marlow repeats insistently throughout the novel, "He was one of us." It is not just as a sailor that Jim fits this bill, but as a common white middle-class male of the late 19thcentury. Baxter (2009) has a peculiar interpretation of "one of us" in *Lord Jim*. She contends that Marlow, in the initial stages of the first part of the novel, expends his energy on avoiding the "depths of horror" in Jim's apparent trustworthiness through romance techniques of digression, which serve to emphasize his similarity to "us" (p. 104). In this way, there is a tension between Jim's desire for vindication and his desire for spectacular action. This tension mirrors that which Edward Said identifies between action and the verbal narration of that action (Said, 1974, p. 127).

Batchelor (2007) considers "one of us" as the reminder of one frontier Jim is unable to cross: the racial frontier (p. 35). One can assume several borders in *Lord Jim* that Jim succeeds to cross through the novel: moral, narratorial, geographical, semantic, and metaphorical. The geographical border, for instance, is that which

separates the British Empire—the huge, ubiquitous Victorian institution—from the partly explored Malay states. The border is actually between Patna and Patusan.

When Marlow first sees Jim and expresses his feelings, "I liked his appearance; I knew his appearance; he came from the right place; he was one of us" (Conrad, 1968, p. 27), one social and also emotional bonding is drawn between them. However, this phrase is always restrictive and never becomes synonymous with "everyman"; it would not be used for someone who is not British—white and male. This becomes more evident when Marlow makes a contrast between white Jim and native Dain Waris where he describes the latter, "beloved, trusted and admired as he was, he was still one of them, while Jim was one of us" (Conrad, 1968, p. 220). Another instance is when Marlow describes the natives of Patusan, depicting them as a background to focus on Jim (Conrad, 1968):

> The immense and magnanimous Doramin and his little motherly witch of a wife, gazing together upon the land and nursing secretly their dreams of parental ambition; Tanku Allang, wizened and greatly perplexed; Dain Waris, intelligent and brave, with his face in Jim, with his firm glance and his ironic friendliness; the girl, absorbed in her frightened suspicious adoration; Tamb' Itam, surly and faithful. (pp. 200-201)

As it is quite apparent here, every character is somehow described in relation to Jim, through their faith in him and their loyalty toward him. It should be taken into consideration how once again Marlow uses his known phrase. This time, he is recording the last moments of his last day with Jim. They have come to a side of the open sea. Marlow will recross the sea later on and return to England, whereas Jim believes "this is my limit, because nothing less will do" (Conrad, 1968, p. 202). Marlow records beautifully, "the twilight was ebbing fast from the sky above his head . . . he himself appeared no bigger than a child—then only a speck, a tiny white speck that seemed to catch all the light left in a darkened world . . . . And suddenly, I lost him . . ." (Conrad, 1968, p. 204).

Jim is here symbolically at the frontier (Conrad, 1968, p.38). He has no way back and no way forward. Although Marlow still believes he is "one of us," Jim finds no refuge in the white world (besides, he cannot cross the solidarity of the white middle class, represented by Brown), whereas the native world will soon show him it has no place for him either.

What was discussed in this section about the possible significations of the concept of "one of us" is—as one finds at the end of it—ambiguous and complicated. It may be illuminated by considering Conrad's imperialistic attitude on

the whole, and the level into which he injects his own ideas into the story via the narrators especially Marlow. Before a discussion on this issue, an analysis of other voices in the novel is needed.

2.3 Different Voices in Lord Jim

Marlow and Jewel, as two voices in the novel, utterly fail to understand each other (Tourchon, 2008, p.72). He will be able to come back to Patusan only if he never fully enters it, only if he perceives the place without merging with it; conversely, Jewel, who has merged with it since her birth, will never be able, according to Marlow, to perceive anything about the Western world. In other words, one can contend that the conflict between Marlow and Jewel is the same struggle between commensurable and incommensurable, reversibility, and historicism, "would" with "did" (Tourchon, 2008, p. 74). This leads to the story's polyphony. However, Stein's voice which philosophically dominates, whereas Marlow's narrative domination should not be ignored.

