THE TREATMENT OF RELIGION AND THE USE OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE IN THE WRITINGS OF JOSEPH CONRAD

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ABSTRACT

Conrad's use of religious terminology has attracted mainly archetypal criticism to date, and the validity of this approach is tested in chapter one. An assessment of Conrad's beliefs begins with a study of the Polish and personal religious influences of his childhood and continues in chapter four by showing how, under the tuition of his guardian's letters, he developed a kind of work ethic, to which he brought the religious intensity of his father; initially towards his life at sea, later towards his vocation as a writer. Literature, in fact, is shown to be the crucial background, not only to his attacks on Christianity but also to the pessimism shown in his letters to R. B. Cunninghame Graham in the late 1890s.

The following chapters study literal religious references in Conrad's writings. Chapter five investigates the sources of Conrad's knowledge of Islam and shows how his fictional Muslims expose the shortcomings of their European counterparts. Critical views of his use of Eastern religions (particularly Buddhism) are analysed in chapter six and the usage itself scrutinised, whilst chapter seven is concerned with Conrad's treatment of Christianity and its failings.

In the final chapters, the figurative religious language is studied. The terms "devil" and "soul" are
given secular interpretations, such as "excessive egoism" (devil) and man's "will" or "power of choice" (soul). Generally, the figurative religious language (including numerous biblical allusions) shows the results of the inadequacies of literal religion in the modern world by indicating man's obsessions for less spiritual occupations such as his passions, his own ego, his personal illusions, his vocation, his self-conception or the material and political pursuits of society. Examples are drawn from the whole canon and usually show such conduct to lead to disaster. In this spiritual crisis, hope lies in such simple ideas as fidelity, faith and love but these notions are seldom attained.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first encountered the work of Joseph Conrad in the sixth form where The Rover was one of the set novels for "A level" English. The book did not impress me greatly at the time, but we were also provided with a supplementary reading list of recommended novels to give us a wider experience of English Literature, and this list included Lord Jim. My first acknowledgement, therefore, should be to the compiler of that list, J. R. Madell, for bringing to my attention the more profound Conrad of earlier years, since, needless to say, Lord Jim did impress me.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Throughout the text, the following abbreviations have been used for the titles of Conrad's books:

AF  Almayer's Folly
OI  An Outcast of the Islands
NN  The Nigger of the "Narcissus"
TU  Tales of Unrest
LJ  Lord Jim
Y  Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories
T  Typhoon, and Other Stories
N  Nostromo
MS  The Mirror of the Sea
SA  The Secret Agent
ASS A Set of Six
UWE Under Western Eyes
PR  A Personal Record
TLS 'Twixt Land and Sea
C  Chance
V  Victory
WT  Within the Tides
SL  The Shadow-Line
AG  The Arrow of Gold
Re  The Rescue
NLL  Notes on Life and Letters
Ro  The Rover
S  Suspense
TH  Tales of Hearsay
LE  Last Essays
Sis  The Sisters

# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. THE ARCHETYPAL APPROACH AND ITS DANGERS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Introduction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Christ Figures</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. The Fall</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Names and Numbers</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. A Sample, I: R. J. Andreach, The Slain and Resurrected God</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi. A Sample, II: Claire Rosenfield, Paradise of Snakes</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii. Conclusion</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. GENERAL BACKGROUND: RELIGION IN POLAND</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820-1870</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. The Catholic Church</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Polish Messianism</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Summary</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. SPECIFIC BACKGROUND: RELIGION IN CONRAD'S LIFE 1857-1895</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Family Influences</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Other Influences</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Conrad's Letters to Marguerite Poradowska</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4. CONRAD'S LATER RELIGION .......................... 92
   i. Conrad's Catholicism ............................. 92
   ii. Conrad's Vocation: The Sea ............. 100
   iii. Conrad's Vocation: Literature ........ 104
   iv. Conrad's Comments on Christianity ... 121
   v. Summary ......................................... 131

5. CONRAD'S TREATMENT OF ISLAM AND HIS SOURCES ....................... 138
   i. Conrad's Sources .................. 138
   ii. Application: The Purpose of Conrad's Muslims ........................ 155

6. CONRAD'S TREATMENT OF BUDDHISM AND HINDUISM .......................... 173
   i. Buddhism ........................................ 173
   ii. Hinduism ....................................... 196

7. CONRAD'S TREATMENT OF CHRISTIANITY .... 201
   i. Conrad's Catholics ...................... 201
   ii. Conrad's Non-Catholics, I: Greek Orthodox ............................. 222
   iii. Conrad's Non-Catholics, II: Protestant Clergy .......................... 224
   v. Summary ......................................... 232

8. THE DEVIL AND THE SOUL ................................. 234
   i. The Demonic and Egoism ..................... 234
   ii. The Demonic as Catalyst and Reflector ................................. 260
   iii. The Demonic and the Denial of Life ................................. 279
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>iv. The Soul and the Will</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. CONRAD'S USE OF FIGURATIVE RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Biblical Allusions and the Critics</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Egoism, Passion and Personal Illusions</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Vocational Obsessions: Life at Sea</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. Social Obsessions</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Self-Conceptual Obsessions</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi. Conclusion</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

In 1906, whilst at the height of his creative powers, Joseph Conrad wrote an essay on John Galsworthy, in which he concentrated particularly on *The Man of Property*, the earliest part of *The Forsyte Saga*. The manner in which he wrote of the book is very interesting. For Conrad speaks of the Forsytes and of their obsession with property as follows:

The practical faculty of the Forsytes has erected it into a principle; their idealism has expanded it into a sort of religion which has shaped their notions of happiness and decency, their prejudices, their piety, such thoughts as they happen to have and the very course of their passions. Life as a whole has come to be perceptible to them exclusively in terms of property. Preservation, acquisition—acquisition, preservation. Their laws, their morality, their art and their science appear to them, justifiably enough, consecrated to that double and unique end. It is the formula of their virtue. (*LE*, 128)

Soames Forsyte's town house is "one of the temples of property, of a sort of unholy religion whose fundamental dogma, public ceremonies and awful secret rites, forming the subject of this remarkable novel, take no account of human dignity" (*LE*, 129). The incidents of the book can be viewed "in the light of the unquenchable fires burning on the altar of property" (*LE*, 131).
The passage in Galsworthy's novel that inspired this kind of treatment seems to have been the following:

This great and good woman, so highly thought of in ecclesiastical circles, was one of the principal priestesses in the temple of Forsyteism, keeping alive day and night a sacred flame to the God of Property, whose altar is inscribed with those inspiring words: "Nothing for nothing, and really remarkably little for sixpence."

The point is that this is the only passage in the novel that likens the Forsytes' regard for property to a religion and yet it is this one aspect that Conrad has chosen to pin-point as an illustration of the extent of the Forsytes' pre-occupation. Galsworthy made the comparison once within his novel; Conrad makes it five times during his review of that novel. The question that arises is why such a short paragraph (in a novel of over 350 pages) should have attracted Conrad's attention in this way. Clearly he found the comparison striking and significant, indicating that such metaphorical use of religious terminology met with his approval, but it is equally evident that he found it important and appealing.

Why this should be so becomes clear when reading Conrad's writings, for religion in its literal form (the appearance of a Christian priest, for

example) or in a metaphorical guise (as he saw Galsworthy using it) plays an important role in his works. This has not gone unobserved by critics but the current state of Conradian criticism has led to Conrad's use of religious language attracting some questionable interpretations, mostly archetypal and allegorical in nature. This practice and its dangers need consideration and are taken up in chapter one, but, in the meantime, it may be pertinent to preface that study with an analysis of the types of criticism that Conrad's work receives in general. It was the widely diverging interpretations of Conrad's fiction, particularly The Nigger of the "Narcissus", that caused Ian Watt to coin the terms "homeophoric" and "heterophoric" in an attempt to categorise the varying approaches. Briefly stated, Watt's definitions are:

**Homeophoric:** an interpretation which is a natural extension of the implications of the narrative content and which retains a consistent closeness to it;

**Heterophoric:** an interpretation which goes beyond any demonstrable connection between the literary object and the symbolic meaning it has been given and tends towards allegory;

**Mythophoric:** a variety of heterophoric which
depends on allusions to a specific body of mythical, religious or literary knowledge;

Cryptophoric: a subdivision of mythophoric in which the whole body of knowledge invoked is one of the depth-psychologies, depending upon analogies which Freud and Jung agree to be hidden and unconscious.²

British critics, by and large, have tended to confine themselves to the homeophoric areas of interpretation, leaving their American counterparts to tread the less certain ground of heterophoria. The chief danger of this latter approach arises from the temptation to force Conrad's fiction to dwell within the bounds of a restrictive premise. In such an instance, on discovering that certain features of the fiction fit into the theory with a degree of comfort, the heterophoric critic may be induced to provide some purely speculative explanations in order to admit the more recalcitrant aspects. Thus, Gustav Morf, finding (not surprisingly) clear traces of Conrad's Polish background evident within the novels—the use of the third of May, the date of an important Polish constitution, for the date of Sulacan independence in Nostromo, for example³—

² "Conrad Criticism and The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 12 (1958), 272-75.

proceeds to interpret most of the canon from this Polish standpoint. This leads him to such unsupported conjectures as the source of the name Patna in Lord Jim, which, he claims, Conrad could have misread as Patria (Fatherland) from a distance as he watched the ship enter Singapore harbour. Such arguments are as irrefutable as they are insupportable; nevertheless, the assumption of a cryptophoric or mythophoric message to be discerned only by the perceptive initiate who has learnt to read the signs (especially if those signs are primarily the reflection of the critic's own pre-occupation) has led to some ingenious heterophoric theories regarding Conrad's use of religious terms in his books. As a result, however, the use of this terminology as a whole has not been explained, nor have its more homeophoric possibilities been fully explored.

A certain restraint is necessary in most heterophoric criticism; a degree of detachment, perhaps, since (as will be seen later), it is not unknown for any deficiencies in such arguments to be attributed to alleged failings on the part of the novelist. Furthermore, to build a thesis around Conrad's use of religious terminology, one needs to consider all aspects of that terminology. Criticism so far in this field has tended to be selective, paying much attention to the novelist's use of the

Bible and practically ignoring other aspects such as the use of Islam in the early novels, which is frequently dismissed as being simply "exotic."

This current study, therefore, seeks to achieve a balanced view of Conrad's use of religious language by taking into account all its varied manifestations and by adopting a more homeophoric approach than the subject has received hitherto. The Polish religious background and its ramifications; certain religious and quasi-religious elements of Conrad's childhood; the impact of twenty years of Thaddeus Bobrowski's admonitions—these are some of the many influences that have an impact on Conrad's writings. Conrad's many letters need careful scrutiny, not in isolation (as they are usually treated), but in the context of the background of Conrad's life, against which they were written. Seen in this light, the picture that emerges differs sharply at times from the previously accepted views, especially in relation to the letters written to R.B. Cunninghame Graham in the late 1890s.

These and other considerations act as a necessary foundation to the analysis of the religious terms (literal and figurative), that follows; an analysis that shows just how appropriate it was for Conrad to have been attracted to that one short paragraph in The Man of Property. The word "obsession" appears frequently during this analysis, especially during the later chapters, and an early definition
may, therefore, be in order. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines the word "obsess" as follows: "(Of evil spirit, delusion, or fixed idea) haunt, harass, preoccupy, fill mind of, (-ed by, with)." It is with these meanings rather than any more specific psychological definition, that the word is used; its appropriateness becoming evident when one considers how often Conrad's characters are preoccupied with an "idea" and how frequently demonic imagery comes to cluster around it.
CHAPTER ONE

THE ARCHETYPAL APPROACH AND ITS DANGERS

i. Introduction

One of the dangers of archetypal criticism is neatly outlined by Tony Tanner in a review of Claire Rosenfield's book, *Paradise of Snakes*, which applies such techniques to Conrad's political novels. Tanner complains:

... the uniqueness of novelistic detail is lost by reference back to certain rudimentary shapes or outlines which in their generality can subsume the most heterogeneous material if the critic so wishes. A man can scarcely get into a boat but he will find himself engaged in a repetition of "a night-sea journey into an ambiguous region either in the dark interior of the earth or below the waters of the sea."  

To the archetypal critic, literature, it seems (like English Law), works by precedent. Man is born, grows through childhood to adulthood, takes a mate, procreates and dies (or, as T. S. Eliot's Sweeney put it so succinctly, "That's all the facts when you come to brass tacks: / Birth, and copulation and death").  


Since literature is intimately concerned with the lives of human beings, each work can be seen as a variation of detail within the set pattern. It would obviously be ludicrous to talk of the archetypal "Birth, and copulation and death" theme; thus such criticism must imply a cut-off point whereby the deliberate evoking of an age-old myth can be distinguished from the inevitable repetition of a motif; inevitable because no work of fiction can be wholly new. The difficulty comes with the fixing of that point since echoes of the past are unavoidable. An undeniable mythical basis to one novel may lead critics to unfortunate temptations, as John J. White points out:

Given the knowledge that such a mythological work can exist as a kind of palimpsest, critics may be encouraged to attribute hidden mythological motifs to novels where they do not really occur or cannot be shown definitely to be of much import to the work in question.

White warns: "Such speculations, possibly resulting in the mythological allegorization of novels, take place when it is suggested a certain myth is latent in a text, although in fact all that has been located is an extraneous myth with an archetypal pattern in common with the novel in question."  


4 White, p. 51.
Conrad's religious language has attracted many critics with a liking for the myth and the archetype. Northrop Frye, whose *Anatomy of Criticism* seems to have fathered some of these approaches, warns: "In pointing out the latent apocalyptic or demonic patterns in a literary work, we should not make the error of assuming that this latent content is the real content hypocritically disguised by a lying censor. It is simply one factor which is relevant to a full critical analysis."\(^5\)

Frye's definition of an archetype—"A symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole"\(^6\)—is loose enough to be applied to almost any work of literature by an indiscriminate critic. A jungle is a wilderness and, therefore, gives connotations of the Fall; a modern city can be likened to a jungle and thereby yield the same connotations; a journey must always be a quest whose seeker should receive enlightenment and knowledge on his return (if he fails to return his quest is unfulfilled); a murdered man can be seen to be a slain and resurrected God even if he omits to become resurrected. Clearly archetypal analysis requires some regulation. As it stands, a historical novel dealing with (say) the voyage of Columbus


\(^6\) Frye, p. 365.
could easily be interpreted as an archetypal quest, especially since the journey is across water.

But even a deliberate allusion to a myth does not indicate that the myth can be automatically applied wholesale to the work in question. If we read in a novel that "People seemed frightened to show their eyes; they averted them swiftly from one another as if they had heard that the Gorgon had returned and was even now at large in their city," this does not mean that we need to start looking for a Perseus figure or apply a mythological pattern to the work. The simile could simply show the steadfastness with which people in big cities tend to avoid eye-contact with each other. Literary and biblical allusions are not lacking in Conrad's work and the temptation to assume that such aspects must be the key to allegorical interpretations has not been avoided. Douglas Hewitt expressed his reservations about this kind of critical approach in the Preface to the Second Edition of his Conrad: A Reassessment. Two of the samples Hewitt produces there illustrate what might be called interpretation by rhyming possibility (Heyst/Christ) and interpretation by anagram (Holroyd= Holy rod). The second of these methods even accepts imperfect anagrams; thus Jeffrey Berman suggests that "'Conrad' and 'Decoud' are almost close enough to be called

anagrams." The "curious resemblance" that Berman sees will not be evident to many. No-one has yet suggested "Hirsch" as a near anagram of Christ, though, on the evidence of the fore-going, it is only a matter of time before this happens. Two critics have already pointed out that Hirsch is shot in a "crucifixion posture," and this assumption, together with Hirsch's Jewishness, leads Adam Gillon (to whom the merchant is "Conrad's Archetypal Jew") to wonder if Conrad realises that in death Hirsch resembles the mystery of Christ. In fact, however, the merchant of Esmeralda has his arms twisted behind his back "and wrenched so terribly that the two clenched fists, lashed together, had been forced up higher than the shoulder blades" (N, 427). In order to form the traditional pose of crucifixion, the arms would need to be stretched out, not "wrenched" behind the back. Nevertheless, Bernard Meyer, accepting Gillon's reasoning, moves on to suspect "an identification of Conrad with Hirsch and with Christ too," but if one disallows the "crucifixion posture" then Gillon's speculation and Meyer's suspicion are based on very little evidence.


10 Gillon, p. 179.

ii. Christ-figures

For the archetypal critic, there are a number of Christ figures in Conrad's fiction. The unfortunate Yanko Goorall of "Amy Foster" is one such figure. Robert J. Andreach, the title of whose book, *The Slain and Resurrected God*, bespeaks his thesis, claims that Doctor Kennedy's "constant allusions to the number three, the cross, and Yanko's being a creature of the woods and trees suggest that for him the castaway may have been a Christ-like figure "'different from . . . mankind'" (XX. 111) who descended into the underworld: he was washed ashore mysteriously, was taller than the others, sang and danced among the dead, got with child a woman who can no longer remember him and died mysteriously.  

This assertion merits analysis. In the sense that Christ told His followers that what they did (or didn't do) for the least of His servants, they did (or didn't do) for Him, every human being in need is a Christ-like figure. On the more specific level, however, the threes relate to the men who arrange Yanko's passage (T, 116), the number of dollars a day he would earn in America (repeated three times—T, 116), the number of boys who throw stones at him, the number of villages in which he is a topic of conversation (T, 119), the miles of  

beach on which the dead bodies from the wreck were being carried (T, 123), the number of weeks Yanko is at Swaffers' before Kennedy sees him digging the garden (T, 127), and the number of Norfolk pines on Swaffer's lawn (T, 129). One could just as easily make something of the three miles and a half to Foster's cottage (T, 140), three and a half being a time, times and the dividing of time explained in the Books of Daniel and Revelations. The references to the cross generally reflect empty religious ostentation (there can be no doubt that the practice of Christianity is severely criticised in the story) and one fails to see how Christ was "a creature of the woods and trees." He is not so much "different from . . . mankind" as "so different from the mankind around" (T, 111) and it is difficult to discover what the other aspects of Yanko's life have in common with Christ at all. Meyer also sees Yanko as Christ-like, claiming, in a footnote: "It will be recalled that Yanko escapes from drowning by clinging to a hen coop containing 11 ducks, which number plus the surviving man may have reference to the number of the Apostles." With this reasoning, Yanko must become an apostle— one of twelve—as well as Christ. Meyer likens Yanko's final cry "'Why?' . . . in the penetrating and indignant voice of a man calling to a responsible Maker" (T, 141) to the cry of Christ on

13 Meyer, p. 352n.
the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" and this, at least, is reasonable, though one could just as easily liken Decoud's final words in Nostromo, "It is done" (N, 501) with the final words of Christ on the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30, though Luke 23:46 has different words). Meyer's other evidence is "the Christ-like portrait of Yanko, whose long hair flows over his shoulders and who is reviled and pelted with stones by the natives."^{14} But long hair need not always be indicative of a Saviour and it is the children who pelt him with stones.

Clearly Christianity is a feature of "Amy Foster" and the fate of Yanko serves as an illustration of the inadequacy of its practices in an English coastal village. But, in a sense, Yanko is every man cast upon a foreign shore (a position that Conrad was peculiarly able to appreciate); a reversal of the motif of the civilised man cast away on an island peopled by savages. If his final cries of "why" and "Merciful" are echoes of the crucifixion (they are certainly less tenuous connections than most of the evidence produced by Andreach and Meyer), they act as an indictment of the emptiness of the villagers' religious protestations by reminding us of the Christian charity which, in this case, has been effectively withheld. Allusion does not

^{14} Meyer, p. 352.
mean identification; some of the more bizarre interpretations seem to be based on the assumption that it does.

To Edwin M. Moseley, Lord Jim is "Christ as Tragic Hero."\(^{15}\) Lord Jim, Crime and Punishment and Fathers and Sons are noted as novels which "express orthodox religious attitudes on the part of the authors and tend to handle the Christ figure traditionally and respectfully."\(^{16}\) Moseley speaks of "godlike Stein" (without supporting the assertion) and comments:

One almost thinks of the first half of the book as the Old Testament, in which man fails his responsibility and is driven from place to place as if seeking somewhere to hide his guilt. In this half of the book Jim is the archetypal Adam; he is clearly Everyman. Similarly, the second half of the book is a kind of New Testament, in which the protagonist is no longer Man but a god who assumes the shape of man to show him by a life of sacrifice the way to redemption. In this half of the book . . . Jim develops as the archetypal Christ; he is clearly the sacrificial scapegoat for Everyman.

To take this view, however, is to lose track of much of Jim's significance. There are apocalyptic overtones to the final scene with the aspect of the sky and Jim's decision to take the responsibility "on his own head" (\(LJ\), 415), but these reflect the extent of his egoism and his pretensions. There are


\(^{16}\) Moseley, p. viii.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., pp. 29-30.
undeniable godlike connotations to Jim's position in Patusan but the way one approaches this is a key factor in interpretation. Moseley seems to see Jim as a deliberately evoked Christ figure. Bruce Johnson, on the other hand, also sees him as godlike but relates him to his milieu—the age of Rajah Brooke and the motif of the white man as god among the natives. Johnson's analysis—embracing the use of the motif by Rider Haggard, Stevenson and particularly Kipling—seems far more pertinent to Lord Jim than Moseley's. For Moseley's emphasis would imply that Conrad's starting point for the novel was Christ; that the purpose of the book, in short, was to re-awaken interest in Christianity. His conclusions are based on what he regards as a religious motif rather than religious language and in his preface he talks of "the pattern of learning through suffering as endlessly and recurrently dramatised by Christ," going on to assert that an author's "lack of conscious intention could not keep the pattern out of the modern awareness even if the author tried to do so." On this basis, Moseley's choice of books could be purely random; whether they like it or not, modern novelists will fulfil his thesis. To identify Jim as a Christ figure (an unresurrected one, let it be noted) is to impose a simplistic notion on

18 Bruce Johnson, Conrad's Models of Mind (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1971), pp. 91-93.
19 Moseley, p. x.
20 Ibid., p. xi.
a complex book. Podmore, at the height of his attempt to convert James Wait, becomes "a voice—a fleshless and sublime thing, as on that memorable night—the night when he went walking over the sea to make coffee for perishing sinners" (NN, 116); Lingard tells Edith Travers "It began by me coming to you at night—like a thief in the night. Where the devil did I hear that?" (Re, 398)—both unmistakeable echoes of Christ. But this does not make either Podmore or Lingard archetypal Christ figures, though it may indicate that, in their "supreme conceit" (NN, 116) they think or act as if they are. In other words the motif often serves to indicate the aspirations of the character, not to show him as an archetypal version of the figure to whose station he hopes to aspire. Thus, if Jim is a saviour figure in Patusan, it is more because this is what he has aspired to be (as a result of reading, not the Bible, but "a course of light holiday literature" [LJ, 5]), rather than his being modelled to fit an archetypal pattern with a necessarily limited allegorical meaning.

Moseley bolsters his assertions by the discovery of a "white-and-black pun" that he feels Conrad employs "in the dualism of man's nature and the dualism of Christ-as-Man."21 But he fails to illustrate this from the text, contenting himself with comments such as "Christ the white one, appeared in the guise

21 Moseley, p. 30.
of man, the black one" and deciding that, at the end, Jim "becomes the true white man in his giving of himself as the scapegoat for all men, white and black. Interestingly, the final devil whom Jim faces is a white man named Brown who tempts and tests Lord Jim as Satan taunted Christ."\(^22\) Brown is certainly associated with "the dark powers" in the novel but Moseley's conclusions continue to see Jim solely in terms of pretensions and not in terms of character.

It is this kind of equation (that allusion means identification) that seems to lie behind the readings of "Heart of Darkness" that make Mr. Kurtz a perverted form of Christ. But, again, if Kurtz's promise of "I will return" is evocative of Christ's promise of a Second Coming, it is also an empty gesture illustrating the intense egoism of the man. W.L. Godshalk sees Kurtz as a "diabolical Christ" on the grounds that "Marlow's journey toward and meeting with Kurtz has certain ironic parallels with the Christian myths."\(^23\) He builds on the religious language—such aspects as the likening of the river to a snake (echoing the evil of Eden), the ironic references to 'pilgrims' and the frequent repetition of demonic imagery for example—but runs into certain difficulties, one of which can be seen from the following extract which comes after a discussion

\(^{22}\) Moseley, p. 31.

of the harlequin as Kurtz's "last disciple"; a dis-
cussion which has equated fishermen (the original
apostles) with sailors (the harlequin and Marlow):

By themselves these references to disciple-
ship might appear as a piece of inadvert-
tence or a wry but momentary jest; however,
coupled with Marlow's description of
Kurtz's death, the parallel with Christ is
inescapable. Like Christ, Kurtz gives a
final cry of desolation, "The horror! The
horror!" and at his death, "It was as
though a veil had been rent." The identi-
fication of Kurtz as paradoxical Satan-
Christ points to a deeper and more subtle
use of Christian ideology in the story.

This is meant to echo the passage "the veil of
the temple was rent in twain" (Mark 15:38) which fol-
lows the death of Christ, but in building up his case,
Godshalk has obscured the chronology of events in the
instance of Kurtz. For the passage "it was as
though a veil had been rent" precedes Kurtz's last
cry and is used by Marlow to describe the effect of
the change that comes over Kurtz's features. The
use is, in fact, ambiguous since one cannot be sure
whether the veil has been rent for Marlow (enabling
him to see Kurtz as he really is) or for Kurtz
(aware, at last, of his approaching death). It
seems more likely to be the latter since it is Kurtz
who has "that supreme moment of complete knowledge"
(Y, 149) that leads to the final cry. The possibil-
ity of a biblical allusion still remains but, clear-
ly, Godshalk's inaccurate chronology has spoilt his

24 Godshalk, p. 103.
Other difficulties arise with the application of specific biblical verses to parts of the text. Godshalk quotes Mark 6:8—"And commanded them that they should take nothing for their journey save a staff only"—and applies it to Marlow's pilgrims, making them ironic inversions of the disciples. But Luke 9:3 says, "And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money . . ." and A.M. Hollingsworth quotes this verse to apply to Christ's lower apostles since Marlow (in the eyes of his aunt) is "something like a lower apostle" who is "worthy of his hire." Luke 9:3, however, applies to the twelve disciples; the admonition to a further seventy (who would, presumably, be the lower apostles) appears in the following chapter of the Gospel from which "the labourer is worthy of his hire" comes (Luke 10:7), and this chapter prohibits the carrying of purse, scrip and shoes but makes no mention of staves. Marlow is obviously being ironical about the "pilgrims" and there is little doubt that his irony forms a link between the idealistic pretensions of Europe and the harsh reality of Africa, but conflicting Gospels (Mark 6:8 and Luke 9:3 both 


apply to the twelve apostles) make specific biblical reference a hazardous business. Just to add to the confusion, W.B. Stein, who sees the work in the context of Mahayana Buddhism, comments of the pilgrims, "Specifically, they are inversions of the Bodhisattva and his staff." In each of these cases the critic seems to have fallen into the dangers of over-specification. Pilgrims have traditionally carried staves; it is the presence of the staves in fact that causes Marlow to call the agents 'pilgrims' in the first place. He refers to them as "faithless" from the beginning; thus to seek out a particular religious source is more likely to obscure than to elucidate a reasonably straightforward point.