The Stein of chapter 20, who serves the plot as a sort of deus, or demi-deus, and in whom, with his oracular utterance and his talisman ring Elliott (1964) has seen a presentment of Jung's archetype of the "wise old man" (p. 143), is the most complicated of those prismatic human lenses which make of *Lord Jim*, more markedly than any other of Conrad's fictions, a sort of great composite eye through the facets of which Marlow, and after him Conrad's readers, successively focus upon the aspects of Jim and his clouded case.

But if Stein is a lens, it is not through his word only that our vision is refracted. We make what we can of his diagnosis of Jim's case and of his prescription for it. His word—apart from the directness of his assertion that Jim is romantic (a condition at once rendered ambivalent by Stein's characterization of it as very bad and very good, too (Conrad, 1968, p.132)—are metaphoric and allusive in the way they enclose in that famous image of human condition ("A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea [Conrad, 1968, p. 130]) an implicit reference to the particularity of Jim's destiny.

In chapter 37, the three voices (i.e., Marlow's, Stein's, and Jewel's) face one another. Marlow becomes aware of his narrative weakness: "My own voice seemed to me muffled, lost in an irresponsive deaf immensity" (Conrad, 1968, p.213). This is the first time that Marlow's authoritarian voice significantly fades out. But Stein's voice is hardly stronger, "No! no! Not false! True! true! true!" (Conrad, 1968, p. 213), but that is of no avail to Jewel and only irritates Marlow. From now on, no voice can reach Jewel's because to her the case is closed, "He [Jim] has left me" (Conrad, 1968, p. 211). Nevertheless, her voice does not reach anybody either. Both Stein and Marlow conclude that she does not understand a thing. Polyphony here

verges on cacophony. Note that Marlow's and Stein's viewpoints on some occasions in the novel stop being mutually incomprehensible.

It is of significance to note that an explicitly imperialistic attitude is shared by a voice which belongs to one who is often considered as one of Jim's doubles in the novel *Gentleman Brown*. Although "Brown hated Jim at first sight" (Conrad, 1968, p. 231), little by little, common points between his past and Jim's increase culminating in Brown's self-justification for murdering a native. When "it came to saving one's life in the dark, one didn't care who else went—three, thirty, three hundred people" (Conrad, 1968, p. 235). A trace of the same imperialistic view in Jim is manifested when he lets Brown go free instead of crushing him. Moreover, some sort of similar leniency is shown by Jim toward other light- colored characters such as Cornelius and Allang.

At this point, turning once again to Tourchon's (2008) study of *Lord Jim*, it is noteworthy to quote some lines from him:

> Until the end then, the reader can choose whose voice (s)he wants to listen to. One may discredit Steins for its romanticism and for the irony it is subject to throughout the narrative, or Marlow's for its coldness, but the text never imposes its verdict . . . . The author's voice is resolutely silent, and that is why the polyphony in *Lord Jim* is genuine. (p. 87)

2.4 Imperialism in Lord Jim

Even a glance at the extraordinarily huge body of criticism written on *Lord Jim* is enough to awe us by a more extraordinary list of known literary characters Jim is compared with: Oedipus, Hamlet, Don Quixote, Michael Henchard, and Jay Gatsby—to name but a few. Then, after all, is Jim "one of them" or "one of us"?!

The most important issue that seems to involve all discussions about what is known as "Conrad's imperialistic perspective," would be to decide what eventually Marlow's known phrase "one of us" means. But, as it was shown through the present study, there is not just one connotation or significance for the issue at stake. Nevertheless, once this is interpreted, one should ask immediately whether Marlow is Conrad or not. Conrad once said that ". . . a work of art is very seldom limited to one exclusive meaning and not necessarily tending to a definite conclusion" (Aubry, 1927, Vol.2, p. 204). It can be now considered what may be one possible convincing interpretation, as long as the previous arguments are concerned.

Many critics have interpreted the significant idea of "one of us" in *Lord Jim* as a generalization of Jim's situation to any other ordinary human being. In this way, when Marlow, upon an early view of Jim says, "he came from the right place; he

was one of us" (Conrad, 1968, p. 27), he should mean that Jim has done something wrong or has faltered in a moment of decision as just any of us (ordinary human beings) may do the same thing on a similar occasion.

However, as Marlow's narration was examined through this study, one can see that through the novel he elaborates his controversial statement more clearly. Somewhere else Marlow, referring to Jim narrates, "He discovered at once a desire that I should not confound him with his partners in crime—let us call it. He was not one of them; he was altogether of another sort" (Conrad, 1968, p.49). This gets more lighted when Marlow makes a contrast between white Jim and native Dain Waris where he describes the latter, "beloved, trusted, and admired as he was, he was still one of them, while Jim was one of us." (Conrad, 1968, p. 220) Here, the distinction between "us" and "them" becomes clear and lets one to interpret "us" far away from any ordinariness to the favor of a particular group.

Therefore, if Jim is "one of us" and not "one of them," he is an English gentleman, brought up within an exalted tradition from which men emerge acknowledging personal honor as absolute. On the other hand, the European officers on Patna are corrupted and, consequently, do not belong to those white Europeans who are civilized such as Marlow, who certainly understand equality and altruism. In this way, an (anti)imperialistic tone, though it may be to the chagrin of some interpreters, shades on Marlow's pervasive statement in the novel. However, one might ask here whether Conrad (or Marlow) is criticizing imperialism in order to undermine its values or whether he is trying to underline its dominance and sovereignty. The question might be answered after some more elaboration on the issue in the following paragraphs.

The idea of being different seems to exist on Jim's mind, too. Regarding his so-called crime as a "flaw," it is due to his being "ignorant" of the equal stature of his fellow passengers on Patna, regardless of their race, color of skin, language, and so on. Rehabilitation will be meaningful for him only if it is concomitant with a radically changed relationship to other people. It is such a changed relationship that the second part of the novel, the Patusan section, appears to present to us. In there, Jim finds "a totally new set of conditions for his imaginative faculty to work upon" (Conrad, 1968, p.133). On the other hand, Jim is consistently seen as a light figure against a dark background. Marlow sees Jim as "only a speck, a tiny white speck that seemed to catch all the light left in a darkened world" (Conrad, 1968, p. 204) This lightness (as traditionally associated with goodness and innocence) is eventually destroyed by dark-skinned natives, also a man called Brown and Cornelius, who is "in a suit of black broadcloth" (Conrad, 1968, p. 197). The color imagery embedded in the words and names reinforces the idea of difference already mentioned.

However, one should admit that *Lord Ji*m portrays white Europeans under two major groups: Those who are corrupted, and those who are civilized and decent. On the Patna, for example, there are faithless white officers who leave the ship and passengers at the time of the incident. A major embodiment of the "corrupted white," if one may so call it, is Brown. He is rumored to be the son of a baronet, and through his fatal colloquy with Jim, there runs a subtle reference to their common blood. However, he is a man who has forgotten his (white) manners and ways of conduct. Like Patna's officers, he is not an honest white man. Significantly, the word "corrupted" not "corrupt" is used through the present study to show a particular reason behind that corruption. "Corrupted" signifies that the corruption is not something innate (not a part of whiteness), but actually a process caused by a constant contact with the nonwhite.

Thus, now that it is suggested that there is a trend of criticism as well as glorification of imperialism in Conrad's work, it should be considered how it is realized in his narrative. It is, of course, quite ambiguous and elusive, but at the same time, there is a very much less ambivalent idea of a process at the heart of it. It is something embedded in Marlow's narrative in *Lord Jim* to use Watt's terminology (1979), the special narrative strategy that Marlow employs as "delayed decoding; [where] the physical impression must precede the understanding of cause" (p. 78). In other words, Marlow narrates certain events as he first sees them, not as he would later understand them.