This identification process is taken still further by Stanley Renner, who sees the whole of "Heart of Darkness" as "an exercise in metaphorical Christology," though he prudently remarks that "It is not necessary for the parallel details to be identical, or in the same order, for it to be true that in his rendering of Kurtz Conrad was contriving a suggestive parallel to the Christian Savior." Renner allocates roles to characters, objects and incidents. Thus the voyage of the steamer becomes a "voyage of


29 Renner, pp. 292-93.
historical criticism in search of the truth about Christ"; the steamer itself represents science as opposed to the sailing ship which represents faith; Kurtz's native woman represents primitive believers, the Intended, enlightened believers and the church; Kurtz on the stretcher is compared to depictions of Christ on ivory crucifixes; Kurtz's room on the steamer is compared to Christ's tomb following a view that Christ was taken down alive from the cross; the empty cabin Marlow finds is equated with the empty tomb and resurrection—the list is exhaustive. Having considered whether the harlequin can be equated with St. Paul or St. Luke, Renner finally decides that he represents contemporary Russian literature that Conrad did not like. The pattern having been set and the identification made, all facets of the story must be made to fit. But the effect of this identification is to diminish Kurtz as a character and "Heart of Darkness" as a story. Renner's case, in fact, rests on Conrad's alleged absorption with scientific historical biblical

30 Renner, p. 305.
31 Ibid., p. 194.
32 Ibid., pp. 340-42.
33 Ibid., p. 298.
34 Ibid., p. 323.
36 Ibid., pp. 354-55.
criticism and there is no evidence to suggest that he was so absorbed. This doubtful background thus comes to dominate any more direct and more easily proven sources, as well as leading to an arbitrary extension of religious language. The comment of the accountant—"He will be a somebody in the administration before long. They, above—the Council in Europe, you know—mean him to be" (Y, 70)—is taken by Renner, together with Kurtz's tour of duty of three years, "to call to mind Christ, who also was sent from above to minister on earth for three years, after which he was to return above and be indeed a somebody in the administration." But this is only likely to call to mind Christ if one's mind is already on Christ and Renner fails to note that Marlow has also been recommended by the same people who sent Kurtz (Y, 79). He also overlooks the fact that the accountant has served "three terms of three years out there" (Y, 74) showing that three years is not necessarily a significant time but a standard term of appointment; indeed, Conrad himself was appointed for just such a period. Marlow's references to the Romans, Renner takes as a reminder of the times of Christ but in fact it was common

37 Renner, p. 294.

practice at the time to compare the situation in the Congo with that in Britain in Roman times. To Renner the steamer means science but the ship Conrad sailed on in the Congo was a steamer (just as the Palestine was a sailing ship) and one can hardly make a point about him not changing this autobiographical fact. Undoubtedly, Kurtz has begun with fine ideals which, coming from Christian Europe, will inevitably bear resemblance to those of Christ; undeniably he is associated with devils and allows the natives to deify him. But if Kurtz is symbolic he is surely symbolic of every European's negative potential or, as L. Feder puts it, "... the potential hell in the heart of every man." To narrow down the story (and Kurtz) to dwell within the confines of a restrictive thesis is, in effect, to nullify the sense of universality that Conrad has brought to his tale. Identification inevitably tries to fix time and place, both of which are deliberately vague.

The last of these Christ figures discovered by critics in Conrad's work is Axel Heyst; an inevitable choice, perhaps, since he saves a girl who is called Alma and Magdalen. Charles Walcutt, however,


feels that his very name is enough to suggest the association, claiming that "The Christian symbolism is boldly announced with the name of Heyst. However it might be pronounced in Swedish, it is certainly rhymed with Christ by an English-speaking reader."41 Others, Meyer among them, endorse this line of reasoning, yet the "certainly" of Walcutt's statement is rather strong here since the name could just as easily be pronounced 'Haste' by an English-speaking reader (and often is). The Swedish pronunciation would seem to be Hayoost (which does not really help much).42 Heyst's very scepticism is also used to support the assertion:

Yet the asceticism of the idea calls up images of religious commitment: Heyst is profoundly kind, gentle, cultivated, intellectual. With almost inexhaustible ambiguities and indirection he is identified with Christ . . . not directly but obliquely. He is perhaps a Christ of the modern world, the world in which the folly of action has been so powerfully demonstrated by both secular and religious atrocities that this thinking Christ would never undertake to save mankind by action or preachment. An ironic version of Christ, then—ironic and tangential, and of course partial—in his total commitment to the ideal of doing no wrong.43

This commitment to identification leads Walcutt to


43 Walcutt, p. 268.
some strange assertions, notably in respect of Jones (identified as Satan) when he recoils from Schombergs mention of a woman:

On the story level, the reaction shows Jones' abhorrence of women; on the symbolic level, it is the devil offended by lack of respect—and also perhaps recalling that the present forms of his angelic followers are the hissing vipers in hell.  

But the image of a viper is produced by the narrator to describe the effect of Schomberg's statement on Jones. It does not appear in the conversation between the two men, hence there is nothing for Jones to recall. Walcutt also runs into difficulties with Wang who "is something of a puzzle in the Christian pattern" and concludes that "If there is a Christian ideal of service here, it is not really apparent and does not seem to enrich the theme."  

In other words, the pattern having been imposed, Conrad is now to be criticised for producing a character who does not fit into it. Walcutt cites Heyst's charity as an instance in which he is Christlike but the amount of Morrison's debt is not large and, in fact, it is Morrison's own charity—his feeding of hungry villages with rice for no return—that is closer to the ideal. Davidson too proves to be charitable; if one is to follow this

44 Walcutt, p. 275.
line of criticism, the connotations of his name (son of David) could lead to similar speculations.  

The biblical allusions in *Victory* are many and varied—travelling the whole gambit of Eden, the Deluge, Christ and the Apocalypse—and indeed could act as a trap for those critics who must identify characters with archetypes. Berman is one of these who seems to get into a thorough muddle with his list of correspondences:

It is not difficult to discover the one-to-one correspondences; indeed it is too easy, as the characters themselves realize: Heyst (whose name rhymes with Christ)—Adam ("There must be a lot of the original Adam in me"); Lena—Mary Magdalene ("I am not what they call a good girl"); Jones—Satan ("an insolent spectre on leave from Hades"); Samburan—Eden.

Thus we have Adam and Mary Magdalene facing Satan in Eden. Similar confusion comes from Richard E. Butler who talks of "Satanic Jones" and "Christ-like Heyst" and thinks of Lena as the "devout worshipper of Heyst (her Christ)" being tempted by the snake (Ricardo), with Davidson as a "sort of wandering Jew." This last interpretation, which reads a little like a biblical mixed grill, highlights the

46 Since these words were written, just such a speculation has come to light in Dennis M. Walsh, "Christian Allusion in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad," DISS. Univ. of Notre Dame 1973, p. 182.

47 Berman, p. 173.

dangers of seeking archetypes to label. Not the least of the comments that can be made is that there are no signs that Lena is ever tempted by Ricardo whom she understands perfectly. If he is the "viper in her paradise," he is there as potential destroyer not as tempter. Heyst (presumably) is an ironic Christ because he saves two people only for the recipients (Morrison and Lena) to die as a result of their gratitude, but he also has affinities to Adam and speaks of himself as a "man of the last hour" (V, 359). Little wonder, then, that critics who insist on labelling characters have become confused and have fallen back on such terms as "an inverted parallel,"49 or "mirror image,"50 though, whilst the first of these critics is talking about Christ and Mary Magdalene, the second is talking of Adam and Eden.

iii. The Fall

Identification, therefore, leads to confusion, principally because it is assumed that the original story to which allusion has been made must either be reproduced, parodied or inverted in some way. This practice leads to some curious speculations in The

49 Andreach, p. 96.

Nigger of the "Narcissus". Leo Gurko thinks that "Captain Allistoun and his officers, Baker and Greighton suggest God and his loyal angelic entourage; their initials, A,B,C, point to the beginning of things,"\textsuperscript{51} but one could say the same for Archie, Belfast and Charley. Gurko is one of a number of critics who see the pattern of the Fall in the novel, though few of them are as detailed in their equations as W.R. Martin, who regards Wait's dignified entrance and bearing and the likening of the black man to a "sick tyrant" and a "hated prince" as evidence to cast Wait as Satan. The crew, he equates with fallen man and Allistoun with God and he follows these parts through to liken the captain's calling out of Donkin to God's calling for Adam. He notes that, like Adam, Donkin gets a "bad discharge" and comments on Allistoun's lack of knowledge of the prayer book that "God does not know how to pray."\textsuperscript{52}

No-one would deny that demonic images cluster around Wait but identification here is not only too simplistic; it leads, as in Martin's case, to obvious absurdities. Is Donkin to be equated with Adam for example? It would follow from Martin's equations. And how can the novel be said to contain the pattern of the Fall when the indications are that life for most of the crew is very much the same at the end of

\textsuperscript{51} Gurko, p. 72.

the voyage as it was in the beginning? Wait has been an incident, not a turning point.

This pattern of the Fall is one that critics commonly see in Conrad's work. Paul Wiley sees him as employing "central allegorical themes of Fall and lost Eden," and particularly applies this to An Outcast of the Islands, which he sees as "a transference of the themes of Paradise Lost to a tropical setting" when the Eden created by Lingard is destroyed by Willems through his passion for Aissa. Wiley argues: "By this treachery the forces of disorder enter Lingard's world and destroy his rule. Since excess of passion motivates Willems' dealings with an infernal host in the Arabs and their leader, Abdulla, the plot of the novel contains parallels with the story of the Fall of Man." But the "forces of disorder" were already present in Sambir (in the figures of Lakamba and Babalatchi), the Arabs are not described by Conrad as being infernal (they are a "hellish crowd," to Almayer, but, in his turn, he is a "friend of Satan" to them and Wiley's subsequent assertion that the meeting of the chiefs with Abdulla recalls the debate in hell in the Second Book of Paradise Lost is not borne out by a comparison of the texts. There is more to support the likening of Lingard to God giving judgment later in the book since


the text specifically connects his mood with that of the storm brewing overhead, but again the instance is hardly sufficient for an overall pattern. Moreover, on this basis Lingard could also be equated with the devil since on two occasions it is revealed that Almayer has "sold himself" to him (O1, 91, 300). Wiley does not consider "Il Conde" among his "Fall" patterns (though he applies the pattern to most of the novels) but John Howard Wills is quick to remedy the deficiency and decide that the unfortunate count's experience is an allegory of the Fall and expulsion from Eden. This conclusion is made on the basis of the pleasant gardens of the Villa Nazionale (Eden) and the aural symbolism of the music which ends with a crash (as of a gate) when the young man holds him at knife point. The article also gives (as alternative allegories) those of Red Riding Hood and the Wolf and later the "Ivory Tower" myth of fin de siècle literature. Thus it is not even necessary to produce religious terms for an archetypal critic to apply a pattern (or, in this case, three at once).

This is not to deny that Conrad does allude to the Fall at times; sometimes very directly (such as in "The Return"). But even the more explicit references do not denote a complete pattern or a need to delineate roles. And if the pattern does exist in

one particular work, that is no guarantee that it must inhabit others.

iv. Names and Numbers

Names and numbers are a frequent starting point for allegorical associations, especially in "Youth." John Howard Wills sees an irony in the change of name from historical Sissie to fictional Celestial and feels that Conrad was "through her, revealing the true nature of the heavenly cities, which Western men, from biblical times onward, have desperately struggled to attain."\(^{57}\) William Bonney also uses names to detect a crisis of faith:

\[\ldots\] in the destruction of the Judea, a vessel which to Marlow seems like "The old village church at home" (Y, 18), whose motto is "Do or Die" whose captain is a feeble and incompetent Beard, steward an aged Abraham, and mate "Mann" himself, there is figured forth the demise of Judeo-Christian linear metaphysics.\(^{58}\)

Norman Sherry's investigations reveal that the captain of the Palestine was Captain Elijah Beard, but this thoroughly biblical name becomes the more neutral "John" in "Youth."\(^{59}\) The mate's surname, like


the captain's, remains unchanged. The pilot's name (Jermyn in "Youth") is connected with "German" biblical criticism by Renner and "Jeremiah" the prophet by James W. Matthews; the original name remaining unknown. These last two critics both see significance in the change of the name from Palestine to Judea (though Matthews seems to think she was called Jerusalem). Matthews talks of the significance of the number "three" in the story—citing such examples as the number of times the light is out for the Celestial and the fact that the storm in the Atlantic abates on the third day which he sees as a false resurrection. Renner speaks of the "flames of skepticism" arising from the metaphorical combustion which denotes loss of faith. Both critics refer to the scene where, having prepared the lifeboats, Marlow returns to the ship to find the captain asleep and the crew enjoying their "last meal aboard" (Y, 32-33), as a possible parody of the Last Supper, the ship's complement being thirteen. Since two of the crew remain in the lifeboat Marlow has just left, however (Y, 31), there are numerical objections to this last interpretation, and it is pertinent to remember that there were actually

61 Matthews, p. 121.  
62 Ibid., p. 120.  
63 Renner, p. 261.  
64 Matthews, p. 123; Renner, p. 263.
thirteen hands on board the historical Palestine.\textsuperscript{65} In the circumstances it is surprising that nothing was made of the fact that the fire goes out on the Judea on a Friday and the ship blows up on the Sunday (Y, 22); an obvious temptation for critics seeking biblical parallels (another false resurrection perhaps), especially since, historically, the fire would have gone out on a Monday and the ship blown up on a Wednesday (March 12 and 14 of 1883).\textsuperscript{66}

This is not to suggest that the names in "Youth" are not important but in assessing the extent of their importance it seems pertinent to consider in whose eyes they achieve this status (the youthful Marlow) and why (his romantic illusions). One of these illusions is the reality of names. Bangkok is a "blessed name" (Y, 15), so too is Java (Y, 36) and these are explained by Matthews as indicating the "allurement of the East" and "the human desire to return to the source of life";\textsuperscript{67} interpretations which are followed by the claim that "The East has a further symbolic attraction in that it is the origin of the great religions of the world."\textsuperscript{68} But the origin of the Judeo-Christian religion is surely not in Bangkok or Java; geographical manipulation

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{65} Sherry, Conrad's Eastern World, p. 297.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Ibid., p. 298.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Matthews, p. 119.
\item \textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
notwithstanding, these names will not fit in to the religious framework he has erected. Taken as a whole, the names in "Youth" can be said to illustrate the romantic illusions of Marlow as a youth; they are emblems of these illusions, in a way. To seek significance in names and numbers in the way that Matthews does is not only to diminish (almost to ignore) the fact of the historical voyage and its details but also to distort certain elements which fit less conveniently into the pattern. Ian Watt comments of this sort of practice that it "is surely to emphasize novelty at the expense of truth; and the literary effect of such interpretation is to reduce what Conrad actually created to a mere illustration."69

There are thus numerous pitfalls awaiting the critic who takes names and numbers as a key to his interpretation. The number three is particularly popular as having special Christian overtones. Jim's trial lasts for three days, his imprisonment in the Rajah's stockade lasts for three days (LJ, 249) and his reign in Patusan for three years (LJ, 367) but an analysis of the frequency of numbers in the book gives the following results which cannot be said to have significance: two-183 times, three--73 times, four--34 times, five--21 times, six--24 times, seven and eight--12 times and nine--three times.70 Three days


and three years have significance in the story of Christ, but how does one tell when a three carries Christian overtones and when it is just a three? In the early pages of "The End of the Tether," it is disclosed that Whalley has been captain of the Sofala "for the last three years only" (Y, 166) and this is quickly followed by a reference to "the three palms of the next port of call" (Y, 167). It would be tempting to treat this as an allusion to the end of Christ's mission and to suggest that these details indicate that Whalley is nearing the end of his term of office and approaching his calvary. The Sofala remains in port for three days, however (Y, 167), also significant in a Christian sense, but there would be obvious folly in attempting to see resurrection possibilities here. Moreover, three palms are also mentioned at the conclusion of "The Planter of Malata" (WT, 72) but if they are echoes of Calvary there, it must simply be as an ominous portent for the protagonist; certainly not an indication of a Christ-like figure or Christian pattern.

v. A Sample, I: R.J. Andreach, The Slain and Resurrected God

Patterns can sometimes dominate an entire book and this happens with Andreach's The Slain and Resurrected God which considers the works of both Conrad and Ford as attempts to recreate the Christian myth. Andreach maintains that within Conrad's work the
heroine appears as an agent of redemption for the male who will turn to her. Where there is no woman (as in "The Secret Sharer") a feminine landscape (Koh-ring with its two hills and a low point) serves the purpose. 71 This leads Andreach to some unusual assertions. One can accept that Decoud meets his end because he turns away from Antonia and that redemption (in a sense) would have been his had he kept faith in her, but it is difficult to agree with Andreach's other assertion that Decoud "scorns" the "virginal mystery" of the Great Isabel "by burying his silver in her" (the Great Isabel being a feminine landscape). 72

In fact Andreach exemplifies one of the dangers facing the critic who builds up an archetypal interpretation of Conrad's novels on the basis of religious language. Having decided that "Heart of Darkness" "delineates the archetypal pattern he continued to refine throughout his career" 73 --the pattern of separation--initiation--return undertaken by the mythic quester--he attempts to fit most of the Conradian canon into this one pattern (with its saving qualification of refinement) together with the institution of the redemptive heroine. In "Heart of

71 Andreach, pp. 43-44.
72 Ibid., p. 70.
73 Ibid., p. 44.
"Darlmess" itself, this leads him to the following statement: "Once inside, the temptation to be Kurtz, to destroy her belief in her fiance and to be her man-god, became more vividly alive every moment of their conversation because she presented herself to him as the Russian had to his master. . . . He could have captured her soul." 74 Quite how destroying the Intended's illusions about Kurtz would have made Marlow her "man-god" is never quite explained and, indeed, seems more appropriate to the declared temptation of Razumov towards Natalia Haldin in Under Western Eyes.

Andreach's theory of the role of the heroine is more supportable at some times than at others. One can accept Emilia Gould as a redemptive agent for Dr. Monygham and also see reasons to support the extension of this role to Natalia and Lena. Speaking of Victory, Andreach argues:

In his eyes he sees reflected his soul, the center, the source of his religious and moral life. Since the Conradian heroine progressively becomes a figure of Mary, there develops in the fiction the suggestion that the concealed reality may be Christ, the slain and resurrected god of the Western tradition, the source of redemption in the hero himself." 75

Thus, "Since Razumov sees in Natalia's eyes both his potential for betrayal and his potential for love and

74 Andreach, p. 48.

75 Ibid., p. 77.
self-sacrifice, the suggestion is that he sees in her eyes both the potential Satan and the potential Christ within himself.\textsuperscript{76} But though this position might be defensible here, when applied elsewhere it seems less apt. Becoming absorbed in Rita almost proves fatal to M. George and a similar obsession with Edith Travers (whom Andreach connects with Dante's Beatrice on the grounds that Conrad had originally thought of naming the character Beatrix),\textsuperscript{77} brings disaster to Lingard (which may be why Andreach has earlier decided that this was "an abortive attempt to create a medieval Beatrice").\textsuperscript{78} He also claims that "Conrad progressively suggests in his fiction a nineteenth-century Beatrice, a woman who when she unveils herself allows the male a glimpse into his own concealed reality."\textsuperscript{79} The heroine thus becomes both Mary and Beatrice. The connection of Emilia Gould with Mary is made explicit in \textit{Nostromo} by her association with the statue of the Virgin in the Casa Gould but Lena is connected more with the other Mary (Magdalen); there is no evidence to associate Natalia with the Virgin (she is Andreach's prime Beatrice figure though there is no real reason to make that association either), and one can hardly

\textsuperscript{76} Andreach, p. 92.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., p. 63.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p. 24.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
accept Winnie Verloc, Flora de Barral, Rita de Lastaola, Edith Travers or Arlette in either role. Where then (one may ask) are these progressively developing Mary and/or Beatrice figures? Emilia Gould does not inhabit all of Conrad's work.

This seems to be a prime example of the overextension of a model—in this case allowing one novel or one character to set a pattern for the whole canon. This practice is at its most evident in his assessment of The Secret Agent. This novel contains many mythic echoes but it is surely going too far to say of Verloc's return from the Embassy that "he does not return a transformed questor reborn into life" and to assert that Verloc "completes the tripartite archetypal pattern without completing the mythic journey."80 Again it is the use of religious terminology—in this case "the path of his morning pilgrimage" (SA, 37)—that helps to form this conclusion but the use of "pilgrimage" here is surely to emphasise the extent of Verloc's devotion to his position as agent, not to suggest an archetypal pattern. But the pattern having been set (more by Andreach than by Conrad) the characters must adhere to it. Thus Verloc becomes "the archetypal slain god against his wishes; he achieves his destiny without realising it."81 Not content with deifying Verloc (whose only

80 Andreach, p. 80.

81 Ibid., p. 81.
claim to this rank would be the religious terms used to describe the way he is regarded by Stevie), Andreach similarly elevates Winnie's brother. Andreach (and Claire Rosenfield too) think that the description of Stevie's beard "a growth of thin fluffy hair" which "had come to blur, like a golden mist, the sharp line of his small lower jaw" (SA, 10), is suggestive of a god. Later, he comments assertively: No matter what he is meant to suggest, though, Stevie remains the archetypal slain and resurrected god."

Andreach also finds another quester in the Assistant-Commissioner, who descends into the underworld "to the feminine triangle, through which the hero must pass to approach the mystery of the circle. He does not complete the quest... But his journey takes the reader to Stevie's resurrection in Chapter VIII."

To regard a Conradian time-shift as a "resurrection" is an example of the way an archetypal approach can be over-extended. For if one regards Stevie as "resurrected" in Chapter VIII, he has only returned to die again in Chapter IX. On this basis there would be many resurrections in the Conradian canon.

Andreach makes a similar assertion about Winnie to the one he made about Stevie; "No matter what she is meant to suggest, though, Winnie remains the

82 Andreach, p. 115.

83 Ibid., p. 82.
archetypal virgin-mother who offers her brother-son to mankind."^84 Reference to Winnie as virginal when the descriptions of her stress her sensuality seems singularly inapt, and if Verloc's selling of pornography "makes a sacred mystery familiar,"^85 it must be remembered that Winnie, with her unwillingness to look deeply into things, is aiding and abetting her husband in the act.

At this stage it might be as well not to discount completely all the results of archetypal criticism. In Andreach's case, the interesting points he makes tend to become submerged beneath a welter of dubiously supported speculation, but it would be inaccurate to assert a total absence of archetypes and myths from Conrad's novels. Undoubtedly there are many there, biblical and otherwise, but to assume a pattern is to come close to allegorising what may not be allegorical, which can lead to the kind of absurdities C.T. Watts points out in considering R.O. Evans' attempt to equate the characters of "Heart of Darkness" with those of Dante's Inferno. ^86 At what point, then, can it be said that the archetypal critic is out of bounds?

^84 Andreach, p. 116.

^85 Ibid., p. 85.

A Sample, II: Claire Rosenfield, *Paradise of Snakes*

Any answer to this question will naturally differ from individual to individual but, as an attempt, an assessment of Claire Rosenfield's *Paradise of Snakes* may assist. The book is sub-titled *An Archetypal Analysis of Conrad's Political Novels*, focusing on *Nostromo*, *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*. An early comment on *Nostromo* could act as a starting point:

To extend this distinction between history and tradition, one need only relate both to the concepts of a perfect and of a fallen world. Sulaco, though its orange groves and isolation suggest Eden, is very different from our conception of paradise. It is inextricably part of the fallen world. Though most of its people are very primitive, a decadent Spanish aristocracy exists to remind us that the equality of Eden has long since been forgotten. Or perhaps we might say that this is a microcosm of the fallen world, possessing within its natural barriers all sorts of evil. The Golfo Placido which leads to it grows so dark that it hides from the "eye of God Himself" the work of man's hand. Although the "luxuriant beauty of the orange gardens bears witness to its [Sulaco's] antiquity," although it had once found "inviolable sanctuary from the trading world," this paradisiacal state could not continue.

In the passage preceding this, Rosenfield has asserted that "Everything which surrounds the treasure—superstitions, guardians, landscape, images used to

describe it or link it with the natural world—reveals figurations which have existed in folklore, fairy tale, myth, and legend." That, one can accept fairly easily. With the passage under discussion, however, it is not so clear. Orange groves and isolation are not enough to suggest Eden and, surely, if one is to accept the notion of a Fall, every novel must inevitably be concerned with a fallen world. Every novel must also deal with inequalities; the existence of a privileged class will only give reminders of the "equality of Eden" if Eden is one's starting point and all things are being regarded in relationship to it. There is a difference, too, between a sanctuary and a paradise. Bliss is not a pre-requisite of a sanctuary; the place is little more than a denial of threatening negative forces. Paradise, on the other hand, is wholly positive in connotation and bliss is a pre-requisite here. Life has never been anything but hard for most of the inhabitants of Sulaco; they have never existed in a state of bliss. The city has been a sanctuary simply because conditions could have been much worse had Sulaco's relative lack of importance not caused most revolutionary activity to take place elsewhere.

Such an analysis may act as a key to determining admissible and non-admissible assertions—in other words the starting point for interpretation should always be the novel which will suggest the myth rather

88 Rosenfield, p. 50.
than working from the myth to the novel. Rosenfield, consequently, seems on much firmer ground when discussing the "paradise of snakes," Don Pepe's term for the San Tomé gorge. To think of Genesis at this stage is clearly admissible and whether one agrees that "Conrad presents a demonic paradise, a parody of the Eden of Genesis" or that the Goulds are "the Adam and Eve who first yield to the temptations of power," the interpretation has the text as its starting point. One has to decide on the purpose of the allusion, though, before allocating mythical roles. "Paradise of Snakes" indicates a place of destructive temptations and one can hardly argue with Rosenfield that it is ominously prophetic. But Emilia Gould is an unlikely Eve figure, and Rosenfield's assertion that the "jumbled and tangled natural setting . . . represents the irrational of the individual or the prehistory of the new race born of material interests" is really the kind of statement one has to either take or leave.90 The starting point--a tangled wilderness--is so general and so common that almost any application of it could still seem valid. It could, for example, reflect the inextricable coils of materialism into which Charles Gould is about to stumble; not prehistoric but prophetic, in other words. One criterion for acceptance must be the extent to which the inter-

89 Rosenfield, p. 51.

90 Ibid.
interpretation supports the theme and, in this case, any number of interpretations would do that.

Holroyd as "a kind of God figure" is not unreasonable given the financier's pretensions, though one fails to see how the financier distributing his time "with regard to geographical importance" can be likened to "God dispensing justice to humanity."  The association of Emilia with the Virgin Mary is more acceptable since it arises explicitly from the text but one stops short on the statement that Nostromo's early life "is a parody of the characteristics which Otto Rank and, after him, Lord Raglan, assign to the hero myth." The danger here is that "parody" could be a rescue word for an interpretation which does not really fit. Rosenfield feels that "The exposure myth whereby the elected infant child, born in unusual circumstances, is committed to the waves by the man who represents the father in authority if not in fact, is here in changed form," by Nostromo's fleeing from a cruel relative "across the traditional body of water to a strange land." She also applies this "exposure myth" to Stevie in The Secret Agent, together with the requisite authorities (whom Conrad would not have known):

His family ties are equally a perversion of the pattern which is part of the composite myth of the hero as described by Otto Rank, Jung, or Joseph Campbell. The hostile parent who, because of a prophetic threat

91 Rosenfield, p. 53.

92 Ibid., p. 59.
to his power, sets the elected hero adrift in a basket or cask becomes in this novel an irascible brewer with a tendency to rage, assail closed doors, and fling objects.\(^{93}\)

There is surely no "prophetic threat" to the father's power here; certainly not from a "slobbering idjut" (SA, 242), as the father describes Stevie. Rosenfield goes on, however, to cite Winnie as "the equivalent of the stepmother of the exposure myth," and sees the same background for Razumov whose father "does not abandon his son to the wilds of the forest or to the deep sea; rather he simply dismisses him to all of Russia." In Razumov's case, the "emotionless entity" of Russia "is the equivalent of the stepmother of the exposure myth of the abandoned hero."\(^{94}\) These are examples, it would seem, of the text being forced to fit the myth rather than the myth being suggested by the text. One has, after all, to look no further than Conrad's own life to see an orphan going away across "the traditional body of water." The myth in Nostromo is "in changed form"; in The Secret Agent it is "a perversion of the pattern," in Under Western Eyes "the equivalent of . . . " Rosenfield runs into particular difficulties of this kind when discussing Linda Viola as "the reward for the hero's victory . . . the beautiful woman at once mother, virgin,  

\(^{93}\) Rosenfield, p. 105.  

\(^{94}\) Ibid., p. 132.
But this role is traditionally filled by the blond woman, the innocent, the representative of the world of reason. According to Mario Praz, the dark woman is usually the temptress, the vampire, the creature who, whether through her own volition or because of something beyond her control, has a pact with the devil for the destruction of the hero. And Linda does partake of this irrationality. She is passionate rather than submissive. When she suspects Giselle's duplicity, she behaves like a vampire; she flings "herself upon the chair in which her indolent sister was lying and impressed the mark of her teeth at the base of the whitest neck in Sulaco." Yet with typical Conradian irony the pattern is again reversed.

It is reversed, apparently, because Linda, as well as being capable of depths of emotion, is also the lighthouse keeper. But for the pattern to become reversed, Giselle would have to become vampirish and Linda innocent. It is not so much that the pattern is reversed; it plainly does not fit and again this is because the myth has been the starting point, not the novel. By such reasoning any dark heroine who is treacherous fulfils the mythic pattern; any dark heroine who is true simply reverses it. One way or another the archetypal critic has his way, but in doing so spoils his case.

It is often such little details, arising, it seems, from the compulsion to complete the pattern, that are the least acceptable. In her discussion of The Secret Agent, these tend to devalue the larger insights, some of which are quite interesting. Does

95 Rosenfield, pp. 71-72.
the description of the Professor's india-rubber tube as a "slender brown worm" really recall to the reader the snake of Eden "responsible for mankind's loss of a timeless and incorruptible world," for example? It does if one is looking at things from a "snake in Eden" point of view, but it would not to a reader less genesis-oriented. Similarly the catherine wheels set off by Stevie do not generally recall the martyrdom of St. Catherine as Rosenfield suggests but are regarded simply as an ordinary (and very common) firework. After all, the catherine wheels are accompanied by "a set of fierce rockets" and "loudly exploding squibs" and are not specially highlighted (SA, 9). On the other hand, there is something to be said for the assertion that Ossipon's seeing of snakes when Winnie holds on to his legs is evocative of Eden since the connexion of snakes and woman would generally bring this to mind. The fact that the comparison is made by the ultra-scientific Ossipon simply adds to the irony.

One problem Rosenfield faces is the question of Conrad's intentions, and she admits that "Conrad himself would have been the first to question any critical statement which categorically asserted that he was consciously employing archetypal patterns." She also claims that "the symbolic and archetypal become meaningless if we ignore the literal description of the


97 Ibid., pp. 89-90.

98 Ibid., p. 91.
city."\(^9\) Her comments that London's topography resembles the classical labyrinth and that the city's primary characteristics are confusion and irrationality are reasonable enough since they can be supported by the text. Her comments that water is traditionally a symbol of life and rebirth but here appears only with negative connotations is similarly supportable. But Rosenfield then descends through degrees of metaphor—London as monster; monster as Satan, the serpent; satan as leviathan (the fallen world into which Adam fell); leviathan as sea-monster; sea-monster as the sea—and quotes Northrop Frye's assertion that "as the leviathan, in his aspect as the fallen world, contains all forms of life imprisoned within himself, so as the sea he contains the imprisoned life-giving rain waters whose coming marks the spring."\(^{10}\) She also quotes Frye as indicating the applicability of "a dark winding labyrinth for the monster's belly,"\(^{101}\) and then goes on to claim that this is "an assertion which the myths of the Minotaur and Jonah support."\(^{102}\) But the minotaur dwelt within the labyrinth (not vice-versa) and the Bible gives no indication of a labyrinth within the great fish that swallows Jonah. Speaking of the leviathan, Frye claims that, "as denizens of his belly, there-

\(^9\) Rosenfield, p. 91.

\(^{10}\) Frye, pp. 191-92; Rosenfield, p. 98.

\(^{101}\) Frye, p. 190; Rosenfield, p. 97.

\(^{102}\) Rosenfield, p. 97.
fore, we are also metaphorically under water.”

This, of course, is Frye’s interpretation; we have no way of knowing it was Conrad’s. Rosenfield uses it to interpret the negative dampness of the city and the abundance of fish imagery, much of which is incited by Sir Ethelred’s bill for the Nationalization of Fisheries. This kind of metaphorical progress is perhaps not too fanciful if one can regard London as a kind of earthly hell (a demonic city); certainly it is described as “the enormous town slumbering monstrously on a carpet of mud under a veil of raw mist” (SA, 300). There is, therefore, some textual basis to the assertion which does seem to support the theme. The same can be said of the last cab ride, whose mythical connotations are clearly hinted at in the novel. Thus, to equate the cab with the ferry boat to Hades is supportable not only from the death imagery that surrounds both the vehicle and its destination but also from the context (Winnie’s mother is being taken on her last living journey to the place where she will die). To see the Assistant-Commissioner as one who “more than any other character, resembles the traditional quest-hero” is not so clear. His journey to Brett Street is seen as a journey to the underworld—the ferry being a hansom cab—though since London as a whole is seen in Rosenfield’s eyes as a kind of “modern underworld” it could be claimed that the Assistant-Commissioner is

103 Frye, p. 191; Rosenfield, p. 98.
already in residence there and is not, therefore, going "across the threshold of one world into another." 104 There is certainly a dream-like atmosphere to the journey but one questions the assertion that his getting "a little splashed" represents a baptism. 105

vii. Conclusion

Rosenfield goes on to apply this kind of treatment to Under Western Eyes, again with varying degrees of acceptability and otherwise. Archetypal criticism is sometimes valid, therefore, though it seems more effective when evoking a general background reference than when it attempts to take a specific piece of action and slot it into a particular archetype. Frye's book (to which most archetypal critics hearken) is, in some respects, a collation of categories into which literature may be confidently placed. The list is so exhaustive that a work of literature can hardly avoid coming within its headings under one form or another. The archetypal critic must beware, therefore, lest he achieve little more than an identification of type and the temptations and pitfalls of this approach are bound to be accentuated by an author's use of a religious lexis. The foregoing analysis has yielded the following practices that can be labelled as unacceptable

104 Rosenfield, p. 99.
105 Ibid., p. 100.
or dubious:

1) the supporting of a possible allusion with evidence that cannot really be connected with that allusion (e.g. Andreach's assertion that Yanko Goorall's being "a creature of the woods and trees" helps to link him with Christ);

2) the assertion that an allusion connecting a certain character with a religious or mythological figure indicates an identification of the character with the figure by the author rather than indicating the extent of that character's pretensions or aspirations (e.g. Moseley's reading of Lord Jim as archetypal Christ);

3) the assumption that a religious reference of a general nature can be elucidated by producing a specific scriptural source (e.g. the opinions of Godshalk, Hollingsworth and Stein on the significance of the pilgrims' staves in "Heart of Darkness");

4) the mis-application of a scriptural source (e.g. Hollingsworth's citing of Luke 9:3 to apply to "lower apostles");

5) the disregarding of undoubted autobiographical elements of a work (e.g. the symbolism of steam and sail in "Heart of Darkness" and "Youth" and many other elements of Renner's thesis);
6) the disregarding of aspects of the text unfavourable to an archetypal thesis (e.g. Renner's failure to note that Marlow has been specially recommended by the same people who sent Kurtz and that the Accountant has also been appointed for terms of three years);

7) inattention to the source of an image or allusion within the text (e.g. Walcutt's assumption that Mr. Jones is aware of the simile of the wriggling viper which is, in fact, invented by a narrator, not in attendance as a character);

8) the determination to fit each character into a pattern decided upon by the critic and to blame the author for any difficulties in casting (e.g. Walcutt's puzzlement over Wang and Andreach's feeling that Edith Travers represents an abortive attempt to create a Beatrice figure);

9) the assumption that suggestive names and numbers must indicate an allegory (e.g. Matthews and "Youth");

10) the application of the pattern of a novel and the attitude of one character to the rest of the Conradian canon (e.g. Andreach and his Mary/Beatrice figures);

11) approaching the novel from the myth instead of allowing the novel to suggest the myth
(e.g. Rosenfield's application of mythic heroines to Linda and Giselle and her application of the exposure myth);

12) the taking of an everyday word or image and investing it with mythic or religious significance not supported by its context (e.g. Rosenfield's comments on catherine wheels recalling the martyrdom of St. Catherine and the image of a worm recalling Eden).

Perhaps the biggest danger facing archetypal criticism is that of failing to treat the characters of a novel as characters. It is hardly fair to talk of Conrad parodying hero myths because he happens to produce characters with faults that fail to conform to the archetypal pattern. To regard Jim as archetypal Christ, Kurtz as diabolic Christ or Wait as Satan is, in many respects, to cease regarding them as individual characters. If there are echoes of scripture that seem to suggest these connections it is important to regard such connections, not as the end of the investigation (assuming an archetypal pattern forthwith), but as the beginning. What is the purpose of the allusion? What does it tell us about that particular character?

Frye's warning (quoted at the beginning of this chapter), that a latent apocalyptic or demonic pattern is only one factor of a full critical analysis, has gone unheeded by many of his devotees and by others. True, a number of them admit the existence of autobiographical and other elements in the text but frequently such
comments seem to be mentioned as a necessary acknowledgment before moving on to the real heart of the matter. Ian Watt's comment is worth repeating here: "the literary effect of such interpretations is to reduce what Conrad actually created to a mere illustration." At its worst, this type of criticism is too simplistic; not only does it fall into one or more of the twelve malpractices listed above, it also fails to go deep enough. When Albert Guerard (one of the most respected critics on Conrad) complains about Watt's internal monologue in *The Nigger of the Narcissus* on the grounds that "we are approaching the mysterious Negro's death, and it has been the very convention of the novel that Wait must remain shadowy, provocative of large speculation; in a word, symbolic," what he is, in effect, complaining about is the fact that Conrad is making Wait a character, an individual human being, instead of just a symbol. A character does not cease to be a character because he symbolises something. Here then is an instance of a critic stopping short and blaming the author for an apparent discrepancy when this very discovery should have encouraged him to go deeper. To discover the purpose of an author must be an important goal of any critical quest but to assume that that quest has been fulfilled when obvious inconsistencies still remain can be simply presumptuous.

Rosenfield, though overdoing the mythic application at times, does consider this question of purpose in her book. In her eyes, archetypal patterns are used ironically to reflect modern civilization's sickness and irrationality by evoking a time when heroes were heroic and society was stable. Here is a rationale, sufficiently general to obtain some degree of acceptance. For this concept shows myth as an ingredient that is available for a novelist's use rather than as a restrictive structure within which he has to perform; which is the kind of situation produced by such theses as those of Andreach, Moseley and Renner.

Religious language, then, can easily lead to a restrictive interpretation if its purpose is not investigated fully. If Wait is connected with Satan, for example, why is he so connected? What is there about his character that leads to this suggestion? By whom is this connection made? Simply to assert the pattern of the Fall and claim that this is Wait's role in that pattern, is to beg these important questions, and this, by and large, is what the more heterophoric of Conrad's critics have tended to do.
CHAPTER TWO

GENERAL BACKGROUND: RELIGION IN POLAND 1820-70

Conrad's earliest religious background was that of Polish Catholicism and the state of religion in Poland during his early years is, therefore, of some importance. Under the oppressive yoke of the three occupying powers, particularly, in Conrad's case, Russia, Polish religion became intensely nationalistic (as Conrad himself was later to affirm in a letter to his aunt),¹ and its principal features—in particular, the power of the clergy over a largely illiterate and superstitious laity, and the elevation of patriotism to a mystical religious belief—frequently appear as elements of his fiction.

i. The Catholic Church

The state of Christianity in Poland, certainly during the early years of the nineteenth century, was exposed in an anonymous pamphlet entitled "Journey to

Darktown," published in 1820, which, provoked by reactionary post-Napoleonic war elements within Poland in which the Roman Catholic bishops were well to the fore, was severely critical of the backwardness of the clergy and of their claims of predominance in the fields of education and culture. The pamphlet was violently opposed, yet the conduct of the Polish clergy during the course of the next fifty years did little to refute its strictures. False predictions of a comet in 1857 (the year of Conrad's birth) caused some priests to proclaim the imminent approach of the end of the world, forcing the authorities to send troops to guard the Jewish quarter of Warsaw, "lest working men, anxious to ensure their passage into heaven, should seek to purchase it by a massacre of the Jews"; an event which prompted the British Consul of the time to comment, "It is curious to observe in the 19th century a movement and its consequences which remind us forcibly of the dark period of the middle ages." In one small town, Turek, three days rioting followed attempts by the Christian population to prevent the repair of the synagogue, illustrating the anti-Semitic tendencies that pervaded all classes.


4 Quoted in Leslie, p. 51.
of Poles and from which Conrad himself was not entirely free.

With an 80% illiteracy rate reported in 1859 (higher still amongst the peasant population), priests had certain responsibilities towards their often ignorant and fanatical flocks; responsibilities they seem not to have discharged satisfactorily, either because they themselves were ignorant and fanatical or through a more unscrupulous exercise of power on their part. The period was dominated, in the Russian part of Poland at least, by the two ill-fated insurrections of 1830 and 1863 and the often turbulent years between, during which the clergy used their undoubted influence in varied and sometimes contradictory ways. During the 1863 insurrection, for example, priests in the Ukraine, in conjunction with the police, were instrumental in persuading the peasants there to rise up and slaughter a group of Polish patriots who were hoping to win their support for the uprising. The earlier activities of Father Ściegienny in the 1840's, on the other hand, attempting to incite insurrection by claiming the support of Pope Gregory XVI and exhorting the peasants to "rally around the standard of the Virgin Mary against her enemies and the enemies of the Fatherland and the People."

5 Leslie, p. 50.

6 Cambridge, p. 380.

7 Leslie, p. 66.
though unsuccessful, still illustrate how many of the clergy were not above manipulating the ignorance of their charges by false appeals to their religious fervour. During the crisis-laden years immediately before 1863 the clergy did nothing to moderate the passions of their congregations. Angry at the determination of their Polish Head of Government, Alexander Wielopolski, not to be manipulated by any faction in Poland and to act fairly to all religions, including the Jews, a small body of priests arrogated to themselves the title of "Catholic Clergy of the Kingdom of Poland" and published a handbill which maintained that Catholicism was the national religion of Poland. Parish priests came to regard it as a patriotic duty to condemn Wielopolski from the pulpit and the effectiveness of this course of action can be gauged from the fact that there were four times as many priests as schoolteachers in Poland and, though badly educated, the priest was still greatly respected. Wielopolski's stand united both the Catholic hierarchy ("that pillar of Polish conservatism"), and the more radical parish priests against him. These two factions of the Church were generally at loggerheads, the bishops tending to support attempts to come to terms with the Russians, the lesser clergy supporting the cause of national independence, but

8 Leslie, p. 107.

9 Ibid., p. 123.
both were adamant that Roman Catholicism (and, by implication, themselves) should enjoy a privileged position among religions in Poland. This is not the place to discuss Wielopolski's political aims, but they do seem to have been those of compromise and moderation, and Church support could have helped to avert the impassioned and ill-advised actions two years later. Instead, the Church's stand seems more appropriate to the days of Innocent III if the views of the Warsaw clergy can be taken as representative. In a letter to their Archbishop—forwarded to Wielopolski and distributed among the population—they maintained the following:

We recognize in the church the authority of the successor of St. Peter and the authority of the bishops, the successors of the apostles; we know that this authority has been given to them from heaven for the government of the church, that this authority ought to be recognized by everyone who is a member of the church.

In making such statements, the Polish clergy showed themselves to be completely unrealistic as some of their other grievances illustrate. For, like their government, the Polish Catholic Church was not an autonomous entity, able to indulge itself in its every whim, but a restricted body under the close supervision of Russia—a control that became still tighter after the events of 1863. An Orthodox Russian stood at its head, despite Polish protests. Marriages between

10 Leslie, p. 124.
persons of the Catholic and Orthodox Faiths had to be celebrated in the Orthodox church first and then in the Catholic one and, from 1847, any children of such a marriage had to be brought up in the Orthodox Faith. Restrictions were placed on the content of Catholic sermons and (from 1845) direct contact with the Vatican was forbidden, all such communications having to be directed through the government. A gesture of defiance, such as that taken by Archbishop Białobrzeski after Russian troops had cleared Polish churches on 15 October 1861 on the singing of patriotic hymns by the congregations, could only be short-lived. Białobrzeski closed the churches in protest at what he regarded as an act of sacrilege but he was quickly exiled to Russia and replaced by a more compliant Archbishop—Felinski—who opened them again. Earlier in that same year (February 1861) troops had fired on the crowd after demonstrators had become mixed up with a funeral procession. During the fracas, a man started to use the cross as a club, the breaking of which caused the crowd to cry out that the Russians were defiling holy Catholic objects. Church grievances further included the confiscation of church land (in return for salaries).

From their official spiritual overlord, the supreme Pontiff in Rome, however, the Polish clergy

11 Leslie, p. 94.

received little worthwhile support.' After the abortive rising of November 1830, Pope Gregory XVI, in the Papal brief "Impensa Charitas" of February 1831, called upon them to obey their Tsarist superiors, whilst the encyclical "Cum Primum" of 1832, addressed to the Polish bishops "in words binding upon their consciences," enjoined as a duty their co-operation with Tsarist authorities. The spirit of collaboration between Pope and Tsar reached its culmination in the Concordat of 3rd August 1847, intended as an alliance between the two powers as forces for restoration. The 1863 insurrection persuaded the Russians that Papal attempts to check the Polish clergy had failed and, after Pius IX had complained about Alexander II's peremptory reorganisation of the Church in Poland, the Tsar revoked the Concordat, broke off diplomatic relations with the Vatican and transferred the spiritual supervision of the Church, previously distinguished from its "ecclesiatical administration," to the college at St. Petersburg. Though short-lived, the very existence of the Concordat is sufficient to reveal the Papacy as an ally of Autocracy, the action being seen as part of a process of dogged support for all legitimate monarchs, no matter how absolute they might be, as a reaction to the setbacks the Church

14 Heyer, p. 235.
had suffered through the French Revolution and Bonaparte. Such alignments are often noted in Conrad's fiction.

ii. Polish Messianism

It has already been observed, however, that Polish religion tended to be very nationalistic in character, to the extent that the nation itself seemed to become an object of veneration and awe. With such an outlook, the failure of the 1830 insurrection was a tremendous blow which historians have seen as having a religious significance for the Poles:

Divine intervention did not come. The Poles saw their country, the nation chosen to bear the torch of Christian faith, as they believed, to the eastern frontier of Europe, deserted. They had to adjust their minds to grim reality: God had let the very instrument of His own purposes be destroyed.16

By way of her romantic poets, safely escaped to Paris in what came to be known as The Great Emigration, ideas of a Messianic role for Poland began to spread. The Poles had been defeated in 1831; now a greater sacrifice was required. Poland, the Christ of nations, was being crucified for the sins of the world but would rise again on the Third Day as the herald of God's Kingdom on Earth. Thus "an impassion-

16 Cambridge, p. 321.
ed patriotism that takes the sacred lineaments of a religion became the basic principle of Poland's romantic literature."  

Ideas such as these appeared in the Books of the Polish Nation (1831) by Adam Mickiewicz, greatly influenced by the visions of the mystical Andrzej Towiński.  

Mickiewicz's works, banned in Poland, were smuggled in to be avidly read in secret and quietly circulated despite threats of punishment by the authorities, which, of course, simply enhanced their attraction. Their devotees included Apollo Korzeniowski, Conrad's father, whose choice of Konrad as one of the Christian names for his son was undoubtedly influenced by the use of the name by Mickiewicz in Konrad Wallenrod (the story of a Lithuanian patriot who becomes Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights so that he can lead them into a trap) and in Forefathers' Eve III (where a Lithuanian youth, Gustav, becomes reborn in a Russian prison and assumes the name of Konrad).

Mickiewicz was one of three major romantic poets whose influence and popularity in Poland were widespread. The other figures—Julius Słowacki (Conrad's

Cambridge, p. 325.

personal favourite) and Zygmunt Krasinski—wrote in similar vein. Słowacki's Anhelli (1837) put forward ideas of Poles preparing themselves for martyrdom and of the coming of the great "King Spirit" who appeared from age to age and would surely come to Poland before long. Krasinski's Dawn (1843) was still more explicit in its message:

... and I heard
A voice that called in the eternal sky:
As to the world I gave a Son,
So to it, Poland, thee I give.
My only Son he was—and shall be,
But in thee my purpose for Him lives.
Be thou then the Truth, as he is, everywhere.
Thee I make my daughter!
When Thou didst descend into the grave
Thou wert, like Him, a part of humankind.
But now, this day of victory, Thy name is: All Humanity!

Krasinski's death in 1859 caused much re-reading of his greatest work, the re-newed enthusiasm for which was fed to some extent by the successful example of Italy, whose famous hero, Garibaldi, also became a popular figure amongst the Poles as a fellow fighter for freedom.21

To Poland's Catholic base, therefore, must be added this strange mixture of mystical nationalism if

19 Zdzisław Najder quotes the following comments by Conrad given in an interview in 1914: "My father read me Pan Tadeusz and asked me to read it aloud too. More than once. I preferred Konrad Wallenrod and Grazyna. Later I preferred Słowacki. Do you know why Słowacki? Il est l'âme de toute la Pologne, lui"; Conrad's Polish Background, p. 9.

20 Cambridge, p. 323.

a full picture of Polish religion is to be achieved. Even Polish societies could acquire names with religious overtones— that formed amongst the Polish students of Kiev was called The Trinity, for example. This passionate sense of mystical destiny reached a crescendo in the early 1860s, culminating in the arrival of the long-awaited Third Day—the insurrection of 1863—and failure. To some Polish historians, however, the religious connotations linger on:

It had assuredly no chance of success. Nevertheless, this act of despair has left a memory sacred to every Pole. No sacrifice for the national cause had, in fact, ever been so disinterested and of so moving a nature.  

iii. Summary

Thus the picture that emerges of religion in Poland during the period can be summarised as follows. Within the Catholic Church, at the lowest level, there were many parish priests, ill-educated yet possessing considerable influence over their mainly illiterate and often fanatical parishioners. The Church hierarchy, smarting under Russian rule, wanted to maintain an elitist position for Catholicism in Poland. They

22 The Cambridge History of Poland cites Apollo Korzeniowski (Conrad's father) as being the moving spirit behind this society (Cambridge, p. 369), but this is disputed by E. K. Hay (p. 42).

pressed for the restitution of Church lands and a larger degree of autonomy, particularly in relation to the filling of empty sees, and the right to communicate directly with the Papacy. Both groups meddled massively in politics and exerted their influence over their congregations to achieve their ends, performing, as it were, before a backcloth of mystic messianic fervour that dominated the literature of the time and pervaded Polish thinking to a disastrous extent.

In retrospect, the application of religious terms to their nation's destiny can be seen to have blinded the Poles to the harsh realities of Russian troops and European politicians, whose sympathy did not extend to active support. Amidst impassioned calls to sacrifice and martyrdom, the cooler counsels of moderation were unlikely to be heeded. Irrational religious nationalism had become a fatal obsession and, in the early days of Conrad's youth, it led the Poles to disaster.
CHAPTER THREE

SPECIFIC BACKGROUND: RELIGION IN CONRAD'S LIFE
1857-95

i. Family Influences

Conrad was born in the Ukraine in 1857 as Jozef Teodor Konrad Nałęcz Korzeniowski, the son of a man who was deeply imbued with the messianic visions of Poland's romantic poets, especially Mickiewicz. Significantly, Conrad's first sense of identity was that of "Pole, Catholic, nobleman,"¹ expressed by him at the age of five in a letter to his grandmother. Earlier, his baptism had been greeted by Apollo Korzeniowski with verses that exemplify the father's nationalistic beliefs:

My child, my son, if the enemy calls you a nobleman and a Christian—tell yourself that you are a pagan and that your nobility is rot. ... My child, my son—tell yourself that you are without land, without love, without Fatherland, without humanity—as long as Poland, our Mother, is enslaved.²

This intense patriotic passion prompted a move

¹ Quoted by Najder, Conrad's Polish Background, p. 8.
² Ibid., p. 5.
to Warsaw where Apollo's fiery political activities led to his arrest in October 1861 and subsequent exile to Northern Russia with his family during the following May. Both Conrad and his mother, Evalina, suffered from severe illness during the journey; indeed, for a while, the boy was near to death. When death did come, however, it claimed his mother in 1865 and his father four years later. In a sense, then, Conrad's childhood epitomises the fate of Poland during these years. Inspired by a deep religious nationalism, evoked by the great Romantic poets, Apollo, unwittingly, led his family to disaster and death. As a very young child, Conrad seems to have held a simple belief, asking the poor at the church "to pray for the return of his father from Warsaw" (Apollo, initially, had gone there alone). Certainly the letters of Apollo are full of religious references such as the following extract, written during the early days of exile:

We have set up and are maintaining a chapel: it is the centre around which we live. We pray a great deal, ardently and sincerely. Apart from us, there are people from '30, '46 and '48 who since '56 are allowed to return but stayed. For them our arrival was like a few drops of water that have fallen on to a layer of unslaked lime. They remembered their speech, their customs, their church. The priests instruct their children; we encourage them to join in common prayer and to take part in the life of the community,

for it would be a shame to let the sheep grow shabby.

As Evalina's health steadily declined, the tone of the letters became more mournful:

We are wretched and unhappy indeed, but thank God that we have been allowed to bear this fate together. We pray that God remove the chalice of bitterness from our lips—for we have drunk from it overmuch, more than enough. But we thank him that our lips jointly drink up that potion. We should not change it for nectar if each of us had to drink separately.