Actually, by delaying to give the proper knowledge, Marlow delays the reader's judgment of that particular event or situation. What is read as *Lord Jim*'s text (with all of its portrayal of superiority of the whites, for instance) is not what Marlow is going to tell its readers. Rather, if one is to reach the real intention of such an ironical narrator (not necessarily the writer for now) he or she should read between the lines.

The distortion of reality in *Lord Jim* can be considered as a parody which signals to the reader that all is "not quite as it should be or appears to be" (Harris, 1981, p. 265). Marlow, from his first meeting with Jim, believes in his difference with others: If Jim "was not one of them, he was altogether of another sort" (Conrad, 1968, p.25).This recognition that culminates in the motif "[Jim] was of the right sort; he was one of us" (Conrad, 1968, p. 27) delays the reader's understanding of its significance, until almost the end of the story. It is at that time that the reader has learnt about Jim's journey to an isolated island, fighting for it natives' rights, and eventually being sacrificed for their cause.

Now, this fixed "understanding" of heroism (with the antiheroism of Brown on its other end, to the detriment of any kind of exploitative colonialism) is associated with the early recognition of Jim as "one of us." The process is complete; the reader has to admit then that Jim, a white man belonging to a large family of

white Europeans, is now one of the natives of Patusan, fighting for their cause. He is now "one of them" (Conrad, 1968, p.49; although he is not at the same time, that is, he is aware of the possible damages the native society can have on his personality and understanding). Therefore, the irony of Marlow's narrative is in that when he considers Jim as "one of us," he is attempting to tell us that Jim is one of those honest Europeans who understand that "we exist only in so far as we hang together" (Conrad, 1968, p. 136).

At this point, one can conclude that Marlow, at the end of the tale, is trying to convince the reader that even though colonization with the purpose of economic exploitation and cruel domination over other people is not right, it can be justified if done in the decent way that Jim practices it over people of Patusan. Benign colonialism (that appeared to Conrad as a necessity for social progress) can be realized if the colonizer accepts to develop into a member of the native society (but at the same time he should be careful not be corrupted by that alien culture, as probably "conquerors" like Brown are). And, if he fails even on only one occasion, the punishment is his demise, as Jim's is at the end of the story, when he ignores Brown who is an enemy of the natives.

2.5 Is Marlow a Shadow of Conrad?

The answer to the question about the relationship between Conrad the author and Marlow the narrator can now be elaborated. Of course, there is no clear answer to this question, not in Conrad's case, but for all authors and the level of affinity between them and the narrators of their stories. Nonetheless, on the biographical side, Conrad has a lot of similarities with Marlow. This fact is reinforced when it is underlined that Marlow is not only the narrator of *Lord Jim* but also the speaker of some other tales of Conrad.

Therefore, one can assume that in such tales as *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *Chance*, Conrad is the shadowy person in the background who listens to Marlow who serves to give us Conrad's own melancholy and ironical philosophy. Through Marlow's watchful glance and unsleeping interest, Conrad is able to get under the skin of his figures; it is, as Curle (1968b) puts it, "a trick which in Shakespearean days was achieved by asides" and "in Victorian days by an author's comments," thus building that atmosphere that is bound up with Conrad's own reminiscences and sense of values (p. 162).

However, Marlow is in some ways totally different from the author for he is not only a philosopher as is Conrad, but he is also a moralist, in a sense in which Conrad decidedly is not. One may even take Marlow as an obtruder in Conrad's works, as Curle does. (1968b, p. 125)

Nevertheless, it is through Marlow that Conrad gains a definite perspective that is valuable to him and the introduction of Marlow gives Conrad the opportunity

of talking colloquially, which is more suitable for the purpose of a story like that of *Lord Jim*. This technique might be counted as a special realism that Conrad employs in his narrative.

True, Marlow has his own likes and dislikes, his own opinions, and prejudices. Indeed, unless he had such emotions, he would not be in the position to fulfill his role as a tireless observer and possess that deeply-felt concern that causes people to confide in him. For in his presence all tongues are loosed, and Jim, Stein, Jewel, and even the unspeakable Brown bare their secret thoughts.