After Evalina's death, Conrad was left alone with a father whose general state of mind can best be gauged from another letter:

I have passed through heavy and even terrible days of brooding on God's blessings, and if I survive, it will be thanks not to my own, but to God's strength. I know I have not suffered and never could suffer like our Saviour, but then I am only a human being. I have kept my eyes fixed on the Cross and by that means fortified my fainting soul and reeling brain. The sacred days of agony have passed, and I resume my ordinary life, a little more broken but with breath still in me, still alive. But the little orphan is always at my side, and I never forget my anxiety for him. ... I teach him what I know, but that, unfortunately, is little. I shield him from the atmosphere of this place, and he grows up as though in a monastic cell. For the memento mori we have the grave of our dear one, and every letter which reaches us is the equiva-


5 Quoted in Baines, p. 16.
lent of a day of fasting, a hair shirt or a discipline.

Towards the end of his life, Apollo could be found "sitting motionless in front of his wife's portrait." The visitor who found him thus continues:

he did not move and little Conrad, who was coming in behind me, put his fingers on his lips and said: "Let's go quietly through the room, because father always looks intently at Mother's portrait on the anniversary of her death—all day, saying nothing and eating nothing."

Conrad later confirmed that Apollo was "withal of strong religious feeling degenerating after the loss of his wife into mysticism and despair." The young Conrad was, therefore, subject to his father's gloomy disposition and cultish obsession with his dead wife; another example, this time on a very personal level, of religious sentiments being misapplied to no good purpose.

Apollo's last days were spent in Cracow (in Austrian Poland) and Conrad himself has described the religious atmosphere that attended his father's sick-room with its "noiseless nursing nuns:

Our domestic matters were ordered by the elderly housekeeper of our neighbour on the second floor, a Canon of the Cathedral,

6 Quoted in Baines, pp. 19-20.

7 Quoted in Baines, p. 23.

lent for the emergency. She, too, spoke but seldom. She wore a black dress with a cross hanging by a chain on her ample bosom. And though when she spoke she moved her lips more than the nuns, she never let her voice rise above a peacefully murmuring note. The air around me was all piety, resignation, and silence. (NLL, 167-68)

He also describes an attempt (albeit a half-hearted one) on the part of one of the nuns to restrict his reading:

I read! What did I not read! Sometimes the elder nun, gliding up and casting a mistrustful look on the open pages, would lay her hand lightly on my head and suggest in a doubtful whisper, "Perhaps it is not very good for you to read these books." I would raise my eyes to her face mutely, and with a vague gesture of giving it up she would glide away. (NLL, 168)

The incident may have been trifling, but the fact that Conrad could still recall it some 45 years later indicates that it had some impact on the boy who may have felt that it signified the opposition of religion to the acquisition of knowledge. Certainly this is one of the faces it reveals in his fiction, notably in Nostromo.

Apollo's final illness caused his son to experience "moments of revolt which stripped off me some of my simple trust in the government of the universe" (NLL, 168), and the father's death left the boy an orphan. At the funeral Conrad's grandmother described how "with bitter tears, he prayed for the soul of his father kneeling between the priest and the nuns, until at length Mr Buszcyński took him
away and pressed him to his heart."\(^9\) Soon after, the first of many letters Conrad was to receive from his uncle and guardian, Thaddeus Bobrowski, began thus:

My dear little Konrad,

It has pleased God to strike you with the greatest misfortune that can assail a child—the loss of its Parents. But in His goodness God has so graciously allowed your very good Grandmother and myself to look after you, your health, your studies and your future destiny.

Whether Conrad was able to endorse this view is unknown; it might well have seemed a somewhat perverse pleasure on the part of the Deity to a boy of twelve. There appears to be more than a hint of authorial opinion in the opposing view taken by the external narrator of "Gaspar Ruiz":

Some proverbs are simply imbecile, others are immoral. That one evolved out of the native heart of the great Russian people, "Man discharges the piece, but God carries the bullet," is piously atrocious, and at bitter variance with the accepted concept of a compassionate God. It would indeed be an inconsistent occupation for the Guardian of the poor, the innocent, and the helpless, to carry the bullet, for instance, into the heart of a father. (ASS,18)

In fact, as Gustav Morf has pointed out, the proverb in question is not Russian but Polish.\(^11\)

Conrad was later to claim that his dislike of

\(^9\) Quoted in Baines, p. 24.

\(^10\) "Bobrowski to Conrad," 8/20 September 1869, Letter 1, Conrad's Polish Background, p. 35. Najder explains that Bobrowski often gave both Julian and Gregorian dates in the letters.

\(^11\) Polish Shades, p. 40.
Christianity began two years after the death of his father, whilst Andrezej Busza points out that "In the Poland of Conrad's childhood 'Christian festivals' were first and foremost family occasions. It is therefore not surprising that Conrad, who was an orphan from the age of eleven, developed an early dislike for them. For him they were only painful reminders of his dead parents and his loneliness." Gustav Morf also feels that Apollo's death marks the end of Conrad's Christian faith:

The young Conrad had been brought up in the Roman Catholic religion which, especially in Poland, repudiated the "good for the good's sake" principle. He expected that, in this life, every good action shall have its reward, and that every bad action shall be punished. The miserable death of his father (who was a "good" man if ever there was one) shattered his religious belief to its foundations. From that moment, his "pessimistic" outlook was fixed in its main lines.

There are, however, no letters from Conrad to indicate the decline of his belief in Christianity. The letters to his uncle are not extant and none of Bobrowski's letters touch on the subject (from which one can only infer that it was never raised). From Catholic Cracow (in 1874) Conrad moved to Marseilles at a time when the Catholic Church was undergoing a

12 "To Edward Garnett," 22 December 1902, Letters from Conrad, p. 188.

13 Busza, p. 133n.

14 Polish Heritage, p. 110.
deep crisis. The dogma of Papal Infallibility, promulgated by the Vatican Council in 1870, was somewhat rudely followed that same year by the occupation of Rome by Victor Emmanuel II; an act which deprived Pope Pius IX of his temporal power. No longer was there a Papal State and the Pope's self-imprisonment within the Vatican must have seemed little more than a futile gesture to all but the most ardent of Catholics. Conrad was, doubtless, not greatly affected by this but he does seem to have had some experience of the Church's vain and unrealistic support for the lost causes of 'legitimacy' if the conduct of his Catholics in The Arrow of Gold is any reflection of actual Catholic backing for the Carlist cause.

The crisis of Conrad's career in Marseilles came with his suicide attempt in 1878; an attempt which shows that his faith was certainly not profound at this stage. Even if one accepts the story of the duel that Conrad put around the spiritual position for a Catholic is still not improved for, as Jerry Allen explains, "The Church in Poland, as in other countries, held that to fight a duel was to commit not one but two major sins; attempted murder and attempted suicide."\(^{15}\)

Until 1890, when Conrad's correspondence with Marguerite Poradowska begins, we have only the letters

of Thaddeus Bobrowski to Conrad upon which to build a picture of the future novelist. References to God are sprinkled liberally throughout the letters but more, it seems, from habit than from any earnest belief. Thus, on receiving one of innumerable requests from his nephew for money, the uncle accedes, trusting that the sum in question will secure Conrad's career and warning that "if it serves no purpose, as has been the case up till now--then you will answer for it to your own conscience and to God."  

Most other references are of similar brevity; there is nothing in the nature of a theological discussion. Bobrowski's comments on the severe illness (pneumonia) which struck down his brother and left him an invalid, however, may not have met with Conrad's concurrence. According to Bobrowski, "God has mercy on his servants, and eventually kept him alive," but since this uncle was now functioning on one damaged lung and, with a deteriorating heart, was facing "a slow, prolonged death," his nephew may have experienced some difficulty in tracing the mercy of God in this news. The uncle duly died a month or two later.

16 "Bobrowski to Conrad," 16/28 May 1878, Letter 7, Conrad's Polish Background, p. 52.

ii. Other Influences

From 1878 Conrad's surroundings were generally English—either the country itself or the merchant seamen with whom he had most to do. His sojourns within the land that was to become his home would have enabled him to observe the Protestant wing of Christianity in operation and, whilst we are unaware of the extent to which he consciously watched the progress of Victorian religion, it is obvious from his later writings that the hypocritical elements certainly came within his purview. Although his periods of time spent away from England, particularly in the East, clearly enabled him to make some contact with other religions, notably Islam and Buddhism, it seems unlikely that he closely investigated the tenets of these faiths while he was there. Instead, the acquaintance he shows with them in his writings is probably the result of his reading. As will be shown later, there have been suggestions that his knowledge of Buddhism was gained, not from the East, but from the works of Schopenhauer and Amiel. Similarly, much of his information about Islam can be seen to have come from Sir Richard Burton's account of his pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina; a book which would have shown him that the Faith of Muhammad was experiencing a similar decay to that of Christianity (albeit a more violent one).
Thus, on an extensive scale, religion was in decline and society with it (or so it seemed). The feeling of *fin de siècle* evoked by the writers of the decadence, both in France and in England, certainly reflects such a premise, becoming quite explicit in Baudelaire's reference to "the autumn of ideas." Historically, such times had seen the birth of new religions, and the formation of various adventist groups (notably the Mormons and Seventh Day Adventists) towards the middle of the nineteenth century—the same time, incidentally, as that of Polish Messianism which is also adventist in spirit—suggests that some, at least, felt a need for spiritual renewal; the disappointing of their hopes leading frequently to disillusion and doubt.

Religious belief in late Victorian times, in fact, had a number of crises to contend with even if, by and large, it did not have early expectations of a dramatic fulfilment of the Book of Revelations. To take one's stand resolutely behind a literal interpretation of the Bible, including the Book of Genesis, seemed clearly untenable to many thinking people in the light of the findings of Charles Darwin, and the unrealistic and often bigoted fundamentalism exhibited by many of the clergy, notably Bishop Wilberforce during his public confrontation with T.H. Huxley, could only alienate the more impartial observers.

This apparent relegation of the long cherished story of creation to the realms of mythology was accompanied by new methods of biblical criticism that made suspect the historical data contained in the Holy Book, not only in its Old Testament, but in the Gospels themselves. Stanley Renner produces much evidence, mainly the product of German criticism to emphasise this last point and shows how even the life of Christ Himself became a matter of question. He fails to show, however, apart from simple assertion, just how relevant this is to Conrad, who shows little interest in his writings either in the strictures of new biblical criticism or in the quest for the historical Jesus; the two areas that prompt Renner's whole interpretation of "Youth" and "Heart of Darkness".¹⁹ This is not to say that Conrad was not aware of these issues but there are very few signs that he was greatly affected by them. He clearly kept abreast of scientific discoveries and theories, however, for it is a scientific view of the universe (which denied individual man personal immortality in another realm) and the implications of the second law of thermodynamics (which denied mankind as a species immortality in this one) that form the substance of his gloom-laden letters to Cunninghame Graham in the late 1890's.

¹⁹ Renner, pp. 241 ff.
iii. Conrad's Letters to Marguerite Poradowska

Conrad's comments on Christian doctrines are mainly to be seen in the letters he wrote to Marguerite Poradowska (his aunt in Brussels). In September 1891 (a year after his Congo adventure), for example, he refutes the doctrine of expiation. He begins by maintaining that "if these convicts found solace in expiation they would no longer be convicts but angels (Catholic angels) fallen into misfortune" (a view that implies that his aunt has misunderstood human nature just as Lord Jim misunderstands the nature of Gentleman Brown). He continues:

I astonish and perhaps scandalize you by my joking about criminals, while you think me capable of accepting or even admitting the doctrine (or theory) of expiation through suffering. That doctrine, a product of superior but savage minds, is quite simply an infamous abomination when preached by civilised people. It is a doctrine which, on the one hand, leads straight to the Inquisition and, on the other, discloses the possibilities of bargaining with the Eternal. 20

The words in parenthesis here "(or theory)" are significant, of course; Conrad is not only rejecting the doctrine but also questioning whether it is a doctrine at all. Expiation cannot exist because of the finality and inevitable consequences of each act of life upon which "all the weeping and gnashing of

20 "To Marguerite Poradowska," 15 September 1891, Letter 30, Letters to Poradowska, p. 36.
teeth and the sorrow of weak souls" can have no effect. Conrad is here asserting man's full responsibility for his own actions and the need for him to accept those actions; maintaining that "I shall never need to be consoled for any act of my life . . . because I am strong enough to judge my conscience rather than be its slave, as the orthodox would like to persuade us to be." Here also, then, is a negative view of orthodoxy, but fictionally, it is the likes of Brown and Jones who are in no need of consolation for their acts in contrast to characters such as Jim, Razumov, Nostromo and Falk, all of whom feel the need to unburden themselves of guilt in some way. Jim should clearly come to terms with his actions on the Patna rather than seek absolution for them but Razumov's confession seems to elicit approval since it puts an end to the lie he is living. The attempted confession of Nostromo to Mrs. Gould would seem unnecessary according to this code (unless it is seen as an attempt to exorcise the spell of the treasure) and that of Falk would certainly be out of place. But these characters were all in the future at this time and it may be that, when he came to write fiction, Conrad found his code here too vague or simplistic to be workable in all cases.

In March 1892, he is telling his aunt that she is "carrying the spirit of self-sacrifice too far" in looking after an elderly relative who "doubtless possesses all the virtues which are the Creator's
universal gift to mankind—but not Charity which is a gift straight from the Eternal to the elect. For Charity is eternal and universal Love, the divine virtue, the sole manifestation of the Almighty which may in some manner justify the act of creation." The problem is, Conrad feels:

abnegation carried to an extreme . . . becomes not a fault but a crime, and to return good for evil is not only profoundly immoral but dangerous, in that it sharpens the appetite for evil in the malevolent and develops (perhaps unconsciously) that latent human tendency towards hypocrisy in the . . . let us say, benevolent."

As a result, he decides, "You have thrown aside dignity, affections, memories! And why? Have you found the peace which is the reward of sacrifices accepted by the Master of our souls?"

The dichotomy evident in this letter—Conrad attacking a Christian doctrine whilst still apparently acknowledging the existence of a "Creator," an "Almighty," a "Master of our souls"—will be noted again more than once in his fictional, non-fictional and private writings. The letter was written from Port Adelaide whilst Conrad was serving on the Torrens (and in the process of creating Almayer's Folly). An earlier letter, which is sometimes taken as a repudiation of faith, was written in London between berths (just before the Torrens offer) and, considering its overall content, has perhaps been

taken rather too seriously. Obviously at a low ebb, having made comments about vegetating and the theories of Descartes on thinking and existing, Conrad compares himself to Punch being gazed at with frigid astonishment by well-made dolls and continues, "Upon my word. I pardon them; once upon a time I was a Christian!" This comment appears more flippant than deeply felt and should be related to the mood of frustration during a period of inactivity and isolation rather than taken as a profound statement concerning a loss of faith. It is usual when joining a religion to make a protestation of faith in one form or another. A declaration of disbelief is rarely called for, however, if that faith should wane in later years. Moreover, the extent of belief or disbelief within any human being is likely to be in a state of flux so that even the most devout believer may have periods of doubt whilst a residue of early faith may still be present in the most outspoken of atheists. Conrad was neither of these and one must take into account the possibility that his comments reflect a particular transitory mood rather than a deliberate philosophy. One must also remember that his letters were written to be read by the recipient only (certainly at this stage) and may, therefore, have been composed to achieve a particular effect. Zdzisław Najder has shown that one

letter to his aunt, protesting a pervading depression on Conrad's part, was written the day after a cheerful letter to Emilie Briquel and has suggested an amatory purpose behind both letters, depression being used as an excuse for the aunt whilst Conrad concentrated on the younger girl. It can be unwise, therefore, to consider letters in isolation unless one is also considering the likely purpose of the correspondence.

Basically Conrad's concern in many of these letters seems to be the extent to which a practitioner of Christian virtues (as he saw his aunt to be) could be exploited by others. This concern appears again, for example, in a letter of October 1892 in which he speaks of the "forgetfulness of wrongs, afflictions, and storms" which is not only "very Christian" but is also "most convenient for that troop of worthies which travels about the world poisoning life to right and left, handing you the cup of gall. 'Come drink, miserable sinner. It won't kill you. It will only wring your heart—a mere trifle! Come drink—and forget!'" Such forgetfulness, Conrad felt, could only end "in a soft crumbling of disappointed hopes, of cheated affections, of righteous indignation that has been outraged, of dignity that has been abandoned, that has been thrown to the winds all for that fatal word uttered

with a false semblance of religious feeling."\textsuperscript{24}

Here is a clear awareness of hypocrisy, similar to that encouraged by self-sacrifice, only this time Conrad is suggesting (by the fact that the religious feeling is not just a "semblance" but a "false semblance") that the virtue is being deliberately evoked by others for their own ends. Affections and dignity are obviously of importance to Conrad since this is the second occasion one has had cause to note them. Although moved specifically by his aunt's case in this particular instance (whatever he may have wished their relationship to be), this sentiment is repeated to a large extent five years later in a letter to Miss Watson. This time it is a close friend, E.L. Sanderson, whose unselfishness seems to have led to trouble:

One hates to preach a lower creed. I have ventured before to do so to him. . . . Abnegation and self-forgetfulness are not always right. They are not always right even in the noblest cause. . . . A man's duties are wide and complex: the balance should be held very even, lest some evil should be done when nothing but good is contemplated.\textsuperscript{25}

Conrad had already illustrated this last point with the character of Lingard in \textit{An Outcast of the Islands}. This later letter simply confirms his rejection of


the efficacy of certain Christian doctrines, though he was willing to concede to Cunninghame Graham that "Abnegation—self-sacrifice means something" in comparison with Fraternity which "means nothing unless the Cain Abel business."26 Clearly Conrad is preaching moderation in such virtues, not their elimination; it is extremes that he seems to oppose.

Most of the letters to his aunt take place between 1890 and 1895, embracing (roughly) the period of gestation of Almayer's Folly, the time of Conrad's Congo journey (in which, indeed, his aunt played an important part), his voyages on the Torrens and his final arrival as a novelist. The correspondence has some importance, therefore, in cataloguing some of his thoughts and moods whilst at the cross-roads of his career. In addition to his comments on Christian doctrines, the main feeling that pervades these letters is one of fatalism. Thus, in a letter which laments the harshness of existence, Conrad writes of "the brutality of the inevitable—since everything is inevitable!" and talks of the poignant sorrow and bitter regrets caused by accidents:

For here there is always the thought of what might have been, the regret for things unaccomplished, the despair over the useless sacrifice of a love on which depended the happiness of those who remain stunned with astonishment at the inexplicable cruelty of the Invisible that guides inanimate things to destroy a life necessary

to the happiness of innocent beings of that being not yet conscious! Truly we are the slaves of fate before our birth, and we pay tribute to misfortune before we have known what it is. Does it, I fearfully ask myself, follow us beyond the tomb?

Again this letter is a reaction to bad news from his aunt and the response is suitably sympathetic. The extract reveals scepticism in a Beneficient Creator if He can allow apparently "inexplicable cruelty" to occur. The fears of misfortune following beyond the grave implies a sense of pre-ordained destiny that one is powerless to alter. Clearly, however, it is the decrees of life on earth that cause this scepticism; Conrad needs no other tutor. He is also not far away from exhibiting the kind of fatalism shown by the Muslims of his early novels, the first of which he was in the process of writing. Later that year (on receiving the berth on the Torrens) he comments, "But what good are plans? Destiny is our master!"—the kind of outlook Marlow shows in "Heart of Darkness" when he talks about "Destiny. My Destiny! Droll thing life is—that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose"

The legacy of Conrad's Polish experiences is plain from these letters. It had cautioned him


severely against illusions and the expectation of miracles, against the folly of mis-applied devotion and the dangers of religious obsession, against the prospects of receiving rewards for exemplary Christian conduct; in all probability it constituted the major factor in his undoubted diminution of faith. The events in Marseilles certainly seem to suggest that by the time Conrad reached England his Catholicism was very definitely on the wane. The voyage up the Congo in 1890, during which it is clear that he came upon many Christian missions, could only have revealed to him the ineffectiveness of missionaries in the face of their brutal European companions whose tacit façade of Christianity could not have appeared in a more cynical light. This, then, formed Conrad's religious background as he began to write and it would seem to explain, in many respects, the use he was to make of religious terminology within his works. But this needs to be seen also in the light of his later religious outlook, to which we must turn.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONRAD'S LATER RELIGION

i. Conrad's Catholicism

The state of Conrad's religious belief has attracted some vastly differing interpretations over the years, from steadfast Catholicism to antagonistic atheism. The evidence (as one would expect) is contradictory. An anecdote of Jessie Conrad illustrates, at least, that Christianity had very little place in the author's household. She is here speaking of their younger son, John:

His father alluded to him as a little pagan and refused to let him learn any religion until he was turned six years old. Then he chuckled with delight because the boy's first words when he heard of the crucifixion were "It's disgusting, it ought to be forgotten, it's not a thing to be proud of." Possibly such an opinion is unique, but it would not have been possible if the child had been taught any religion whatever.

John Conrad himself, however, recalls a quite different incident with his father, in which, during a walk, the pair spent some time in a church:

We carried on, pausing now and then to look at some tombstone and then, as though thinking aloud he said, 'Profanity is the preserve of the devil'. Then as we passed through the lychgate he said, 'Don't assume that because I do not go to church that I do not believe, I do; all true seamen do in their hearts.!' 

There were, indeed, times when Conrad would identify himself as a Catholic, as Jessie reveals when describing how J.B. Pinker, aided by Protestant Swiss waiters, parodied a Catholic procession; the fun coming to an abrupt end at the Conrad's sitting-room door when Conrad "flung it open and said icily: 'Yes, and I'm a Catholic, aren't I!'" Jessie continues, "I heard the singer's voice murmuring insinuatingly. I could not catch what was said, but the effect was a peal of amused laughter from the 'Catholic' and I knew the storm was over." Her use of quotation marks for "Catholic" and the fact that clearly, Pinker had forgotten Conrad's religious heritage, suggest strongly that the novelist's catholicism, at this stage, was nominal only. E.K. Hay shows another instance of this old identity, citing a letter from Conrad in which he is refusing to join a London club:

I was born a R.C. and though dogma sits lightly on me I have never renounced that form of Christian religion. The booklet of rules is so, I may say, theological that it would be like renouncing the faith


3 Joseph Conrad and His Circle, pp. 228-29.
of my fathers.

Of course you will understand, my dear, that it is not with me any question of the principles but merely a matter of correct conduct. I do not think it would be correct for me to ask you to put my name down, and indeed I do not think it could be done since one of the conditions of membership is to be a Protestant. 4

In the same letter, Conrad also reveals that he had earlier refused to join a Catholic Association because:

I discovered that the members engaged themselves with all their might and power to work for the restoration of the temporal power of the Pope. Conceive you that imbecility! Of course I pointed out that this was a political object, that the accomplished fact had all my sympathy and that I certainly would not lift a finger to re-establish temporal power." 5

These instances show that, whilst Conrad was not a practising Catholic, he never revoked his faith, and he did, indeed, receive a Catholic burial on his death, attended by "the blessed mutter of the mass," as Cunninghame Graham put it, quoting (with unintentional irony) the words of a Protestant. 6 It is also clear that he was not willing to allow his erstwhile faith to be attack in his hearing or to join any organisation which would effectively force him to


5 Ibid., p. 193n.

disavow it, though both these factors could be explained as simple defence of heritage. His comments on the temporal aspirations of the Church are interesting when compared with the grievances of the clergy in Poland and the fierce interests of Corbelan in Nostromo.

This residue of Catholic identity could explain why Bernard Meyer perceives a difference in religious stance between Conrad's fictional and non-fictional writings and discovers "powerful and poignant overtones of a deep and abiding devotion to that early Catholic faith" within the fiction and protestations of atheism within his life. The former stance he supports by asserting that Conrad identified himself with Christ in his novels (as was noted in chapter one); the latter he bases mainly on two letters to Garnett (to be considered later), but spoils his case by misquoting Jessie Conrad. Meyer's footnote reads as follows:

According to Jessie Conrad he asserted that he was "a hater of priests . . . and a determined atheist." She noted that during their stay in Catholic Brittany Conrad never removed his hat when passing a church.

In context, however, Jessie's statement reads as follows:

7 Meyer, p. 351.
8 Meyer, p. 351n.
Our guide and friend was our driver, a round-faced man of forty, from whom we hired the carriage. He was a widower with a lot of small children and he was an excellent father. Conrad told me that he was a hater of priests and, in that land of Catholic Faith, a determined atheist. It's a fact that he never took off his hat when passing a church, but he was a kindly man and scrupulously honest in his charges.

The atheist here, therefore, is not Conrad but the guide.

Catholic identity is also claimed for Conrad by certain Catholic writers, one of whom, Patrick Braybrooke, can assert that "Conrad was both a mystic and a believer in collective worship" who "sought reality by looking at his own soul but . . . knew also that he could not hope to find it without the aids of the Church," which "was for him the means by which the individual was introduced into the presence of God." Braybrooke asserts that Conrad "held fast to his religion all through his life" for this "was the foundation, and entire motive of his philosophy," but his support for these statements is scanty and not all Catholic writers agree with him. John K. Ryan, for example, complains of Conrad's treatment of Catholic characters in his novels, especially in The Arrow of Gold "where the characters like Therese and Marquis de Villarel are wretched caricatures, travesties unworthy of the man who wrote 'The Nigger


11 Braybrooke, p. 166.
of the Narcissus' and 'Youth'." The bias of such comments is obvious, of course, particularly when one considers the character of the bigoted Protestant, Podmore, in the first of the books Ryan cites with approval.13

Outside the Catholic circle with its apparent need to know whether Conrad could be considered as "one of us," most critics feel that he lost his faith at an early age. Certain statements criticizing Christianity in Conrad's letters to Garnett and the gloomy world picture emerging from his correspondence with Cunningham Graham, are usually cited as evidence for this view.14 Before these can be taken as conclusive, however, they need to be seen in a wider context than hitherto, it being a common failing of mankind to voice only grievances and not satisfactions.

One first needs to consider a letter Conrad wrote to his aunt on his return to London from his first voyage on the Torrens. Conrad is here giving advice in respect of another nephew of hers:


14 Working on this assumption, it seems, has caused at least two critics to misread a passage of The Nigger of the "Narcissus", claiming an atheistic
... one becomes useful only on realizing the utter insignificance of the individual in the scheme of the universe. When one understands that in oneself one is nothing and that a man is worth neither more nor less than the work he accomplishes with honesty of purpose and means, and within the strict limits of his duty towards society, only then is one the master of his conscience, with the right to call himself a man.

Such work ethics are similar to the advice Conrad himself had often received from his Uncle Thaddeus.

In the previous November, for example, having berated his nephew for pessimism, Bobrowski considers that narrative stance. The passage in question reads: "till the weary succession of nights and days tainted by the obstinate clamour of sages, demanding bliss and an empty heaven, is redeemed at last by the vast silence of pain and labour, by the dumb fear and the dumb courage of men obscure, forgetful and enduring" (NN, 90). Albert J. Guerard's interpretation of this is "The dignity of man lies in his vast silence and endurance; a dignity tainted by those who clamor for the reward of another life" (Guerard, p. 104), whilst H.M. Daleski comments "Indeed the passage insists it would be the height of folly to seek for manifestations of the divine in nature since 'heaven' is 'empty', and the 'sages' who have obstinately demanded 'bliss' despite the fact of that emptiness have only succeeded in 'tainting' life, which is 'redeemed' not by their 'clamour' but by the 'vast silence' of dogged suffering and work" (Joseph Conrad: The Way of Dispossession [London: Faber and Faber, 1977], p. 30).

But the punctuation of the passage makes it clear that it is in fact the sages who are demanding "an empty heaven" in addition to "bliss," and the tainting effect of this shows that such a position is condemned by the narrator.

each individual should contribute to mankind, not with dreams of leadership, "but rather thinking of himself as a modest tiny ant which by its insignificant toil in fulfilling its modest duty secures the life and existence of the whole nest."\(^{16}\) Both extracts advocate a sense of vocation and there is (as we shall see) much to recommend R.R. Hodges' views on the importance of this word to Conrad. Hodges claims: "Conrad's ideal was that a man's profession, his true work, should also be a vocation, a calling, and some of the old religious meanings cling to the world \(^{[\text{sic}]}.\)\(^{17}\)

Certainly it can be said that Conrad had little time for institutionalised forms of religion as his remarks to Edward Noble in 1895 make clear:

> Everyone must walk in the light of his own heart's gospel. No man's light is good to any of his fellows. That's my creed from beginning to end. That's my view of life—a view that rejects all formulas, dogmas and principles of other people's making. These are only a web of illusions. We are too varied. Another man's truth is only a dismal lie to me.

Conrad's religion evidently underwent considerable change during the course of his life and his use of a religious lexis can be said to indicate the nature of the change. Devotion to an institutional-


\(^{18}\) "To Edward Noble," 2 Nov. 1895, LL, I, 184.
ised belief thus becomes devotion to "his own heart's gospel" and in Conrad's case this proved to be his vocation, to which he would bring his "few simple ideas," notably "the idea of Fidelity" (PR, XIX).

ii. Conrad's Vocation, I: The Sea

The two vocations that (figuratively speaking) acted as Conrad's particular deities were the craft of the sailor with his mystic attraction for the sea, and the craft of the writer; the latter being used many times to describe the former with suitably religious terms. One brief passage in A Personal Record brings the two together, in fact:

I had better say that the life at sea... is not, upon the whole, a good equipment for a writing life. God forbid, though, that I should be thought of as denying my masters of the quarter-deck. I am not capable of that sort of apostasy. I have confessed my attitude of piety towards their shades in three or more tales, and if any man on earth more than another needs to be true to himself as he hopes to be saved, it is certainly the writer of fiction. (PR, 108)

The tone of this is not entirely serious, of course (though it is not entirely flippant either) but the note is still struck. Soon after this passage, Conrad relates the initial attraction of the sea and compares it deliberately with a religious belief:

In that faint, ghostly sound there live the memories of twenty years, the voices of rough men now no more, the strong voice of the everlasting winds, and the whisper
of a mysterious spell, the murmur of the great sea, which must have somehow reached my inland cradle and entered my unconscious ear, like that formula of Mohammedan faith the Mussulman father whispers into the ear of his new-born infant, making him one of the faithful almost with his first breath. I do not know whether I have been a good seaman, but I know I have been a very faithful one. (PR, 110)

Religious images are thus abundant in Conrad's maritime memories and whilst he is, of course, using the terms metaphorically, their very usage indicates to some degree, the sense of vocation he felt was necessary. Thus when Conrad compares the captain's state-room to the "sanctum sanctorum of a temple" (MS, 5), there is an underlying seriousness to the apparently playful comparison. His descriptions of a theft on board, committed "in such a way as to bring the profoundest possible trouble to all the blameless souls animating that ship" is regarded as being in the nature of a spiritual crime:

I am really in doubt whether the crime should not be entered under the category of sacrilege rather than theft. Those things belonged to the captain! There was certainly something in the nature of the violation of a sanctuary . . . (NLL, 186)

Discovering the theft the steward is described as being "a prey to a sort of sacred horror" (NLL, 187) and the whole incident is a "deed of darkness" (NLL, 186), for a ship "has to be respected, actually and ideally; her merit, her innocence, are sacred things" (NLL, 188)

Beneath the apparent mocking effect of the
inflated language (describing, after all, an instance of petty theft), lies the seriousness of a potential undermining of solidarity; that vital component of shipboard life that is so important a feature of The Nigger of the "Narcissus".

Like a literal religion, this creed of the sea is invested with its own form of after-life. When remembering a lost shipmate, Conrad remarks, "may the god of gales who took him away so abruptly between New Zealand and the Horn, let his soul rest in some Paradise of true seamen" (MS, 45), whilst, for the wrongdoers, "I could imagine no worse eternal punishment for evil seamen who die unrepentant upon the earthly sea than that their souls should be condemned to man the ghosts of disabled ships, drifting for ever across a ghostly and tempestuous ocean" (MS, 64).

It is, thus, a fitting reminder of the faith that in the episode of the Tremolino, Dominic Cervoni should feel (after wrecking his boat to escape coastguards), that the deed "lies upon my soul" (MS, 179).

Some of the real harshness of the calling is indicated in his final work, the unfinished "Legends," in which he directly contrasts his sailors of the sea with the saints of Christianity. Here he is concerned with the false or fatuous which creeps into worthy or noble stories:

Or even into a holy story. The Golden Legend itself. The legend of saints and their miracles is an awful example of that danger --as any one who turns over a few pages of it may see. Saintliness is made absurd by
the presentation of the miraculous facts themselves. It lacks spirituality in a surprising way. (LE, 45)

This, as it happened, was to be Conrad's final tribute to his erstwhile comrades of the sea:

They did not work miracles, to be sure, but I have seen them repeatedly do all that men can do for their faith—if it was only the faith in their own manhood. And that is something, surely. But there was something more in it, something larger—a fidelity to the demands of their calling which I verily believe was for all of them I knew, both afloat and ashore, vocational quite as much in its way as any spiritual call a man's nature has ever responded to. And all that for no perceptible reward in the praise of man and the favour of gods—I mean the sea gods, an indigent, pitiless lot, who had nothing to offer to servants at their shrine but a ward in some hospital on shore or a sudden wedding with death in a great uproar, but with no gilding or fine words about it. La mort sans phrases. (LE, 45).

His attitude is most explicit, however, in a letter to William Blackwood:

A wrestle with wind and weather has a moral value like the positive acts of faith on which may be built a doctrine of salvation and a rule of life. At any rate men engaged in such contests have been my spiritual fathers too long for me to change my convictions.

These particular aspects span almost twenty years of writing and show that Conrad was true to his creed. His fictional treatment of it is most marked in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (1896), but the Preface to that work, being not about the sea but about the task of the writer, indicated a conscious adherence to a new vocation. This transition, however, was a painful one. *Almayer's Folly* had been worked out at a fairly leisurely pace whilst Conrad was still at sea and his second novel does not seem to have caused him too many traumas. But *The Sisters* petered out and its successor, *The Rescue* (originally *The Rescuer*), was to follow a tortuous passage for over three years, stretching its author on a rack of despair in the process before being finally put aside.

It was during this time of crisis (1896-99) that Conrad's gloomy letters to Cunninghame Graham were written and whilst these have been frequently cited as evidence of a pessimistic world view on the part of the author, the context in which they were written has been generally neglected. In the course of these letters, Conrad likens the universe to a knitting machine knitting unchangeably and remorselessly and expresses his despair at the futility of existence in the face of the news from science that the world
would one day perish from cold. He felt that Graham
was too much of an idealist whilst he (Conrad) saw
things as they were. Man was naturally egotistical—
no reform of institutions could improve the situation.

This is melancholy indeed; little wonder such
comments should be taken to indicate a loss of belief,
especially since the letter containing his considera-
tion of final extinction also proclaimed that "Faith
is a myth and beliefs shift like mists on the shore.
... As our peasants say: 'Pray brother, forgive me
for the love of God'. And we don't know what forgive-
ness is, nor what is love, nor where God is. Assez." 20
The letter ended, "But salvation lies in being
illogical. Still I feel remorse."

In a way this was a time of religious crisis but
this was only incidentally to do with Christianity
and more to do with vocation. To the craft of liter-
ature Conrad brought the same sense of integrity that
he had taken to the art of seamanship and the back-
ground to his despair is the soul-searching that
accompanied his doubts of being worthy of his new
profession (or belief). Generally it has been
assumed that the despair shown in his letters is the
real Conrad and that this mood has been transmitted
to his novels, whereas there seems to be a case for
reversing this assumption to assert that the despair
of his letters was caused by the difficulties of com-
position. In other words it was not the despair,

20 14-15 Jan. 1898, Letter 7, Conrad to Cunning-
hame Graham, p. 65.
reflected in the letters, that caused the novels but the writing of novels that caused the despair. The religious terms Conrad applies to the art of writing show that he had elevated it to the same high position as the calling of the sea. The despair thus reflects, in a very real sense, a spiritual crisis as Conrad reached a state of creative torpor over The Rescue. He was failing in his new belief and now, dependent on that belief, were his wife Jessie and (from January 1898) a son, Borys. This was no time for authorial paralysis to set in; family responsibilities demanded creative energy.

One can see the mood develop in the letters to Garnett written in 1896. When giving up The Sisters (on Garnett's advice) Conrad was almost philosophical in his attitude:

If one looks at life in its true aspect then everything loses much of its unpleasant importance and the atmosphere becomes cleared of what are only unimportant mists that drift past in imposing shapes. When once the truth is grasped that one's own personality is only a ridiculous and aimless masquerade of something hopelessly unknown the attainment of serenity is not very far off. Then there remains nothing but the surrender to one's impulses, the fidelity to passing emotions which is perhaps a nearer approach to truth than any other philosophy of life.

21 23 March 1896, Letters from Conrad, p. 23. One could note, perhaps, that in the next year Conrad was writing to Miss Watson (in the letter about E.L. Sanderson that has already been cited) that "You must sacrifice the best of your impulses to do the most good . . . " (27 June 1897, LL, I, 206). Clearly, any absolutist stand Conrad made needed to be qualified.
In this letter Conrad announced his intention of beginning *The Rescuer*. Five months later this plan had plunged him into despair:

... I have been living in a little hell of my own; in a place of torment so subtle and so cruel and so unavoidable that the prospect of theological damnation in the hereafter has no more terrors for me. It is all about the ghastly "Rescuer".

These lamentations continue for a full page during which the novelist confesses to being "paralysed by doubt" with "just sense enough to feel the agony" but "powerless to invent a way out of it." His only solution was to write short stories but this diversion seems to have troubled his sense of artistic integrity. His comment to Garnett nine days later shows the sense of being unfaithful to a creed; a feeling made apparent by the reference to the "lost soul," which is an image that appears several times in his letters with the same connection:

There is only 6,000 words in it so it can't bring in many shekels ... Don't you think I am a lost soul?—Upon my word I hate every line I write. I wish I could tackle the *Rescuer* again. I simply can't! And I live in fear that is worse than mortal.

From this state he was rescued for a while by


23 Ibid., p. 43.

24 14 August 1896, *Letters from Conrad*, p. 47. Where ellipsis points appear in the original material (as here), this is indicated by three unspaced periods.
his old belief, the sea, this time in the fictional form of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, but whilst writing the last pages of this work Conrad wrote "May the Gods help you. I am all right--have sold myself to the devil. Am proud of it." This may indicate that he still felt his true purpose was his "Rescuer" and that he was compromising his beliefs in writing anything else. The context is not too clear, however. What is clear is his comment on the troublesome work a month later: "The Rescuer sleeps yet the sleep like of death. Will there be a miracle and a resurrection? Quien sabe!" The application of religious terms to his art (whether serious or not) shows the development of the new vocation and his sense of artistic integrity is shown again by this comment to E.L. Sanderson (speaking of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*):

I am conceited about it,—God knows,—but He also knows the spirit in which I approached the undertaking to present faithfully some of His benighted and suffering creatures; the humble, the obscure, the sinful, the erring upon whom rests His Gaze of Ineffable Pity. My conscience is at peace in that matter.

But the Rescuer came to overwhelm him again:

I trust you are well. I am so so—horribly irritable and muddle-headed. Thinking of


Rescuer; writing nothing; often restraining tears; never restraining curses. At times thinking the world has come to an end—at others convinced that it has not yet come out of chaos. But generally I feel like the impotent thief on the cross (he is one of my early heroes)—defiant and bitter.

Two months after this letter, the correspondence with Graham begins, in the midst, it will be noted, of another unavailing attempt to come to grips with the Rescuer. Conrad's first letter to Graham reveals part of his creed; his integrity as a writer:

Mr. Kipling has the wisdom of the passing generations—and holds it in perfect sincerity. Some of his work is of impeccable form and because of that little thing he shall sojourn in Hell only a very short while. He squints with the rest of his excellent sort. It is a beautiful squint; it is a useful squint. And—after all—perhaps he sees round the corner? And suppose Truth is just round the corner like the elusive and useless loafer it is? I can't tell. No one can tell. It is impossible to know. It is impossible to know anything tho' it is possible to believe a thing or two.

Pray do not regret your letter; I mean to hold my beliefs—not that I think it matters in the least. If I had your eyesight, your knowledge and your pen it would matter. But I haven't. Nevertheless I shall persist in my beastly attitude. Straight vision is bad form—as you know. The proper thing is to look round the corner, because, if truth is not there—there is at any rate a something that distributes shekels—And what better can you want than the noble metals? 29


29 5 August 1897, Letter 1, Conrad to Cunninghame Graham, p. 45.
Part of the creed, it seems, is that any prostitution of the art (writing for money instead of from conviction) attracts the terms of the demonic. Conrad once more attacks hypocrisy, this time within his profession, but the letter shows the extent of his problem and, in many ways, the cause of his gloom. Conrad's "straight vision" was not attracting the "shekels," nor was it causing enough to be written, and it may be that his cynicism about the "noble metals" derived, in part, from the fact that he was not receiving enough of them. His integrity was proving unprofitable, in short, but he still needed money to live.

The position with The Rescue (the title had changed by now), had still not altered as is clear from a letter to Garnett in October:

I can't get on with the Rescue. In all these days I haven't written a line, but there hadn't been a day when I did not wish myself dead. It is too ghastly. I positively don't know what to do. Am I out to the end of my tether? Sometimes I think it must be so.  

By December the position was becoming more and more urgent since Conrad was only one month away from fatherhood and, to add to this additional impending burden, was involved in a dispute with Adolf Krieger over a debt; an event that hurt him deeply as his letter to Garnett shows:

My soul is like a stone within me. I am going through the awful experience of losing a friend. Hope comes every evening to console me but he has a hopeless task. Death is nothing—and I am used to its rapacity. But when life robs one of a man to whom one has pinned one's faith for twenty years the wrong seems too monstrous to be lived down.  

This, then, constitutes the background to Conrad's excessively pessimistic letters to Graham, six of which were written in December 1897 and January 1898. The concept of the self-evolved knitting machine, knitting remorselessly "time space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions," came in the letter of 20 December; the despair over "humanity condemned ultimately to perish from cold" in a letter of 14 January 1898, coinciding with the birth of Boris. The general tenor of the letters is well-known and need not be reproduced here. What they reflect, however, is little more than the morbid thoughts that to some degree are present in everyone and require only a crisis of personal circumstances to bring them to the fore. This crisis was obviously evident in Conrad at the time and it is argued that it was the religious intensity he brought to the art of writing and his temporary inability to fulfil his new creed that provided the essential background for his des-

31 5 Dec. 1897, Letters from Conrad, pp. 107-08.
32 Letter 5, Conrad to Cunningham e Graham, pp. 56-57.
33 Letter 7, Conrad to Cunningham e Graham, pp. 63-65.
34 Conrad confessed that "this is morbid" in one part of his letter of 6 Dec. 1897 (Letter 3, Conrad to Cunningham e Graham, p. 49).
pair. To Garnett, in March 1898, after complaining
of nervous trouble, he writes:

Since then I've been better but have been unable to write. I sit down religiously every morning, I sit down for eight hours every day—and the sitting down is all. In the course of that working day of 8 hours I write 3 sentences which I erase before leaving the table in despair. There's not a single word to send you. Not one! And time passes—and McClure waits—not to speak of Eternity for which I don't care a damn. Of McClure however I am afraid.

I ask myself sometimes whether I am bewitched, whether I am the victim of an evil eye? But there is no "jettatura" in England—is there? I assure you—speaking soberly and on my word of honour—that sometimes it takes all my resolution and power of self control to refrain from butting my head against the wall. I want to howl and foam at the mouth but I daren't do it for fear of waking that baby and alarming my wife. It's no joking matter. After such crises of despair I doze for hours still half conscious that there is that story I am unable to write. Then I wake up, try again—and at last go to bed completely done-up. So the days pass and nothing is done. At night I sleep. In the morning I get up with the horror of that powerlessness I must face through a day of vain efforts.

It is not for nothing that the word 'religiously' is used here, reinforcing his commitment and adding to the extent of his despair. With McClure having

35 Between 11 June 1896, when part one of the manuscript of The Rescuer was sent off to London, and 19 December 1898, when part four was begun, Conrad wrote less than 300 pages of the novel (about 150 in the final version). Of the 200 pages written for part four, almost half were eventually scrapped. The last 78 pages of manuscript, in fact, became only 1½ pages of book. (The Rescuer manuscript is item 4787 of the Ashley-Wise Collection in the British Museum, London)

purchased the serial rights for *The Rescue* in America, the pressure on the author was greater than ever, and this long extract shows, in some detail, the dominance the unfinished book had achieved over Conrad's life at this time. Little wonder he should write again to Garnett in June that "I am living in a hell of my own"; little wonder, also, that a sudden demand for more "Rescue" material should prompt him to write in this manner to Cunninghame Graham:

Ride on to the tree and to the right— for verily there is a devil at the end of every road. Let us pray to the potbellied gods, to gods with more legs than a centipede and more arms than a dozen windmills, let us pray to them to guard us from the mischance of arriving somewhere. As long as we don't pray to the gods made in man's image we are sure of a most glorious perdition.

Don't know tho'. I wouldn't give two pence for all its glory—and I would pray to a god made like a man in the City—and do you know for what? For a little forgetfulness. Say half an hour. Oh bliss. I would give him my soul for it and he would be cheated. To be cheated is godlike. It is your devil who makes good bargains, legends notwithstanding.

This passage can be seen as revealing the author's forebodings, for Conrad is clearly fearful of the consequences of his inability to write (he mentions McClure's demand for material in the postscript of the letter). The reference to "gods made in man's image" reverses the biblical view of man (made in


God's image), and indicates either formulas (by implication, man-made), to which Conrad could not adhere, or the British tendency to portray God and Christ as elderly and youthful Anglo-Saxons, claiming each to be "one of us" as it were. It was, of course, "a man in the city" (McClure in America) who was putting pressure on the novelist and, obviously, the traumas of writing constitute the things Conrad would like to forget, together with impending deadlines. Towards the end of the letter, he thinks wistfully of his previous vocation, for "to get to sea would be salvation."39

Conrad was to experience such traumas over most of his books, even to the extent of suffering a nervous breakdown after the writing of *Under Western Eyes*, but never again was he to go through such difficulties of composition for such a sustained period of time and it is significant that never again was he to produce such a procession of pessimistic letters. On his recovery from the breakdown that followed *Under Western Eyes*, he wrote thus to Galsworthy:

"I am thus coming back to the world. Yet that isn't exactly it. It's very much like coming out of one little hell into another. Don't think I am ungrateful to gods and men . . . by saying this. One can't help that feeling. I am glad enough to have changed one hell for another, for I do not feel either helpless or hopeless. On the contrary, there is a sort of confidence,—but indeed it may be only the sign of an incipient

softening of the brain! However, I am glad enough to feel it on any terms. Anything better than black depression, which may be the sign of religious mania.

If one can take Conrad's vocation as his religion then his black depressions do indeed indicate religious mania and his recognition of this state in better times indicates an ability to appraise its lack of validity. In this respect, it is interesting to consider one of the earliest letters Conrad wrote to his aunt (in March 1890) before his Congo experience. The occasion of the letter was the recent death of his aunt's husband:

Life rolls on in bitter floods, like the grim and brutal ocean under a sky covered with dark clouds, and there are days when the poor souls who have embarked on the disheartening voyage imagine that never has a ray of sun been able to break through that dreary veil; that never will the sun shine again; that it has never even existed! Eyes that the sharp wind of grief has filled with tears must be pardoned if they refuse to see the blue; lips that have tasted the bitterness of life must be pardoned if they refuse to utter words of hope. Especially must the unhappy souls be pardoned who have elected to make the pilgrimage on foot, who skirt the shore and gaze comprehendingly upon the horror of the struggle, the joy of victory, and the deep despair of the vanquished; these souls who receive the castaway with a smile of pity and a word of prudence or reproach on their lips. They especially must be pardoned, "for they know not what they do!"

This is how I feel about him, about you, about those with you; but I ask you to remember, I beg you to understand, that it is permitted a soul dwelling in a body torment-ed by pain, exhausted with illness, to have

these moments of aberration. Under the stress of physical suffering the mind sees falsely, the heart errs, the soul unguided wanders in an abyss.

Now that soul is delivered; it has recognized its error. It requires your pardon. You must give it, wholly, without reserve, with complete forgetfulness of your personal suffering; not as a sacrifice, but as a duty. So given, your pardon will incline a little towards the human ideal of Divine Justice, towards that Justice which is the only hope, the only refuge, of souls who have fought, suffered, and fallen in the struggle with life.

Here we have a sympathetic correspondent consoling a bereaved one, speaking of souls in a conventional religious sense but also of Divine Justice as a human ideal. The theme is forgiveness and the harshness of existence, but the early sentences seem almost prophetic if applied to the writer. Perhaps Conrad could write in such a vein here because he had experience of the feeling (in Marseilles, maybe); certainly he was to reach this state of mind later. More importantly, though, he recognizes the falseness of such pessimism; pessimism akin to that shown in those letters to Cunninghame Graham at the time of The Rescue. In fact, in Conrad's fictional world, the outlook of Axel Heyst, regarding "Man on this earth" as "an unforeseen accident which does not stand close investigation" (V, 196) and choosing non-involvement as his course of action, would fit very well into those letters and it may be that Victory

represents Conrad's fictional rejection of that earlier pessimism. Conrad rejects it directly in an essay on "Books":

It must not be supposed that I claim for the artist in fiction the freedom of moral Nihilism. I would require from him many acts of faith of which the first would be the cherishing of an undying hope; and hope it will not be contested, implies all the piety of effort and renunciation. It is the God sent form of trust in the magic force and inspiration belonging to the life of this earth. We are inclined to forget that the way of excellence is in the intellectual, as distinguished from emotional humility. What one feels so hopelessly barren in declared pessimism is just its arrogance. It seems as if the discovery made by many men at various times that there is much evil in the world were a source of proud and unholy joy unto some of the modern writers. (NLL, 8)

This was written in 1905, but there are few signs of hope in The Secret Agent which Conrad was about to write, illustrating perhaps that his philosophy was very much a matter of mood. If anything, The Secret Agent seems to show all the elements that Conrad was condemning.

Conrad is consistent, though, in applying religious terms to his art, however playfully these may be used. A successful author, in his eyes, becomes a kind of literary holy man, for example:

We live like a family of anchorites. From time to time a pious pilgrim appartenant à la grande fraternité des lettres comes to pay a visit to the celebrated Joseph Conrad—and to obtain his blessing. Sometimes he gets it and sometimes he does not, for the
hermit is severe and dyspeptic.42

This seems almost sardonic in tone (it follows another battle with The Rescue and the beginning of "Heart of Darkness") but the expansion of such imagery in a letter to Arthur Symons in 1908 is apparently used to convey a sincere approach, especially since Conrad had also used the same set of images in a letter to Garnett the day before:

One thing that I am certain of is that I have approached the object of my task, things human, in a spirit of piety. The earth is a temple where there is going on a mystery play, childish and poignant, ridiculous and awful enough, in all conscience. Once in I've tried to behave decently. I have not degraded any quasi-religious sentiment by tears and groans; and if I have been amused or indignant, I've neither grinned nor gnashed my teeth. In other words, I've tried to write with dignity, not out of regard for myself, but for the sake of the spectacle, the play with an obscure beginning and an unfathomable denouement. I don't think that this has been noticed. It is your penitent beating the floor with his forehead and the ecstatic worshipper at the rails that are obvious to the public eye. The man standing quietly in the shadow of the pillar, if noticed at all, runs the risk of being suspected of sinister designs.43

Conrad had reported to Garnett the previous day that, according to Symons, "I gloat over scenes of cruelty and am obsessed by visions of spilt blood,"44 thus


part of the purpose of this elaborate imagery is to repudiate the charge (which he had, in fact, done much more simply earlier in the month). The Secret Agent was his most recent novel at this stage, the pervasive ironic tone of which embraced both the grotesque dismemberment of Stevie and the violent death of Mr. Verloc, and can appear to be either callous or detached, depending on individual interpretation. For the present purpose, however, it is significant that Conrad chose to defend his art in religious terms, and his protestations of "piety towards things human" were to be repeated six weeks later in a letter to E.V. Lucas which also claimed that "a man who puts forth the secret of his imagination to the world accomplishes, as it were, a religious rite." Some years later, when struggling with Suspense, it may well be the temple of literature that Conrad has in mind when he writes:

I can't get my teeth into the novel. I am altogether in the dark as to what it is about. I am depressed and exasperated at the same time and I only wish I could say to myself that I don't care. But I do care. A horrid state. Don't forget me in your prayers. You who have never strayed beyond the precincts of the Temple.


47 "To Jack and Ada Galsworthy," 10 May 1921, LL, II, 257. It is certainly unlikely that this comment was meant literally to denote orthodox religious belief since Galsworthy had also strayed from that temple,
The use of language here is still figurative, of course, but the comparisons are plain and emphasise Conrad's acute sense of integrity towards his art. Two letters to Garnett in 1904 reflect his unease at writing articles for magazines, the first of which concerns the edition of the *Speaker* in which Conrad's article on Anatole France appeared. Conrad writes, "Strengthen his faint soul by pointing out that the thing is low down and commonplace enough to please the divine mediocrity of the only god he knows--his public."\(^{48}\)

There is a great irony in this point of view, of course, for whilst Conrad's major works were not written to pander to public taste (and he was suitably bitter about works that were), he was still naturally anxious to be read, since this alone provided him with his livelihood. The second letter shows a still greater sense of apostasy in writing for magazines (and, therefore, for money);

A few days later I saw (and read) in the 'Standard' a warm and gentlemanly appreciation of the dumminess of your dummy. Amen! And I beheld the bald summit of my ambition. Some day I shall write a thing that'll be reviewed thus and not otherwise. Then in the dead of night, in the woods about the

holding the ethics of Christianity in high esteem whilst rejecting its dogmas and divine foundation, To an unrecorded correspondent, in fact, Galsworthy wrote (in terms similar to Conrad's), "In this age I think we all have to find ourselves--no glib formulas will help us, and those people who believe in flog­ging the dead horse of outworn religions are dead wood in our tree" (M.E. Reynolds, *Memories of John Galsworthy* [London: Robert Hale, 1936], p. 81).

Cearne, wearing the cope and the pointed mitre of a High Priest, in the secrecy of a persecuted faith, by the light of a torch held by David clad in the white vestments—you shall bury my tame and impotent soul. You'll bury it alive—by God—and go home smiling ironically, and sleep no more that night.

The art of literature would, it seems, be the "persecuted faith."