Marlow's existence permits Conrad always to be in the right place at the right moment or, at least, to find invariably someone to close the gaps. In so far as one is conscious of Marlow as a human being and not as a voice, one pictures him as mature and quiet, with a probing, ironic, generous mind and a friendly, reserved bearing. He avoids the obvious, he has acute sensibilities, he is absorbed by the problem of relationships and their results, but he does not obtrude himself and invariably behaves with that guarded frankness which makes him both approachable and reserved. Although he talks so much, as Curle (1968a) somewhere else points out, it is as a listener that he really shines (pp. 64-65).

If Marlow is a shadow of Conrad, it is clear that he is, most likely, the mind of Conrad rather than the personality. And perhaps, even so far as the mind is concerned, he is, in a manner of speaking, only partially Conrad. It is a mistake to assume that all his thoughts are inevitably those that Conrad would have had in like circumstances. The Conrad flavor pervades him, but as he has been granted his own personality, it follows that, within certain broad limits, he expresses ideas or passes judgments as a man rather than as a puppet. This becomes more illuminated when one considers that Conrad (particularly with regard to his Polish background and his self-exile) has also some affinities with Jim, especially at the moment of his jump. However, as Jim is presented to us through Marlow, there is no doubt that Conrad has used Marlow to express a lot of his own ideas on different issues, most importantly imperialism in this case. Nevertheless, what was discussed as Marlow's (or *Lord Jim*'s) touch on imperialism is, undoubtedly, not very alien to Conrad.

3. Concluding Remarks

On the whole, the fluctuating narrational levels in *Lord Jim* can be divided into two major levels: conversational and literary. On the conversational level, Marlow is an unreliable and subjective narrator who even interferes with Jim's affairs and changes the sequence of the events. Furthermore, Jim himself is uncertain in his behavior (or romantic as he is called by Stein). It is on this level that the relative and unascertainable atmosphere of *Lord Jim* can be justified. The reader has to decipher what Marlow communicates with him or her and reconstruct it in order to arrive at a reliable interpretation of the story.

On the literary level, however, Marlow turns to abstractions that show no sign of a communication with a reader or an audience; he just mentions some viewpoints or general facts. It is on this level which Marlow can be considered as Conrad's mouthpiece and, therefore, the authorial control of Conrad becomes evident. Nevertheless, Conrad uses a particular strategy to conceal his identity. It is close to what Shklovsky calls "defamiliarization." Defamiliarization can be interpreted as the development of narrative techniques to make stories plausible. That is, according to Shklovsky, novelists are motivated to conceal the factitiousness of fiction in order to hide their own voice. Thus, the numerous quotations in the form of inverted commas in the narrative of *Lord Jim* constitute together a mask for Conrad to hide his identity and prevent the reader to judge the story as Conrad's. However, one can claim that Conrad eventually fails, because after all, he is the creator of the work and even the same defamiliarization strategy is his own and proves his presence in the story (Taira, 1988, p. 65).

One should note that Conrad's complex system of narration results in several narrational levels in a form that any reader is at least four levels distant from Jim. All ideas attempted by this study regarding Conrad and his *Lord Jim* are shaped on these levels. Conrad himself is a part of this system—one that includes other members as well: Marlow, the other narrator, the characters, and even the readers.

It is even possible to assume that Conrad has given us the ironical narrative of Marlow with an ironical perspective on his own side, too. This does not simply mean that Conrad has portrayed Marlow as a racist to criticize him at a higher level, by exposing the contemptibility of his ideas to us. More complicatedly, however, it means that *Lord Jim* is an "irony within irony"; if Marlow is trying to belittle some imperialistic assumptions ironically (by presenting the reader an ironic narrative in a way already discussed), Conrad might be recriticizing that criticism on a much higher level to come back to a conclusion that has connotations probably much similar to the original issue exposed to Marlow's criticism. Future studies can examine this issue by an ongoing analysis of narrative devices, considering Conrad and Marlow as two distinct managers of the narration of *Lord Jim*, each one having a narrative and a series of narrative devices for his own.

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