There is a note of self-mockery here, showing that Conrad was aware of the exalted plane to which he elevated his vocation and could see it in a wider perspective at times. But despite the wry humour of his exaggerated imagery, one can still perceive serious intent beneath. To be universally popular, he seems to say, one must relinquish the essential integrity of true writers and to do that would be to betray one's creed.

iv. Conrad's Comments on Christianity

It is against this background that Conrad's comments on Christianity must be set. Two letters to Garnett are frequently cited in this connection but the context requires careful consideration. The earliest of these is chiefly concerned with the press reviews of the Youth volume before it turns to Christianity:

J. Bl'wood sent me word that the thing sells decently and that if the Christmas does not kill it or if ...

It's strange how I always, from the age of fourteen, disliked the Christian religion, its doctrines, ceremonies and festivals. Presentiment that some day it will work my undoing, I suppose. Now it's quite on the cards that the Bethlehem legend will kill the epic, and the bogie tale, and the touching, tender, noble captain Newcombe—Colonel Whalley thing. Hard. Isn't it? And the most galling feature is that nobody—not a single Bishop of them—believes in it. The business in the stable isn't convincing; whereas my atmosphere (vignee views) can be positively breathed.

These comments are clearly a reaction to the news that the presence of Christianity could have effects on his livelihood; not a carefully thought out refutation of theological premises. Evident in Conrad's remarks is the exasperation that, because of the religion's hypocritical followers the fruits of his vocation (the new source of his devotion) could be spoiled. In such circumstances, too much could easily be made of Conrad's professed dislike of the religion since the age of fourteen and of the general tenor of the comments.

The second attack on Christianity is again connected with literature; the catalyst this time being a discussion of Tolstoy (the subject of a book by Garnett that Conrad had just read). Having spoken of the Russian's "anti-sensualism," Conrad continues:

Moreover the base from which he starts—Christianity—is distasteful to me. I am not blind to its services but the absurd

oriental fable from which it starts irritates me. Great, improving, softening, compassionate it may be but it has lent itself with amazing facility to cruel distortion and is the only religion which, with its impossible standards, has brought an infinity of anguish to innumerable souls—on this earth.

Such comments pick up the remarks he made on Christian doctrines to his aunt and Miss Watson in the 1890's, but once again this can be seen as a reaction and, in this case, an earlier letter (to Galsworthy) is pertinent. Having pronounced his friend "a humanitarian moralist," Conrad writes:

I don't believe that it will ever lead you into the gratuitous atrocity, of, say, Ivan Tillyth [sic] or the monstrous stupidity of such a thing as the Kreutzer Sonata, for instance; where an obvious degenerate not worth looking at twice, totally unfitted not only for married life but for any sort of life, is presented as a sympathetic victim of some sort of sacred truth that is supposed to live within him.

Clearly, Conrad feels that, within the works he cites, Tolstoy is moralising. The "anti-sensualism" he spoke of to Garnett is an important ingredient of The Kreutzer Sonata and it may well be that Conrad regarded Tolstoy's views as an example of "cruel distortion." The cause of the outburst, therefore, would be what Conrad saw as an attempt by a fellow artist to propagate a particularly ascetic view of


52 "To John Galsworthy," Wednesday 1908, LL, II 77.
the religion. This reading of Conrad's complaint would tend to support E.K. Hay's feeling that too much can be made of these remarks to Garnett (though for different reasons). Hay comments:

If my subject were Conrad's religion, I should argue that... Conrad is himself no mean advocate of "a purer form of Christianity" and that his religious scepticism goes little deeper than the impasse many reach when finding that the presuppositions and commitments necessary to maintaining an active faith, especially in respect to men outside the faith, are odious. 53

Unfortunately she does not elaborate on this view and, apart from citing Conrad's refusal to join a Protestant club (noted earlier), does not support it. The remarks to Garnett, she feels, "are not borne out in Conrad's life and other writings." 54

This, of course, remains to be seen, but before moving on one should also consider J.E. Saveson's comment that, in the second of the two letters to Garnett, "Both the substance and the phrasing recall Nietzsche's analysis of spiritualized cruelty and his attack on the ascetic ideal." 55 Conrad mentioned the philosopher in a letter to Ford in 1903, 56 but before

53 Hay, pp. 192-93.

54 Ibid., p. 192a.


56 "To Ford Madox Hueffer," Tuesday 1903, LL, I, 313. Certainly the following passage from Beyond Good and Evil is interesting when applied to Lord Jim. Nietzsche is talking about the man who attempts independence:
accepting Nietzsche as directing Conrad's thoughts on Christianity one ought to consider that the views expressed in the 1914 letter to Garnett were not new. Gautier had "attacked Christianity because it had given mankind sadness and anxiety, with a sense of sin and shame" in the preface to *Madamoiselle de Maupin*, and this was long before the advent of Nietzsche. This is not to say that Conrad had read Gautier's novel (though he may well have done, since he was well read in French literature), but it does indicate that there was nothing exceptional in his strictures on the religion. Conrad concluded his letter: "However I don't suppose these views of mine can interest you and I only meant to send you a word of thanks. Why I should fly out like this on Xianity which has given to mankind the beautiful Xmas pudding I don't know, unless that, like some good dogs, I get snappish as I grow old."58

He ventures into a labyrinth, he multiplies by a thousand the dangers which life as such already brings with it, not the smallest of which is that no one can behold how and where he goes astray, is cut off from others, and is torn to pieces limb from limb by some cave-minotaur of conscience. If such a one is destroyed, it takes place so far from the understanding of men that they neither feel it nor sympathize—and he can no longer go back! He can no longer go back even to the pity of men! (trans. R.J. Hollindale *Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973*, p. 42).


This final comment suggests that the attack was a passing impulse rather than the expression of a pervading philosophy, provoked (as has been seen) by the premise of a fellow artist. But he used the argument in his fiction too, describing the condition of M. George in his obsession with Rita as "the state like that of some strange wild faiths that get hold of mankind with the cruel mystic grip of unattainable perfection, robbing them of both liberty and felicity on earth" (AG, 140). This comparison, however, signifies not so much an attack on religion as an indication of the extent of George's plight, which is even more serious, in fact, since "A faith presents one with some hope" (AG, 140). That Christianity can be one of these "strange wild faiths" is shown by the "Big, ascetic, gaunt body" of the old Basque priest (AG, 115). But this is encroaching on fictional usage, where purpose is, inevitably, more complex and sustained; and that must await its time in a later chapter.

These two extracts apart, Conrad's comments on Christianity are less direct and less detailed. The reception of The Arrow of Gold, for example, caused Conrad to write (again to Garnett) in a somewhat cynical vein about Christian newspapers:

The Church Times (High) the Guardian (Evangelical) and the Methodist Times (2 notices) are most sympathetic and--yes--almost intelligent. I am not joking. Who would have thought it possible... My misfortune is that I can't swallow any
Literature again provides the occasion for the remarks. Conrad's professed inability to "swallow any formula" made him (in his eyes) somewhat different from "the public" which would "swallow anything":

It will swallow Hall Caine and John Galsworthy, Victor Hugo and Martin Tupper. It is an ostrich, a clown, a giant, a bottomless sack. It is sublime. It has apparently no eyes and no entrails, like a slug, and yet it can weep and suffer. It has swallowed Christianity, Buddhism, Mahomedanism and the Gospel of Mrs Eddy. And it is perfectly capable, from the height of its secular stability, of looking down upon the artist as a mere windlestraw!" 60

The religious references in this statement are frequently quoted but the context (usually ignored) is once again literary, and it is clear that not everything the public swallows is bad since the list includes Galsworthy, to whom the letter was written. There is no evidence to suggest that Conrad disliked Hugo either, whom he had read in Polish as a child (PR, 72). If the intention is to show the lack of discernment on the part of the public it may be that Conrad is showing this by setting the lesser lights of Hall Caine and Martin Tupper against two writers of whom he approved and revealing similar lack of


discernment with the bathos of "Mrs Eddy" following the three famous world religions. Seen thus, the apparent dismissal of the religions, which seems obvious when quoted out of context, becomes too equivocal for any strong assertion to be made.

Two more of Conrad's better known and often quoted comments can also be seen to share the vocational background. The letter to Garnett in which he states "I would rather grasp the solid satisfaction of my wrong-headedness and shake my fist at the idiotic mystery of Heaven," also announced the decision to abandon The Sisters, whilst a letter to Cunninghame Graham, in which Conrad had written "I shall be inexorable like destiny and shall look upon your sufferings with the idiotic serenity of a benevolent Creator (I don't know that the ben:Crea: is serene--but if he is (as they say) then he must be idiotic) looking at the precious mess he has made of his only job," was written in the midst of traumas about The Rescuer and, indeed, the day after he had written to Garnett about the loss of his friend Krieger through a dispute over a debt.

At times Conrad could indulge in sardonic humour at the expense of Christian exclusiveness; an example being a letter written to Cunninghame Graham during the Boer War:


Allah is careless. The loss of your MS. is a pretty bad instance; but look—here's his very own chosen people (of assorted denominations) getting banged about and not a sign from the sky but a snowfall and a fiendish frost. Perhaps Kipling's Recessional (if He understood it—which I doubt) had offended Him.

During the First World War he wrote with similar irony, this time attacking the jingoistic concept of "God on our side":

The age of miracles is past—and the Yahudi God (Who rules us) seems to develop Central European affinities. He's played out as a patron. Why not turn over the whole Establishment and the Non-confst organisations to the Devil and see what'll happen.

At times a streak of Polish anti-semitism seems evident:

I am making preparations to receive The Impenitent Thief which (sic) all the honours due to his distinguished position. I always thought a lot of that man. He was no philistine anyhow—and no Jew, since he had no eye for the shent-per-shent business the other fellow spotted at once.

This view is consistent with that expressed in the earlier letter to his aunt where one of his reasons for rejecting the doctrine of expiation was that it


smacked of "bargaining with the Eternal." When he once more complains about the "Jewish God" (this time to Garnett, immediately prior to Christmas 1921) the occasion is literature again; in this case the non-arrival of Garnett's copy of Notes on Life and Letters:

There must be a special devil with a mission to make trouble between us. As you know the Jewish God (under whom you and I were born) is not direct in his methods. It would have been simpler to put hatred into our hearts without all that low intriguing. But I always suspected him of being a Futile Person. . . .

Our best wishes my dear Edward. In this world where the seasons of curses and congratulations are still ruled by the Jewish God it is not prudent to be more precise—at least for us incorrigible Gentiles.

But I commend you to the Merciful, the Compassionate—the same whom I would like to look on me at times. Of course I know He can't do much. Still...

Finally, another well-known comment to Garnett comes after Conrad has expressed difficulties of writing once more, this time on Under Western Eyes:

I wish I could believe in an intelligent, benevolent Supreme Being to whom I could leave the task of paying my debts—such debts as the one I owe you for instance. And perhaps there is one. I don't know but it is clear that unless there be a God to repay you in some heavenly coin I shall die in your debt.

v. Summary

The background to Conrad's comments on religion is important, therefore, and almost exclusively to do with literature—usually his own. This had become his raison d'être to such an extent that he would lash out at anything which seemed to obstruct its progress, be it less talented yet more successful writers or religion. To Cunninghame Graham he once wrote, "It's a pity my style is not more popular and a thousand pities I don't write less slow. Of such that do is the Kingdom of the Earth. I don't care a damn for the best heaven ever invented by Jew or Gentile. And that's a fact." Written whilst he was struggling with *Lord Jim*, this at least shows the extent of his aspirations, clearly confined to this plane of existence.

It is when Conrad feels that he is not fulfilling his vocation that pessimism sets in. He was clearly at a low ebb between his return from the Congo and his berth on the *Torrens* (January-November 1891) and his uncle's accusation of pessimism relates to this period, during which, of course, apart from his health problems, he was not following his calling. The creative torpor he experienced over *The Rescue(r)*, which he could easily have regarded as another

failure of vocation, seems to have provided the occasion (if not the substance) of his gloomy letters to Cunninghame Graham.

For the later Conrad, therefore, the object of intense devotion (akin to that of a faith and demanding, as it were, prodigious sacrifices from its neophyte) was literature, the pursuit of which exercised a controlling influence over the state of his mind and his moods. It attracted, in other words, the kind of devotion his father had given to Christianity and to Poland.

About his attitude towards Christianity, it is clear that Conrad was not a practising believer and, indeed, would not follow institutionalised religion, which would come under the heading of "formulas" he could not accept. It is not easy, therefore, to accept Cunninghame Graham's view that Conrad held "the older faith . . . not only as a faith, but as a bulwark against Oriental barbarism." When rejecting the Protestant club, he claimed to hold "a great regard and sympathy" for the Church of England, but that may simply have been a tactful comment to his Protestant correspondent. It may also indicate, however, that it was the formula of Christianity that he rejected. Clearly he doubted its mystical beginnings and disliked certain of its doctrines especially if


70 Quoted in Hay, p. 193.
they hinted at a quid pro quo arrangement with the Deity, encouraged latent hypocrisy, brought about "anguish" by insisting on "impossible standards," or led to the exploitation of devoted individual followers. He seems to have held a low opinion of its clergy (also reflected in the novels, as will be seen later), and certainly had no liking for claims of Christian exclusiveness. Some of these are elements of the formula, some, simply, the faults of the followers. In Conrad's eyes, then, Christianity needed to be less mystical, less demanding and more realistic in its appraisal of human frailties and emotions.

This is not a total disavowal of religion, therefore, and complaining about the Deity when things go wrong is not at all uncommon, even among the most fervent of believers (some, indeed, interpret Christ's words on the cross in this way). Conrad was certainly far from going to the extremes of disbelief and extolling science and material progress as substitutes for dwindling spirituality. When a book appeared, suggesting that the arts should be enrolled to popularize science as they once had religion, Conrad was instantly antagonistic and went on in his review to explain just why arts and science would not merge:

Many a man has heard or read and believes that the earth goes round the sun; one small blob of mud among several others, spinning ridiculously with a waggling motion like a top about to fall. This is the Copernican system, and the man believes in the system without often knowing as much about it as its name. But while watching a
sunset he sheds his belief; he sees the sun as a small and useful object, the servant of his needs and the witness of his ascending effort, sinking slowly behind a range of mountains, and then he holds the system of Ptolemy. (NLL, 73-74)

Conrad felt that the author of the book was "obsessed by science, haunted and shadowed by it, until . . . bewildered into awe" (NLL, 73) and he concluded that "the light of Transfiguration which has illumined the profoundest mysteries of our sinful souls is not the light of the generating stations" (NLL, 75).

Conrad was also antagonistic to claims that science, through spiritualism, could prove immortality. In 1908 he ridiculed the idea in "The Black Mate" and in his essay, "The Life Beyond," vehemently refuted the whole proposition. As far as Conrad was concerned, "an Immortality liable at any moment to betray itself fatuously by the forcible incantations of Mr. Stead or Professor Crookes is scarcely worth having" (NLL, 68-69), and he continued:

And to believe that these manifestations, which the author evidently takes for modern miracles, will stay our tottering faith; to believe that the new psychology has, only the other day, discovered man to be a "spiritual mystery," is really carrying humility towards that universal provider, Science, too far. (NLL, 69)

The essay concludes with an interesting paragraph:

We moderns have complicated our old perplexities to the point of absurdity; our perplexities older than religion itself. It is not for nothing that for so many years the priest, mounting the steps of the altar,
murmurs, "Why art thou sad, my soul, and why dost thou trouble me?" Since the day of Creation two veiled figures, Doubt and Melancholy, are pacing endlessly in the sunshine of the world. What humanity needs is not the promise of scientific immortality, but compassionate pity in this life and infinite mercy on the Day of Judgment. (NLL, 69)

In many ways these final extracts epitomize Conrad's attitude towards religion as well as towards modern progress. There is scorn in the reference to "modern miracles" but the "tottering faith," though initially related to the view of the scientist, is obviously applicable to Conrad, as are the two veiled figures. "Doubt and Melancholy" haunted the course of Conrad's literary vocation just as here he mentions their haunting of mankind. Perplexity "older than religion itself" implies that religion is a man-made invention (which would be consistent with the "best known heaven ever invented by Jew or Gentile"), but this is then set against the traditional backdrop of "the day of Creation" and "the Day of Judgment." Unable to accept the "formula" of religion in all its details and doctrines yet similarly unwilling to renounce the concept in its entirety; recognizing the validity of scientific discoveries yet sardonically critical of the prominence science was acquiring; aware of a vague allegiance to both and an adherence to neither, Conrad tried to tread a middle path, acknowledging the beneficial aspects of each and similarly condemning their excesses. This precarious balance was affected by the fluctuating state of his
vocation into which he pumped all the fervour and
devotion of a religious faith. When his creativity
was at a low ebb, science's gloomy prognostications
loomed powerfully in his mind; when religion encroa-
ched on his vocation he would bitterly denounce it;
when science attempted a similar encroachment, he
would attack its presumption. Truly he could not
live according to another's formula and the fate he
wryly envisaged through supporting neither Catholic
nor Protestant could apply also to his conflict be-
tween the spiritual and material worlds:

So you see now I have got to stand between
the two, a prey to the first inferior devil
that may come along. My only hope of es-
caping the eternal fires is my utter in-
significance. I shall lie low on Judgment
Day, and will probably be overlooked."

Conrad seems, therefore, to have established a
shifting existence between spiritual and material
extremes, and if (as J.H. Buckley claims), the "great
polar ideas of the Victorian period were . . . the
idea of progress and the idea of decadence,"72 Conrad
was doubtful, not only of the enthusiasm for the
former view, but also (in his less harrowing literary
moments) of the potential despair of the latter. It
may, in fact, have been a desire to produce an all-
embracing world view which would accommodate each
valid philosophy, that prompted him to write:

71 Quoted in Hay, p. 193n.

72 The Triumph of Time (Cambridge, Mass.: Har-
The ethical view of the universe involves us at last in so many cruel and absurd contradictions, where the last vestiges of faith, hope, charity, and even of reason itself, seem ready to perish, that I have come to suspect that the aim of creation cannot be ethical at all. I would fondly believe that its object is purely spectacular: a spectacle for awe, love, adoration, or hate, if you like, but in this view—and in this view alone—never for despair. Those visions, delicious or poignant, are a moral end in themselves. The rest is our affair. . . . In this view there is room for every religion except for the inverted creed of impiety, the mask and cloak of arid despair; for every joy and every sorrow, for every fair dream, for every charitable hope. (PR, 92–93)
CHAPTER FIVE

CONRAD'S TREATMENT OF ISLAM AND HIS SOURCES

i. Conrad's Sources

The use of Islam is such a feature of Conrad's early fiction that it is pertinent to preface any discussion of these works with a consideration of his knowledge of the religion. Conrad's Muslims are usually bigoted, frequently violent, invariably unscrupulous and always complacently exclusive. They constantly accuse the Europeans of being unbelievers, infidels and sons of Satan, and it seems important to ascertain whether Conrad uses them for some more profound purposes than at first appears. If it is accepted that he had specific reasons for producing Christian bigots such as Podmore and Therese, why should this not also be the case with his Muslims?

To many Victorians, the picture of the Conradian Muslim (given above) would have constituted the standard Arab (to many Europeans it still does), and it is worth looking at the Arab with whom Conrad had the closest connection—Syed Mohsin, the owner of the Vidar—to see if this was the case. Clearly it was not. According to Norman Sherry's sources, Syed Mohsin was "very well known and liked in Singapore by
many of the European community,"¹ and it seems that there were other Syeds in the city who were equally well regarded.² This is not the case with Conrad's Syed, Abdulla, in the novels. Syed Abdulla, Sherry reveals, was the son of Syed Mohsin but does not seem to have taken over the trading concerns of his father until long after Conrad had left eastern waters for good.³ Conrad still cites "Syed Abdullah" as being Almayer's enemy in A Personal Record but the name is such a common Islamic one that there may have been more than one Arab trader of that name in the region.⁴

Conrad certainly knew about many Muslim practices and laws. It is evident from the novels that he knew that a Muslim should not eat the meat of the pig, should not consume alcohol, should pray towards Mecca at certain times of day and is allowed up to four wives. He knew about the pilgrimage to Mecca and the


² Buckley also makes favourable mention of a Syed Omar and a Syed Allie; Buckley, pp. 563-64.


⁴ The name is spelt "Abdulla" in the novels and "Abdullah" in A Personal Record (PR, 82) and "Because of the Dollars" (WT, 177). Technically speaking, it should be spelt "Abdu'l'llah." In the absence of a standard form of transliteration of Arabic names in the nineteenth century, many variations in spelling will be noted. Syed, for example, can also be spelt Saiyyid, Siyyid, Sayyid, Seiyid, Seyyid or Saiyid. Original spelling has been retained in all quotations and, to avoid confusion, Conrad's version of Seyd is retained for the text.
title—Hadji—that goes with it. Whether he knew
more or was aware only of the many corrupt practices
that have bedevilled Islam is an intriguing question.
In An Outcast of the Islands, for example, Abdulla and
the blind Omar are horrified at the idea of a Christ-
ian— an unbeliever— living in their midst, yet this
in no way contradicts Quranic prescriptions. On the
other hand, Islam proscribes theft and murder, the
very activities Omar has been most proficient in. If
it could be proved that Conrad knew this—and he
would surely have known that murder and robbery were
not part of Muhammad's scheme of things—one can look
at the conduct of his Muslims with a different atti-
tude than if one assumes that he shared the common
European prejudices. Perhaps the attitude depends
very much on the reader, but, judged against a know-
ledge of the religion, Conrad's Muslims can be seen
to achieve a much greater significance.

There is, however, no indication in his corres-
pondence of just how deeply he had investigated the
Faith. Occasionally he would give Cunninghame
Graham an Islamic greeting such as "Istaghfir Allah!
O! Sheik Mohammed! I take refuge with the One the
Invincible," with an air of familiarity with the
subject, (written in a letter following Graham's wan-
derings in Morocco disguised as an Arab), and in A

5 Qur'ān 5:7.

6 "To R.B. Cunninghame Graham," 1 May 1898,
Letter 15, Conrad to Cunninghame Graham, p. 84.
Personal Record he likens his attraction for the sea to "that formula of Mohammedan faith the Mussulman father whispers into the ear of his new-born infant, making him one of the faithful almost with his first breath" (PR, 110); but there is little else.

What knowledge he did have could have come from first hand experience during his time in the East Indies when working for Syed Mohsin in Singapore, but this seems unlikely when one considers Sir Hugh Clifford's accusation that Conrad knew nothing about Malays; a charge which Conrad cheerfully admitted (PR, IV). If he knew nothing (or very little) about Malays, what did he know of Arabs?

His only other direct opportunity would have come during his stay at Stanley Falls when, as he relates in "Geography and Some Explorers," he was surrounded by "the yet unbroken power of the Congo Arabs" (LE, 17). Certainly, at Stanley Falls, he could have heard of Islamic fanaticism for he was there only five years after the death of General Gordon at the hands of the Mahdists and only one year after rumours had reached Nicholas Tobback at the Falls that there were plans to kill all the Europeans and establish a Central African empire with its centre in Khartoum. This last notion was scarcely feasible, there being about a thousand miles of almost impenetrable jungle between Stanley Falls and the Sudan, but it may have seemed real to the iso-

7 Slade, King Leopold's Congo, p. 98.
lated Europeans. Tobback was still at the Falls during Conrad's visit. 8

It seems more likely, though, that Conrad's information was derived from his reading, which, in many cases, would have supported the concept of Muslims as being a violent, intolerant, fanatical people if the press formed any part of it. Gordon's death was greatly publicised and the news of the jihad (Holy War) against the infidel, called by the self-proclaimed Mahdi (a Messianic figure for Islam) would thus have reached many Victorians. Similar tales of Islamic fanaticism (though rather less publicised) were also coming out of Iran (with the persecution of Baha'is, recorded by E.G. Browne) 9 and Morocco (with the intimidation of Christian travellers, mentioned by Cunninghame Graham). 10 Thus the equation of piety with violence, frequently encountered among Conrad's Muslims—Omar (OJ), the men of Sherif Ali (LJ) and Daman (Re)—would be well understood by Victorian readers and could be what they would expect from a Muslim. Would they know, however, that this was not the way a Muslim was supposed to be. What did they, or could they (and Conrad) know about the precepts of Islam?

In fact, they could have learnt a great deal. By 1880 there were three full translations of the

8 Sherry, Conrad's Western World, p. 68.


10 Mogreb-El-Aksa (London: Heinemann, 1898).
Qu'ran in print and numerous books about the religion, ranging from Christian condemnation to thoughtful appraisal.\textsuperscript{11} Even some of the former kind—such as that of J.W.H. Stobart, written for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge—could admit that "Mahomet speaks of the Christians much more tenderly than the Jews,"\textsuperscript{12} and that the idea of predestination was "more extreme in the opinion of the followers than in actual doctrine."\textsuperscript{13} Stobart regarded the Islamic images of the afterlife as possessing elements of "grossness and possible impurity" (reflecting the Christian preoccupation with sex as sin in doing so),\textsuperscript{14} and Sir William Muir showed a similar influence when levying charges of sensuality against the Prophet.\textsuperscript{15} Muir complained that Islam kept the people away from Christianity,\textsuperscript{16} but others proved more sympathetic; so much so that one writer could

\begin{enumerate}
\item See Appendix A.
\item \textit{Islam and Its Founder} (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1878), p. 90n.
\item Stobart, pp. 96-97.
\item Ibid., p. 106.
\item \textit{The Life of Mohammad} (1861; Edinburgh: John Grant, 1912), pp. 510ff.
\item Muir, p. 522.
\end{enumerate}
comment of Muslims: "Notwithstanding the unfavourable opinion entertained by many—principally in the Christian world—against their religious principles, I must, in strict justice, add that I have found these persons liberal and intelligent, sincere, and most faithful friends."\textsuperscript{17} Elsewhere, the same writer comments: "It is worthy of remark that the Prophet, as well as his direct successors, had Christian and idolatrous servants in their service, and that it is nowhere mentioned that any violence was ever used to induce them to become Moslems."\textsuperscript{18}

Others seemed to have shared this view since, at the end of the century, the editor of the posthumous publication of Sir Richard Burton's essay, "El Islam", could write that since the essay had been written (in the 1850's) "a change has taken place among thinking men in the estimate of El Islam among the religions of the world" and could go on to cite Lane-Poole and Bosworth Smith as writers who had "cleared away many misconceptions concerning the 'Saving Faith,' and discussed its merits as a humanizing creed."\textsuperscript{19} Some Victorians, in fact, painfully aware of the shortcomings of Christianity, began to see Islam in a new light. Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, who wrote a series of articles about the future of Islam in 1882 and was

\textsuperscript{17} John P. Brown, \textit{The Darvishes or Oriental Spiritualism} (1868; London: Frank Cass, 1963), p. v.

\textsuperscript{18} Brown, p. 76.

later to become a friend of Cunninghame Graham, was one who became increasingly attracted by its doctrines. 20

Thus there were sympathetic writers among those who wrote of Islam and its Prophet; writers who could dispel the ideas of forcible proselytization being part of the creed. Burton, in his essay, commented: "The protege of El Islam paid a small capitation tax, and was allowed to practise his faith and to worship his God as his law directed." 21 The Qur'an, in fact, would have been found to prohibit conversion by force. 22

20 Elizabeth Longford, A Pilgrimage of Passion: The Life of Wilfrid Scawen Blunt (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979). Two incidents in particular served to demonstrate to Blunt the failings of Christians during his investigation of Islam, curiously coincidental in a Conradian setting. The first of these came while Blunt was in Jeddah from which, his biographer relates, "he carried away with him a growing faith in Islam—and an 'ugly' story of Christendom" (Longford, p. 168). This "ugly" story was the incident of the Jeddah in which the ship, carrying hundreds of Muslim pilgrims, was abandoned by its British crew. This incident formed the basis for the first part of Lord Jim (Sherry, Conrad's Eastern World, pp. 41-64).

The second incident came in India when Blunt was farewelling some Muslim friends at a railway station only for a white man to order the natives away. A row ensued between Blunt and the other white man (who happened to be Chief Medical Officer of the Punjab) and Blunt took legal action to enforce an apology. The coincidence comes with the name of the city where this occurred; the city was Patna (Longford, pp. 203-04). Blunt, apparently, wrote about the Jeddah incident in his fortnightly articles on Islam, but it is not clear whether he also wrote about his Patna experience or whether this attracted any publicity outside India. Conrad mentions Blunt as an acquaintance of Cunninghame Graham in a letter dated 30 July 1898 (Letter 21, Conrad to Cunninghame Graham, p. 94).

21 Burton, El Islam, p. 332.

The only book of this kind that Conrad is known to have read is Cunninghame Graham's *Mogreb-El-Acksia* which, being published in 1898, could only have influenced *Lord Jim* and parts of *The Rescue* of those novels which have Muslim characters. Graham's dedication revealed his belief that Muslims thought they could attain paradise by killing unbelievers and also showed a widespread superstition (amongst the Moroccan believers at least) that Christians could cast spells. The first of these comments may explain why *Lord Jim* "was to be murdered mainly on religious grounds. ... A single act of piety (and so far infinitely meritorious)" (*LJ*, 310). Graham's condemnation of the Sherifs in his book—hypocritical parasites who "occupy a semi-religious, semi-political position" and who cadge from the rich "for Allah and His Holy Prophet's sake"—may have contributed to the character of Sherif Ali in *Lord Jim* (at least to the extent of making him a Sherif), whilst his criticism of the missionaries as living in a "dream world" (conversions being a rarity), may have contributed to the gullible missionary who thinks he is converting Gentleman Brown. Graham, whilst remaining a Christian attacked the travellers "who thundered through the land, Bible and gun in hand" and felt that "With a fair field, without the adventitious


24 Ibid., p. 24.

25 Ibid., p. x.
aids of Christian goods, the Muslim wins hands down" because Islamic racial equality contrasted favourably with the white supremacy of Christianity. He also revealed the Arabs' belief that "all Christians are influenced in all they do by money"; that, indeed, "the official Christian's God is money."

A more potent source for Conrad's knowledge of Islam seems to be Sir Richard Burton's Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Mecca, first published in 1855 and reprinted in 1879. There is no direct evidence that Conrad read the book but it is certainly the kind of book he would have read given the fascination he had with explorers such as Livingstone, Mungo Park and Burton himself, revealed in the essay "Geography and Some Explorers." To this can be added certain textual evidence which suggests that Burton's narrative was indeed Conrad's major source for his knowledge of Islam. There are too many close correspondences between Burton's book and Conrad's novels for it to be mere coincidence as the following examples illustrate:

26 Cunningham Graham, Mogreb-El-Aksa, p. 123.

27 Ibid., p. 23.

28 Ibid., p. 43.

29 Richard F. Burton, Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to El-Medinah and Mecca, 3 vols. (London: Longmans, 1855-56). Further references to this book will be made in parentheses within the text, cited as "Burton."
To the invalid you say, "There is nothing the matter, please Allah, except the health." (Burton, I, 77)

"There is no misfortune--please God--but the sight?" (Abdulla to the blind Omar, OI, 122)

Allah makes all things easy! (Burton, I, 253)

"Allah makes everything easy," interjected Babalatchi, piously, from a distance. (OI, 131)

"Repentance: I take refuge with Allah..." (Burton, I, 107)
* A religious formula used when compelled to mention anything abominable or polluting to the lips of a pious man. (Burton, I, 107n)

"Penitence! I take refuge with my God ... How can he live under my eyes with that woman who is of the Faith? Scandal! O abomination!" (OI, 120)

The generous is Allah's friend. (Burton, I, 242)

He was largely charitable because the charitable man is the friend of Allah. (OI, 110)

After touching the skin of a strange woman, it is not lawful in El Islam to pray without absolution. For this reason, when a fair dame shakes hands with you, she wraps up her fingers in a kerchief or in the end of her veil. (Burton, II, 47n)

Abdulla glanced at her swiftly for a second, and then, with perfect good breeding, fixed his eyes on the ground. She put out towards him her hand, covered with a corner of her face-veil. (OI, 131)
"A Jew. May his lot be Jehannum!" (Burton, I, 161)

"We gave it to the white woman---may Jehannum be her lot!" (Re, 450)

"Glorified be the Lord my Lord, and glorified be the faith, my faith . . . We pray thee for safety in our goings forth and our standings still, in our words and our designs, in our dangers of temptation and doubts, and the secret designs of our hearts." (A prayer for safety at sea, recited on the pilgrim ship taking Burton to Yambo; Burton, I, 312)

... and for a time nothing was heard above the crackling of the fire but the intoning of Omar glorifying the God--his God, and the Faith--his faith. (OL, 106)

[The Arab] recited aloud the prayer of travellers by sea. He invoked the favour of the Most High upon that journey, implored His blessings on men's toil and on the secret purposes of their hearts. (LW, 15) (Burton's description of the horrors of the sun's heat on board the pilgrim ship and the relief of the nights seems also to have influenced a similar description on the Patna.)

Pilgrims, especially those from Turkey, carry a "Hamail," to denote their holy errand. This is a pocket Koran, in a handsome gold embroidered crimson velvet or red morocco case, slung by red silk cords over the left shoulder. (Burton, I, 352)

The Koran in a velvet case hung on his breast by a red cord of silk. (Re, 293)

After vainly addressing the pilgrims ... the boy Mohammed collected about half a dozen stalwart Meccans, with whose assistance, by sheer strength, we wedged our way into the thin and light-legged crowd. ... After thus reaching the stone, despite popular indignation ... we monopolised the use of it for at least ten minutes. Whilst
kissing it and rubbing hands and forehead upon it I narrowly observed it. (Burton, III, 210)

[Babalatchi] had even struggled in a pious throng for the privilege of touching with his lips the Sacred Stone of the Holy City. (OI, 52)

This sample of correspondences seems to suggest strongly that Conrad did indeed read Burton's account of his travels to the Muslim Holy Cities and made widespread use of the information contained therein. There are many other, less direct correspondences that could be hypothesized upon. Burton reveals, for example, that "Those who tread the hallowed floor are bound, among many other things, never again to walk barefooted, to take up fire with the fingers, or to tell lies" (Burton, III, 293-4), which may be a source for Babalatchi's habit of playing with the live embers of a fire (OI, 122). The one-eyed statesman of Conrad's first two novels is also known to break the other two prohibitions Burton mentions; prohibitions that would apply to him since, as has been seen above, Babalatchi has been a pilgrim.

Conrad's Muslims act like the Arabs of the desert, it seems, although their environment is the East Indian jungles. For his knowledge of this environment, Norman Sherry has shown that much of Conrad's information also came from books, notably A.R. Wallace's *The Malay Archipelago*, from which, among other things, Conrad seems to have discovered the Muslim burial procedures. Wallace describes how
"The body was wrapped up in a new white cotton cloth,"\textsuperscript{30} whilst in The Rescue one of Lingard's followers is buried at sea, "wrapped up decently in a white sheet, according to Mohammedan usage" (Re, 74). Wallace also spoke of the possible influence of Arab priests or Hadjis returned from Mecca, spreading strange ideas of Islamic might among Muslim villages,\textsuperscript{31} which may be another factor prompting the presence of Sherif Ali in the Patusan of Lord Jim.

From other travel books, Conrad seeks to have learnt of the Padris, a Muslim sect which began in the 1820s with a group of Hadjis zealously desiring to discipline their lax countrymen into conforming more closely to the requirements of their faith. They succeeded in beginning a war as well as a reform.\textsuperscript{32} In the manuscript of The Rescue (though not in its final version) such Padris are to be found within Belarab's camp; followers of the old chief's father who was "full of fight and religion--just the man for the Padris" (fol. 183). The historical demise of the movement appears in the characterisation of these followers who are devoted to "a flag known in the deserts of central Arabia" which "proclaimed Belarab's puritanical belief, the memory of a lost cause, the


\textsuperscript{31} Wallace, II, 103-04.

fidelity of the man who understood the meaning of the banner" (fol. 193). The old men "with the fire of belief in their hearts and with austere faces would lift in a moment their downcast eyes to the fluttering emblem of a purified faith" (fol. 193) and they are apt to taunt "their chief with the laxity of his principles" (fol. 194). The way Conrad brings different sources together is seen by the way the Padris revere the grave of Belarab's father:

And there was something ironically pathetic summing up the futility of belief and teaching in this tribute paid to the memory of a wandering and fierce leader to whom reverence for the dead was a heathenish superstition and who all his life inculcated sword in hand and pious quotations on his lips that there is no God but God and that in the matter of graves the best are those that are forgotten. (fol. 195)

Burton (once more) is a likely source here, for he reveals a saying of Muhammad—"O Allah cause not my tomb to become an object of idolatrous adoration! May Allah's wrath fall heavy upon the people who make the tombs of their prophets places of prayer!"—and contrasts it, in a footnote, with other sayings which encourage Muslims to visit graveyards, especially those of parents (Burton, II, 71).

This deleted section, in fact, can serve as an example of how Conrad's Muslims are generally neglected by critics. Thomas Moser is one of the few people to consider the passage and he simply dismisses its deletion by relating it to the "exotic" writing of Conrad's early period and deciding that the
author recognised the limitations of such elements when he came to revise the novel. But if one works on the assumption that Conrad had a purpose behind his Muslim characters, another reason becomes evident. The impact of the original is to emphasise the inability of these old men to live in the present; they are still stirred by "the memory of a lost cause" and waste much of their time in remembrance for the dead. Their presence would thus act as a further warning to Lingard about the futility of pursuing lost causes and trying to right the past. What the passage would also achieve, however, is an undermining of Belarab's position for his act of withdrawing from his village "to pray at his father's tomb" (Re, 176) could then be construed as filial disobedience. It would also be inconsistent for him to be able to outweigh Tengga's power whilst still at the tomb on the grounds that Tengga "was not a professed servant of God famed for many charities and a scrupulous performance of pious practices, and who also had no father who had achieved a local saintship" (Re, 281), if he was also being "taunted with the laxity of his principles." Belarab's standing in the village is important for Lingard's enterprise, and the fact that even the old chief has faith in the Rajah Laut gives a still greater boost to the sailor's prestige. To

have this standing undercut by the discontent of the old followers of his father would be clearly inappropriate.

The Malay Muslims were generally less fanatical, it seems. Sir Frank Swettenham remarked in his Malay Sketches (1895) that the real Malay "is a Muhummaden and a fatalist, but he is also very superstitious. He never drinks intoxicants, he is rarely an opium-smoker." Swettenham entitled one of his sketches "Malay Superstitions" which included the belief that familiar spirits could enter and plague an enemy, but which could be exorcised by certain native priests, and this may have had some influence on "Karain," although a belief in ghosts among the Malay believers is also evident in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, both written by the time Swettenham's book had come out.

From fictional sources, it seems, however, Conrad could not have learnt much. Islam does not seem to have been a popular ingredient in late Victorian fiction and though the religion appears in a sympathetic light in Disraeli's Tancred and also in Kipling's short story "The City of Dreadful Night," there seems to be little of any import that Conrad could have read from these sources.


35 Swettenham, pp. 103-04.
Overall, it seems that the well-read Victorian had ample opportunity to read about Islam from both antipathetic and sympathetic bases. The number of publications and reprints in the 1870s and 1880s—coinciding with an increased interest in the Middle East caused by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the occupation of Egypt by Great Britain in 1882—suggest that books about Islam would have a ready readership. If Conrad read Burton's account of his pilgrimage—and the textual correspondences seem strongly to suggest that he did—he would have known not only the way Muslims behaved but also, to some extent, the way they ought to behave. It would be reasonable to suppose that some of his readers would know this too. The disparity between precept and practice could be utilised, therefore, not to display stereotype Arab fanaticism to an ill-informed Victorian public, but to illustrate and indicate some of the central issues in Conrad's early fiction; a circumstance that makes the presence of Islam a more important ingredient of these novels than has been generally acknowledged.

ii. Application: The Purpose of Conrad's Muslims

Given this background, Conrad's Muslims, indeed, appear in a more purposeful light. Their familiar

36 See Appendix A.
and apparently bigoted accusations, for example, can be seen to have relevance if applied closely to the conduct of Conrad's Europeans. The cunning Babalatchi has more than dogma to guide him when he makes the following comments:

The fate of the Believers is written by the hand of the Mighty One, but they who worship many gods are thrown into the world with smooth foreheads, for any woman's hand to mark their destruction there. Let one man destroy another. The will of the Most High is that they should be fools. They know how to keep faith with their enemies, but towards each other they know only deception. (01, 60)

This common Islamic accusation that white men worship many gods is borne out by European obsessions throughout the novel, highlighted, indeed, by religious terms. The statement has obvious relevance to Willems, who, as a "consistent worshipper in the 'temple of self,'"37 is easily overcome by his sexual passion for Alissa and serves to make Babalatchi's remark prophetic. The most explicit example, however, is that of Almayer in his adoration of Nina:

And as he stood in the still night, lost in his enchanting and gorgeous dreams, while the ascending, thin thread of tobacco smoke spread into a faint bluish cloud above his head, he appeared strangely impressive and ecstatic: like a devout and mystic worshipper, adoring, transported and mute; burning incense before a shrine, a diaphanous shrine of a child-idol with closed eyes; before a pure and vaporous shrine of a small god—fragile, powerless,

unconscious and sleeping. (OI, 320)

In Almayer's Folly, where Almayer's wife also accuses Europeans of having "many gods" (AF, 151), such conduct leads him to disaster.

The accusation of Europeans being "unbelievers" or "infidels" is also shown to have some point. Jim, as a European, is thus regarded by the Muslim passengers of the Patna (LJ, 15, 17), who, having "surrendered to the wisdom of white men and to their courage, trusting the power of their unbelief and the iron shell of their fire-ship" (LJ, 17), are proved right in this one particular only. The charge has particular pertinency when applied to Jim for, by jumping from the steamer, he proves unfaithful to those dreams of heroism which are said to have "carried his soul away" (LJ, 20). As far as his romantic egoism is concerned, he is truly an "unbeliever."

On two occasions the Muslims are said to be "pilgrims of an exacting belief" (LJ, 15, 17-18) and this is also relevant to Jim. If he is to be true to his exalted conception of himself, he must be aware of it as an exacting belief. Had he been so aware, the invocations of the Arab for "blessings . . . on the secret purposes of their hearts" (LJ, 15) would have been fulfilled on the Patna and Jim would not have missed his chance. But Jim's heroic beliefs are unexacting, like the comfortable rural Christianity of his youth (LJ, 5), and are heedless, therefore, of Islamic blessings, valid only for followers of an
exacting belief. As a result, the blessing simply precedes his disgrace. Similarly, the blessings of Jim's parson father, representative of rural Christianity, are relevant only to the followers of an un-exacting faith and (for the reader), come immediately before the disaster in Patusan which they are powerless to prevent because Jim's belief has now become an exacting one.

One role of the Muslims, then, is to indicate European failings by their apparently bigoted yet, in, reality, perceptive accusations. In their other comments and deeds, Conrad's Muslims reflect, in an exaggerated form, the shortcomings of their Christian counterparts. In The Rescue, for example, the Malay chief, Tengga, complains that he has been forbidden to loot the stranded yacht of Mr. Travers because "their skin is like yours and to kill them would be wrong, but at the bidding of you whites we may go and fight with people of our own skin and our own faith--and that is good" (Re, 173). Later in the book, Bel-arab, the head of the village, reveals similar considerations, feeling that "It would be even in a manner a sin to begin a strife in a community of True Believers" (Re, 435). Both comments, however, can be seen to echo those of Lingard's Christian mate, Shaw, in the opening pages:

My grandfather was a preacher and, though my father served in the navy, I don't hold with war. Sinful the old gentleman called it--and I think so, too. Unless with Chinamen, or niggers, or such people as must be kept in order and won't listen to
reason; having not sense enough to know what's good for them, when it's explained to them by their betters—missionaries, and such like au-tho-ri-ties. (Re, 22)

Thus Muslim exclusiveness on the grounds of religion becomes equated with racial exclusiveness on the part of some of the Europeans; a point which is exemplified further by Belarab's denial of paradise to the white man (Re, 113)—which smacks also of Christian claims to exclusive salvation—and Shaw's attempt to eject the Malay Prince Hassim and his sister from the cuddy, on the grounds that they are "niggers" (Re, 239). This equation is not peculiar to The Rescue, of course—there are many other instances in the early Eastern stories.

Muslim exclusiveness is loudly proclaimed and its religious observances are ostentatiously performed. In contrast, the Europeans are relatively quiet about their beliefs which are brought forth, it seems, only to stress their hypocrisy. Thus the "Protestant wing of the proper Mrs Vinck" (AF, 41) proves unaccommodating to Almayer's half-caste daughter when Nina proves more attractive to potential suitors than the Vinck girls do (AF, 30), and Willems remembers various Christian doctrines on marriage (OI, 26, 349), and suicide (OI, 278) when these seem to work to his convenience.

Islamic protestations, however, prove to be just as suspect. Syed Abdulla's acceptance of the will of God in Almayer's Folly, for example, is shown very
ironically:

Where was the use to wonder at the decrees of Fate, especially if they were propitious to the True Believers? And with a pious ejaculation to Allah the Merciful, the Compassionate, Abdulla seemed to regard the incident as closed for the present. (AF, 109)

Such overt piety is seen to be at odds with Abdulla's dealings as a business man (AF, 28) and his ill-treatment of the slave girl Taminah (AF, 110); the latter action going against Burton's statement that "The laws of Mahomet enjoin his followers to treat slaves with the greatest mildness, and the Moslems are in general scrupulous observers of the Prophet's recommendation" (Burton, I, p. 89). Abdulla's professed absorption in the delights of the next world also do not prevent his appreciation of more earthly issues. When suggesting to Almayer that Reshid should marry Nina, he presents such a union as a profitable alliance, since Reshid will be the first Arab in the islands when his uncle has been "called to the joys of Paradise by Allah the All-merciful" (AF, 45). But the inducements he offers are material luxuries and worldly position and his calling upon Allah to give Almayer "many more years to gladden the eyes of his friends by his welcome presence" (AF, 44) is produced either as part of a meaningless ritual or to achieve an effect, but certainly not as an expression of sincere regard. Conrad's first novel ends with Abdulla gazing on the dead Almayer, "this Infidel he
had fought so long and bested so many times. Such was the reward of the Faithful!" The Arab leaves the scene, clicking his prayer beads, "while in a solemn whisper he breathed out piously the name of Allah! The Merciful! The Compassionate!" (AP, 208), but, in giving instructions for the translation of this work into Polish, the author emphasised that "Abdulla recites the well-known formula mechanically," a word that is also used to describe Belarab's recital of formula in The Rescue (Re, 443), and which obviously denotes habit rather than conviction. In a later novel there is a suspicion (on the part of Rita de Lastaola at least) that priests recommend repentance from the same cause (AG, 116). Hypocrisy also exists in the lesser Muslims. Thus Mahmat, who fears he may have defiled himself touching the body of a possible unbeliever before eating, finds that his greed outweighs a belief in witchcraft when confronted with a gold anklet, claiming that "I have a charm against the ghosts and am not afraid. God is great!" (AP, 96). There is superstition involved here too, little different from the knowledge of Christianity possessed by Mrs Almayer who regards the little brass cross around her neck "with superstitious awe"; a feeling "connected with some vague talismanic properties of the little bit of metal and the still more hazy but terrible notion of some bad Djinns and horrible

torments invented, as she thought, for her especial punishment by the good Mother Superior in case of the loss of the above charm" (AF, 41). Such comparisons (or rather exaggerated reflections) are made more emphatically in *An Outcast of the Islands* with the description of the Blind Omar at prayer (OI, 106) for Omar's "ostentatious piety" (OI, 58) has been accompanied by a life of robbery and murder that serve to belie the precepts of the Faith he so loudly professes. Nevertheless, this ostentation leads to him being regarded as a "holy man" by Mahmat later in the book (OI, 354). The narrator adds his own assessment of Omar's life after his death as Babalatchi sits in the hut "from which the fierce spirit of the incomparably accomplished pirate took its flight, to learn too late, in a worse world, the error of its earthly ways" (OI, 214).

Babalatchi and Lakamba are similar characters. Babalatchi, as was noted earlier, has been a pilgrim, "and after attaching himself to Omar el Badavi, he affected great piety (as became a pilgrim), although unable to read the inspired words of the Prophet" (OI, 52). He too has engaged in "the manly pursuits of throat-cutting, kidnapping, slave-dealing, and fire-raising, that were the only possible occupation for a true man of the sea" (OI, 52). Here, then, is another professing a belief that his actions belie; one who is quick to produce the appropriate pious phrase at the right time. To Patalolo, then Rajah, he re-
marks that "Charity was a virtue recommended by the Prophet" (OI, 55); to a doubting Lakamba he cries "verily our only refuge is with the One, the Mighty, the Redresser of ..." (OI, 48); to Willems and Abdulla he comments "Allah makes everything easy" (OI, 131). This is especially appropriate when Abdulla is present. Faced with the possibility of the great Syed establishing his trade in Sambir and challenging Lingard's monopoly, "Lakamba and Babalatchi have no doubt—if Allah wills. They are in the hands of the compassionate" (OI, 136).

In the cases of Omar and Babalatchi, the divergence between religious profession and actual practice is extreme and such cynical manipulation of belief is to appear again in Lord Jim; utilised this time by Sherif Ali and his men, one of whom "leaning on the long barrel of a rifle, exhorted the people to prayer and repentance, advising them to kill all the strangers in their midst, some of whom, he said, were infidels and others even worse—children of Satan in the guise of Moslems" (LJ, 295). Superstition is thus to be encouraged to perpetuate one's power or to ensure exclusiveness. The latter reason seems to lie behind the old invalided jurumundi's discourse to "a small knot of unsophisticated citizens of Sambir" that Almayer's books are "books of magic ... that makes them [the white men] great, powerful, and irresistible while they live, and—praise be to Allah!—the victims of Satan, the slaves of Jehannum when
Abdulla, however, is presented more subtly in Conrad's second novel. As a Syed he holds a special place among Muslims, being regarded as a direct descendant of Muhammad, and he appears as an apparently exemplary Muslim who for more than forty years "had walked in the way of his Lord":

Allah had made it his fate to become a pilgrim very early in life. This was a great favour of Heaven, and it could not have been bestowed upon a man who prized it more, or who made himself more worthy of it by the unswerving piety of his heart and by the religious solemnity of his demeanour. (OI, 109)

He seems to acquire virtues:

He bore himself with the humility becoming a Believer, who never forgets, even for one moment of his waking life, that he is the servant of the Most High. He was largely charitable because the charitable man is the friend of Allah, and when he walked out of his house--built of stone, just outside the town of Penang--on his way to his godowns in the port, he had often to snatch his hand away sharply from under the lips of men of his race and creed; and often he had to murmur deprecating words, or even to rebuke with severity those who attempted to touch his knees with their finger-tips in gratitude or supplication. (OI, 110)

In recognition of his descent, a Syed is allowed to wear a green turban. Burton explains: "The green turban is an innovation in El Islam. In some countries it is confined to the Sayyids. In others it is worn as a mark of distinction by pilgrims" (Burton, II, 259n.). In Almayer's Folly, it is Lakamba (not a Syed) who wears the green turban. Swettenham, however, talks of the "Famous Seyyid" as having a black head-dress (Stories and Sketches, p. 46) so it may not have been the practice in the East. That Conrad knew of the Syed's connection with green is shown by his...
This picture of Abdulla's piety and his successful progress is carried along by Conrad's mocking of Islamic fatalism with such comments as "the book of his destiny contained . . . " or "the writing on his forehead decreed . . . " (OI, 109) or "the good genie, who ordered the stars at his birth, had not neglected . . . " (OI, 111).

The possible sources of his name have already been noted. "Abdullah" was also, however, the alias under which Burton travelled during his pilgrimage. Burton explains that the name means "servant of God" which would be very appropriate for the pretensions of the character (Burton, I, 20n.). To know the meaning certainly adds to the picture of the venerable Syed and gives extra weight to the phrase "the servant of the Most High" which is applied to him.

Thus far there is little to criticise since there have been no suggestions of dishonesty in the building up of his business. But Abdulla becomes overwhelmed by a mania, the desire to get the best of Lingard, which becomes "the paramount interest of his life, the salt of his existence" (OI, 111); a mania which appears to interrupt his role as a "servant of the Most High" and induces him to use force to impose his position in Sambir once his ship is safely in the river and to assist Lakamba to become

statement in The Shadow-Line: " . . . an Arab owned her, and a Syed at that. Hence the green border on the flag" (SL, 4).
the new ruler—though it should be noted that Lingard would also use force to restore his own position if he could (OI, 173). This pre-occupation persuades him to accept the position of Willems and Aissa, though not without many misgivings:

But Omar is the son of my father's uncle... and all belonging to him are of the Faith... while that man is an unbeliever. It is most unseemly... very unseemly. He cannot live under my shadow. Not that dog. Penitence! I take refuge with my God... How can he live under my eyes with that woman, who is of the Faith? Scandal! O abomination! (OI, 120)

"O Sin! O Temptation!" sighed out Abdulla, faintly. "Our refuge is with the Most High. Can I feed this infidel for ever and for ever? (OI, 121)

It has already been noted that marriage with Christians is permitted by the Qur'an so there is actually no good Islamic reason why Abdulla should object to the match. By compromising his beliefs (as he sees it) he is actually closer to conforming to them; a subtle irony if intended. Certainly it illustrates the power of his obsession that the apparently scrupulous Muslim Syed is thus willing to compromise his sense of exclusiveness. We do not see his reaction to Babalatchi's offer of poisoning Willems except to note, later, that he does not take advantage of it, preferring instead to hand the outcast over to Lingard. Abdulla's word is not worth very much at this stage as he shows when commenting to Babalatchi, "I have promised everything, I mean to keep much" (OI, 134).

What is not clear from this is whether Abdulla's
faith has been corrupted by his mania to get the better of Lingard or whether this has been his conduct all along? Certainly his humility seems to have dissolved if we are to believe Almayer's account that "Abdulla sat amongst them like an idol, cross-legged, his hands on his lap. He's too great altogether to eat when others do, but he presided, you see" (OI, 176). Abdulla, however, has previously commented that he refuses food because "his habits are ascetic and his temperament inclines to melancholy" (OI, 135). One has the choice of believing Almayer (in which case the image of Abdulla as an idol amongst iconoclastic Muslims would comment potently on his state of faith), or the Arab. There is also the question of what is to happen to Patalolo. The old Rajah leaves on Abdulla's ship to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca but Almayer believes that he goes to his death. In Almayer's Folly he departed this life "by a convenient decree of providence" (AF, 27), but that is still enigmatic, and Almayer is not a reliable commentator.

In varying degrees, therefore, Conrad's Muslims show their hypocrisy from a cynical disregard of all religious precepts (Omar, Lakamba and Babalatchi) to the less cynical but still egotistical Abdulla. Even the source of their fatalism is suspect, for the narrator reveals that, "Fatalism is born of the fear of failure, for we all believe that we carry success in our own hands, and we suspect that our hands are weak" (OI, 126).
Such shortcomings succeed, once more, in reflecting, in an exaggerated way, the European and, by implication, Christian society that banishes Willems out of jealousy and pride. Hudig, in plotting to have Willems marry his half-caste daughter by dangling the bait of riches and, by involving a priest in the plot (OI, 35), obtaining the tacit approval of the church, can thus be equated with Babalatchi who uses Aissa's sexuality to tempt Willems into betraying the secret of the river. There is, in fact, a similar pattern to each plot: Willems seduced (first by wealth, then by sex), Willems triumphant (before his misappropriation at Hudig's and at the time of his revenge over Almayer) and Willems in decline (after his dismissal by Hudig and his disenchantment with Aissa). Willems is, therefore, the victim of two sets of schemers—Europeans and Arabs—and the great emphasis on their religion by the latter group simply shows up the emptiness of the shocked protestations of the former.

Perhaps the most explicit comparison of Muslim with European comes in "Karain" where the accusation of unbelief is placed in the centre of the story. To Karain, haunted by the ghost of a companion he killed long before, unbelief in his religion means a lack of belief in spirits also; an outlook that he shares with the seaweed-gatherers of "The Idiots" who, when regarding the distraught Susan as an evil spirit of some kind, consider that "Millot feared nothing,
having no religion, but that it would end badly some
day" (TU, 80). In fact, Hollis' box reveals that,
though the haunting is of a different nature, the
European also has his ghosts, "the homeless ghosts of
an unbelieving world" (TU, 49).

But European and Muslim are also linked in the
Method of keeping the avenging spirit of Matara at
bay. Earlier this protection has been achieved by
the presence of an old man, regarded by Karain's fol-
lowers as "the old wizard, the man who could command
ghosts and send evil spirits against enemies" (TU,
16). The ruler explains:

When I met him he was returning from a
pilgrimage, and I heard him intoning the
prayer of sunset. He had gone to the holy
place with his son, his son's wife, and a
little child; and on their return, by the
favour of the Most High, they all died
... and the old man reached his country
alone. He was a pilgrim serene and pious,
very wise and very lonely. I told him all.
For a time we lived together. He said over
me words of compassion, of wisdom, of pray-
er. He warded from me the shade of the
dead. I begged him for a charm that would
make me safe. For a long time he refused;
but at last, with a sigh and a smile, he
gave me one. Doubtless he could command a
spirit stronger than the unrest of my dead
friend, and again I had peace. (TU, 42)

This may be some of Conrad's irony again at the
expense of Islamic fatalism—death as a favour from
God—not unconnected, perhaps, with the way Thaddeus
Bobrowski used to write to him about God's blessings
when, to the uninitiated, these were not apparent.
The phrase may also be connected with Burton's comment
that "Those who die on a pilgrimage become martyrs"
(Burton, III, 253n.). The most important part of this passage, however, concerns the manner in which the charm is given—"with a sigh and a smile"—for this suggests that it is given in the same spirit as Hollis’ jubilee sixpence. Swettenham’s Malay Sketches revealed the antipathy of learned Muslims for such superstitions and the wise old man may have been drawn as just such a Muslim, hence his reluctance to fall in with Karain’s superstitious wishes. Karain, indeed, compromises his faith by wearing the portrait of Queen Victoria on the sixpence since, as Hollis points out, Muslims are not supposed to wear "an engraved image" (TU, 48).

If The Rescue can be regarded as belonging to Conrad’s early period, then Islam virtually disappears from the Conrad canon after Lord Jim, presumably because its purposes had been fulfilled or had been taken over by something else. Once one has accepted the likelihood that Conrad knew enough about Islam to realise the shortcomings of its adherents and deliberately made use of the disparity between precepts and practice, numerous possibilities unfold. Islamic exclusiveness is pronounced but even the likeable Padre Roman of Nostromo has the feeling of compromising Catholic exclusiveness by his admiration of the heretical Emilia Gould (N, 399), whilst, like the Muslims, the Autocracy of Under Western Eyes claims

40 Stories and Sketches, p. 114.
exclusive belief and brands those who oppose it as "perfect unbelievers" (UWE, 51). Many of Conrad's novels reveal the hypocrisy, superstition and often blind fanaticism abounding within institutionalised religions, and it may be that Islam is used in the early works not only to give an exaggerated reflection of Christian failings but also to act as a surrogate for the European's belief; a way of presenting the faults of religion without incurring the wrath of Christian Victorians. Christian hypocrisy and bigotry are dealt with very obliquely in the first two novels--there are no fervent representatives centre-stage, as it were. With both Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands behind him, however, Conrad was able to bring the corrupt practices of European Christianity to the fore. "The Idiots" reveals a complacent and self-seeking clergy living off French peasant villagers who are every bit as superstitious as their Malay counterparts; indeed the unfortunate Susan dies because she fears that the husband she has killed has come back to haunt her and she has, therefore, much in common with Karain in the later story. In The Nigger of the "Narcissus" Conrad felt able to present an ostentatiously professing Protestant (the bigoted Podmore), but whereas Protestant England seemed happy enough to contemplate Catholic inadequacies, at least one of Conrad's friends seems to have felt that the portrait of the cook was irrever-
ent. In other words, whilst bigoted Muslims were acceptable, Podmore was coming rather too close to home.

The Muslims, therefore, can be said to act as harbingers of these and other Christian inadequacies. For the manipulation of religion by people such as Omar and Sherif Ali is on a par with its cynical utilisation by Guzman Bento or its subtle subjugation by the material interests of Nostromo. If the creed is different, the outlook is much the same. Islamic fatalism may be suspect but it stands the Muslims in better stead than the inaccurate presumption of Captain Whalley to know the workings of Providence, and Lingard would do well to heed Hassim's cry that, as to what is written, "Nobody knows" (Re, 77). The author's note Conrad produced for Almayer's Folly gave warnings against dividing humanity into distinctive categories and hinted, perhaps, that Conrad's Muslims and their religion were not to be regarded in isolation (AF, vii-viii). Instead, the note implied that there was a deeper purpose behind their bigotry and cunning, a purpose that the well read Victorian (with the writings of Burton and others behind him) would have been well able to apprehend.

CHAPTER SIX

CONRAD'S TREATMENT OF BUDDHISM AND HINDUISM

1. Buddhism

The apparent neglect of Islamic aspects of Conrad's work by critics cannot be said to extend to Buddhist references. These are far less pervasive, being little more than the frame narrator's descriptions of Marlow's poses in "Heart of Darkness" and mention of the pagodas in "Falk" and "The Secret Sharer," but these alone have been sufficient to attract critical attention.

Some comments are extreme. R. C. Brashers, for example, sees the structure of "Heart of Darkness" as being parallel to the Buddha's Noble Eight Fold Path (right views, right intentions, right speech, right actions, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration), and he proceeds to divide the book into eight episodes, each of which is allocated the appropriate stage. The trouble with this allocation is that, far from the combination of episodes and stages being "too numerous to be accidental" as Brashers claims, he, more than once, appears

1 "Conrad, Marlow and Gautama Buddha: On Structure and Theme in 'Heart of Darkness,'" Conradiana, 1, No. 3 (1969), 70.
to dredge up any incident that will fit. Thus, Marlow's action of giving a biscuit to a dying native is regarded as illustrating his "right intentions," whilst his pulling of the steam whistle during the attack on the ferry is regarded as the "right action." But, quite apart from the fact that the first of these incidents could equally well be regarded as an action rather than an intention, any novel is likely to reflect the eight stages he mentions; the right order being obtained by the simple process of selection and interpretation. Marlow's struggle with Kurtz as he crawls towards the natives' fire is selected for "right effort," but it could just as easily have been regarded as a "right intention," a "right action," or even "right speech" had that been the desired stage. The "matrix of action" is said to begin with Towson's book, but Towson's book would itself be better suited to "right intentions" which Brashers allocates to the Outer Station. No doubt Conrad knew about the Eight Fold Path (which is, after all, very basic Buddhism) but Brashers' application of it to "Heart of Darkness" is too arbitrary to be acceptable.

W.B. Stein assumes that Conrad had a very deep knowledge of Buddhism since, at one point, he decides that the steamboat "metamorphoses into the Buddhist

2 Brashers, pp. 64-65.
3 Ibid., p. 67.
4 Ibid., p. 65.
doctrine of the ferryboat of redemption.⁵ His view of the pilgrims as "inversions of the Bodhisattva and his staff" was noted in an earlier chapter but he also regards them as "burlesque counterparts of the Indian ascetics whose staffs are the badge of their mendicancy."⁶ Stein proceeds to reveal a detailed knowledge of the meanings of Buddhist iconography. Thus the lotus position in which Marlow is first seen "exhibits the adept in the inturning moment of absolute enlightenment,"⁷ whilst the lifting of his arm as he begins his tale is "the act of teaching."⁸ In Stein's eyes, Marlow becomes a Bodhisattva, enlightened enough to enter Nirvana but returning through compassion to assist those still engaged in the endless cycle of rebirth; an interpretation that will be tested shortly.

In a different article Stein also applies this kind of treatment to Conrad's first two novels (which do not have specific Buddhist referents); suggesting that the log which Almayer watches at the beginning of Almayer's Folly (AF, 4) and the uprooted tree on which Willems has vague thoughts of escaping his jungle imprisonment in An Outcast of the Islands (OI, 330) both have connections with Buddha's parable of

⁵ "'Heart of Darkness': A Bodhisattva Scenario," Conradiana, 2 No. 2 (1970), 44.


⁷ Ibid., p. 43.

⁸ Ibid., p. 44.
the log, in which the log which avoids all obstacles and reaches the ocean symbolises the man who reaches Nirvana. He approaches this point by suggesting the influence on Conrad of Henri-Frédéric Amiel, whose *Journal Intime* provides the epigraph to *Almayer's Folly*. This epigraph, Stein claims, "indirectly acknowledges the influence of Amiel and directly admits his capitulation to the Eastern view of existence," and he quotes Amiel's succeeding sentence in support of his claim. But, though Amiel may well have had a "hesitant, remorseful surrender to the fatal charm of Hindu-Buddhist pessimism," at the time he wrote the words which form the epigraph (28 April 1852) his concerns still seem to have been on the Judeo-Christian side of things; indeed the sentence before the epigraph refers to Moses. The whole passage reads as follows with the translated epigraph underlined:

Thou too sawest undulating in the distance the ravishing hills of the Promised Land, and it was thy fate nevertheless to lay thy weary bones in a grave dug in the desert!—Which of us has not his promised land, his day of ecstasy and his death in exile? What a pale counterfeit is real life of the life we see in glimpses, and how these flaming lightnings of our prophetic youth make the twilight of our dull, monotonous manhood more dark and dreary!"


11 Ibid.

Stein's suggestions of Amiel's influence on Conrad, especially in such expressions as "absurdity," "nothingness," and "the abyss" are interesting and persuasive but Amiel's comments on Buddhism are certainly not deep enough to yield the kind of knowledge that Stein assumes and applies; nor does the epigraph, either alone or within its context, indicate the presence of a uniquely Eastern philosophy within the novel.

It is also hard to agree with him that Islam can be regarded as an Eastern philosophy, to be mentioned in the same breath as Hinduism and Buddhism,¹³ if one accepts the usual distinction between Middle Eastern and Indian-based religions. Muhammad's emphasis on monotheism and an after-life places the religion firmly in the Judeo-Christian tradition whose figures the Qur'an constantly invokes. Abdulla looks forward to paradise, not annihilation, and the only representative of Hinduism or Buddhism in either book—the Brahmin, Dain Maroola—exhibits such a wholesale and passionate commitment to his wooing of Nina that he is certainly no repository of Eastern wisdom to counteract Western illusions.

To return to "Heart of Darkness," Jerry Wasser- man is another critic to see purpose in Marlow's Buddha poses:

In a well-known episode in Zen tradition the Buddha transmits the experience of supreme awakening to his chief disciple by silently holding up a lotus flower before him. The last phase of the narrator's description seems to allude to this tradition, which uses the flower as an archetypal objective correlative. But Marlow is without a lotus because the experience he is trying to convey here has a different meaning. Its perfect expression is himself as he sits before his disciples.

Thus, just as Stein assumes a knowledge of Mahayana Buddhism on Conrad's part, Wasserman assumes a similar knowledge of its Japanese offshoot, Zen. The absence of the lotus flower is, however, one of two qualifications the narrator makes to his description of Marlow as being in the pose of a Buddha (the other being his European dress), and it is perhaps not too impertinent to remark that a lotus flower would surely be a somewhat incongruous ornament in the midst of the Thames Estuary. Like those who have seen the key to understanding "Heart of Darkness" as residing in such aspects of Western heritage as the Grail Legend (Jerome Thale) or Dante's Inferno (R.O. Evans), Wasserman is trying to be too specific, seeing the whole pattern in the terms of one of its details.


Evans, in fact, refutes the terms of an earlier article by Stein (on which his later one on "Heart of Darkness" appears to be based) when he claims that "I find nothing in the description of Marlow's posture which makes it necessary to identify him with anything more than the commonplace image of Buddha. Such a statue carved in ivory and set on a black base can be purchased anywhere in the Orient for a few shillings."  

Evans feels that "It seems unlikely that Conrad knew a great deal about eastern religion," but this kind of assumption is just as invalid as the opposing ones. Conrad could have read about Buddhism and Hinduism in English in some detail (there were sufficient books in print). William W. Bonney, however, lamenting the "uncritical enthusiasm" of Stein and the "dogged" opposition of Evans, suggests that Conrad could have learnt of Buddhism and Hinduism from Schopenhauer for Schopenhauer discusses at length the philosophies of the Orient in The World as Will and Idea, and he goes on to cite instances of Schopenhauer's high opinion of eastern scriptures. Bonney's evidence of Conrad's interest in Schopenhauer is Galsworthy's comment that "Of philosophy he

17 R.O. Evans, "A Further Comment on 'Heart of Darkness,'" Modern Fiction Studies, 3 (1957-58), 359.

18 Ibid.

had read a good deal. Schopenhauer used to give him satisfaction twenty years and more ago."

From this beginning, Bonney proceeds to discuss most of the references to Eastern religion in Conrad (including some rather oblique ones), working from the assumption that, like Schopenhauer, Conrad was favourably impressed by the nothingness to which eastern thought suggested man was working. Accepting (unlike Stein) that Islam's affinities are closer to Judeo-Christianity than to Buddhism and Hinduism, he sees significance, for example, in the Patna being named "after one of the most famous Buddhist holy cities," regarding the "creation of this irony" as "one of Conrad's master-strokes, directly illuminating the relativism that dominates Lord Jim and indirectly alluding to the darkness that threatens constantly to engulf its characters." In the same book he sees the description of the grave of Jewel's mother, in which "lumps of white coral shone round the dark mound like a chaplet of bleached skulls" (LJ, 322), as repeating "one of the central icons of Tantrik Buddhism which represents the cyclical, annihilatory principle personified under the name of


Kali. 22 Bonney points out that this goddess is "destructive" and is "garlanded with human heads" and that Schopenhauer mentions these features in words close to those used by Marlow. This, he feels, makes the heads that surround Kurtz's hut in "Heart of Darkness" "take on an important new dimension"; 23 a view with which Stein would agree since he takes the native woman as the embodiment of Kali, ("the destructive principle of time"). 24 When considering the heads at the Inner Station, however, one should also take into account the report of an American missionary in the Congo in 1896, who, in writing of death and destruction, reported that "twenty-one heads were brought back to Stanley Falls and have been used by Captain Rom (the station commander) as a decoration around a flower-bed in front of his house." 25 Stanley Falls, of course, was the historical "inner station."

Bonney also considers "Karain" in similar terms, seeing the stone idols which Karain encounters in the jungle as renditions of Buddha, placing "the protagonists' efforts to maintain a sense of murderous purpose in time" into "the all-consuming context of the Buddhists' void by means of a mute and uncomprehending statue." 26 Both the idols of "Karain" and the grave

23 Ibid., p. 248.
24 Stein, "Bodhissattva Scenario," p. 49.
26 Bonney, "Eastern Logic," p. 244.
of Jewel's mother, he sees as acting in a similar way to the Buddhist pagoda in "Falk," where this symbol of Nirvana is considered as effectively denying the lust for life that has epitomised Falk's survival and desire for wedlock:

It is not Falk who represents authenticity in this tale, nor is the narrator capable of perceiving the authentic as such. Only the pagoda, an edifice enclosing and intimating indirectly the nothingness, bears mute witness to the "Annihilation" (F, 210) which alone can take the measure of human experience, and which Buddhists treasure for that reason.27

Bonney may claim to represent a happy medium between the polarities of Stein and Evans but, clearly, apart from substituting Schopenhauer for Amiel as a source (and Amiel had read Schopenhauer),28 his outlook differs very little from the "enthusiasm" of Stein. There seems, however, to be a universality of experience in man's heritage that makes it difficult to make specific identifications with any degree of certainty. Thus the idea of a ferryboat of redemption in Buddhism is close to that of the ferryboat that conveys souls to Hades in Greek mythology, and the destroyer goddess, Kali, is not greatly different from Atropos, the third Greek Fate who cuts the cloth of life and who is, indeed, equated with the native woman (and the intended) by David Ketterer (her


sister fates, Clotho and Lachesis, being the two women in the company office in the "sepulchral city"). In the same way, whilst a sense of nothingness as the culmination of existence might well be the conclusion of eastern philosophy, it was also the likely alternative to Christian theology once this had been put to question. If western man ceased to believe in an after-life then, for him too, the end of life meant an entry into eternal nothingness.

There has also been (so far) an assumption that Buddhist theology (if applicable) is cited with approval. Critics not so committed to Buddhist interpretations (such as C.T. Watts) have pointed out the ironic possibilities of such religious allusions.

Speaking of "Heart Of Darkness," Watts comments:

Conrad's purposes in comparing Marlow, with his still, crossed-legged posture, to "an idol" (p. 3), "a Buddha preaching" (p. 6) and "a meditating Buddha" (p. 79), are partly ironic: for this "Buddha" is "in European clothes and without a lotus-flower" and offers no road to Nirvana. Like the eastern idol to the eyes of a western tourist, Marlow may seem the possessor of more knowledge than he can express. However, a few positive connections are the following. Like Buddha, Marlow instructs by means of paradoxes; he offers eloquent warnings against eloquence, while describing the snares of the appetites; and he indicates the impermanence and possible illusoriness of the phenomenal world.


Bruce Johnson sees a different aspect to the possible Schopenhauer/Buddhist connections, explaining that Schopenhauer saw art and asceticism (based on a Buddhist model) as ways of escaping from Will:

It is entirely possible that Conrad offers us the allusions to Buddha in order to suggest both that Marlow seeks to escape the grotesque Will of Kurtz (which is in Marlow as well, and in all life) and that in so doing he has, after the manner of Buddha, emptied himself and begun contemplation of that "annihilation" that Conrad seems to have associated with Buddhism fully as much as he did sympathy. . . . The important thing to see in the Buddha Tableau is that Marlow seeks to emulate Kurtz's movement beyond emptiness.

The difference between Johnson and Bonney seems to be in the interpretation of influence. Both agree that Schopenhauer is a source for Conrad's Buddhist allusions but whereas Bonney seems to take Schopenhauer as source and Buddhism as influence, Johnson takes Schopenhauer as both source and influence. Johnson, in fact, explicitly refutes any ideas of Conradian sympathy for Buddhism in an article which compares the manuscript of "Falk" with the finished story. He points out that the original manuscript contained the following passage:

. . . and my good friend Hermann upright in his chair in the cabin door, his thick hands resting on his round knees had a staring serenity of aspect (a bit vacuous perhaps) as though he had that very moment

issued all complete out of Buddha's thigh—or whatever part of Buddha's the honorable caste of skippers comes out of.\textsuperscript{32}

Johnson remarks, interestingly, "Apparently the myth Conrad retails represents a popular grafting from the Brahmanic tradition onto a Buddhism generally uncongenial to the whole idea of caste."\textsuperscript{33}

This information gives rise to a number of speculations. The passage may have been cancelled simply because it confused the two major eastern traditions, of course. On the other hand, it may indicate that Conrad's knowledge of eastern philosophy was, in fact, only superficial; that he did not know that what he was writing was a "popular grafting." This possibility would make it difficult to assert a detailed knowledge and acceptance of Buddhist doctrines on Conrad's part. It may, however, simply indicate typical western ignorance of eastern doctrines on the part of the narrator whose confounding of religious teachings is indicative of the superficiality of his perception, though, on the other hand, it may have been deleted to avoid this impression.

In the event, of course, the passage was cancelled (it would have followed the first sentence of page 157 in the Dent edition) but it enables Johnson to make a further point about Buddhism in Conrad's works.


\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 280n.
and reject Stein at the same time:

Despite one critic's attempt to make Marlow in "Heart of Darkness" a budding Buddhist, Conrad's word "Annihilation" sums up his distaste for this religion's rejection of the ego. Falk is in refreshing contrast to both Hermann and Buddhism, for he intuitively accepts the ugly basis of life. Although one may argue that Conrad later deleted this passage precisely because he wanted to avoid the connection between Hermann and the Buddha demeanour, I cannot really believe he would reverse himself on so important an issue. We ought to agree once and for all that Conrad did not like Buddhism, and that if he saw a certain vacuity in Hermann, he also saw it, by way of evaluation, in Buddha. When Conrad describes Marlow in "Heart of Darkness" as sitting in the Buddha posture, he is surely being ironic; indicating that Marlow's sympathetic involvement with Kurtz has created no serenity at all.34

Conrad's Buddhist allusions have drawn most critical attention in two particular areas, therefore --"Heart of Darkness" and "Falk"-- and the lack of consensus indicates that a closer look should be paid to the passages themselves. In "Heart of Darkness" the first of these references comes when the frame narrator is describing his companions:

Marlow sat crossed-legged right aft, leaning against the mizzen-mast. He had sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol. (Y, 46)

Here is a vague evocation of the East, clearly distinguishing Marlow from his companions; but the image is not precise and is formed, one must remember, in the mind of the narrator. J.A. Palmer notes this

34 Johnson, "Conrad's 'Falk,'" pp. 280-81.
distinction and goes on to comment: "The Oriental overtones, whatever else they do, grant Marlow a kind of wisdom more ancient than the Renaissance wisdom implicit in the frame narrator's rhapsody on the Thames and set him apart from his thoroughly English audience."35 But this is only part of the differentiation, as the second reference clearly shows:

"Mind," he began again, lifting one arm from the elbow, the palm of the hand outwards, so that, with his legs folded before him, he had the pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower . . . (Y, 50)

The paragraph ends with an echo of its beginning:

An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to. . . . (Y, 51)

It will be noted here that, whilst Marlow continues to resemble an idol with a specifically eastern flavour to the frame narrator, he himself is likening the rationale of European interests, similarly, to an idol. In some sense, then, the worship of the Buddha which, in western eyes, would seem futile and superstitious, especially since it promises only eternal nothingness (something atheism promises, though without the rigour), is equated with European motivation (by implication, just as futile and, if one thinks

of the ill-health of the agents of progress, just as rigorous). When one considers the frame narrator's earlier romantic enthusiasm for his nation's history and its heroes, "bearers of a spark from the sacred fire" (Y, 47), it is clearly appropriate for his casual likening of Marlow to a Buddha to be thrown back at him in this way.

David Ketterer takes the two quoted parts of this paragraph to indicate "that Marlow is a man of ideas or an idealist," though he has to qualify this view by noting that this must reflect his "prior state of mind"; causing Conrad to involve himself "in a necessary narrative inconsistency."36 He omits to note, however, that the two images are produced by different narrators, illustrating that idols, which have negative theistic connotations in the west, are usually regarded as the deities of others. If the two references are to be solely linked with Marlow and ideas, this would absolve the frame narrator from harbouring any misconceptions of his own, which is plainly not the case. Far from there being any narrative inconsistency, Conrad is carefully structuring Marlow's tale at this point, for he knows (and probably Marlow does too) that belief in an idea is held by the frame narrator at least, if not by the others, and that equating such a belief with idolatry is likely to provoke a sense of vague uneasiness in his hearers. One can agree with Ketterer that there is a connection here with

36 Ketterer, p. 1014.
Kurtz's position as idol for the natives (Marlow, after all, makes this explicit by maintaining that "Mr. Kurtz was no idol of mine" (Y, 132)) but the idea as idol is best exemplified at the Central Station where the agents have the appearance of faithless pilgrims praying to ivory in Marlow's eyes (Y, 76).

There are two ways of interpreting the word "pose"; the first being simply that this is how he appears to the frame narrator, the second that Marlow is deliberately adopting the position. The fact that he seems to be "a Buddha preaching in European clothes" indicates his universality. He is, in fact, as thoroughly English as his audience (at least, there are no suggestions that he is not) but he is also, it seems, the embodiment of something eastern too. He is, in effect, the uniting of east and west with the wisdom of both— or so he appears. There is, indeed, irony in the frame narrator's comment but it is, to some extent, a double irony since the experience Marlow is to relate belongs neither to east nor to west but to mankind as a whole. Marlow's "regular dose of the East" is pretty varied too, embracing, as it does, the Indian and Pacific Oceans and the China Seas (Y, 51) and the part of the world to which he goes is neither east nor west but "Dead in the centre" (Y, 56). He sets off after a spell of "invading your homes, just as though I had got a heavenly mission to civilize you" (Y, 52), which not only links Marlow's
view of past activities with the frame narrator's view of his present pose, but also appears ironically similar to Kurtz's initial attitude to the natives later on (Y, 118). There is a later reminder of Marlow's ascetic appearance during a break in his narrative when he feels that he is not being understood:

There was a pause of profound stillness, then a match flared, and Marlow's lean face appeared, worn, hollow, with downward folds and dropped eyelids, with an aspect of concentrated attention; and as he took vigorous draws at his pipe, it seemed to retreat and advance out of the night in the regular flicker of the tiny flame. The match went out. (Y, 114)

Marlow's face thus reveals his experience in the face of the ignorance of his listeners, shown by their obtuse reactions. The illusory nature of appearances is emphasised here with the apparent mobility of Marlow's face through the flicker of the match. A lawyer, director of companies and an accountant are likely to be innocents in the affairs of the world beyond their own fields. That Marlow's is a universal experience is shown by the apparent vagarities of time and place; exemplified in the company offices where he gives women resembling the Fates of Greek mythology, the gladiatorial farewell belonging to ancient Rome.

When his story is over, the frame narrator reports that "Marlow ceased, and sat apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha" (Y, 162), and one can agree with Seymour Gross that the less optimistic view of this narrator at the end,
seeing the river, now, as leading "into the heart of an immense darkness" (Y, 162), indicates that he, at least, has been enlightened to some extent. His likening of Marlow's poses with those of the Buddha suggest that, to him at any rate, the purpose of Marlow's tale has been didactic, and that what is to be learnt is not to be explained by a solely western or solely eastern understanding. What was originally going to be "one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences" (Y, 51) has, in fact, had some effect on him. The final pose is also a reminder of the misguided idolatry revealed in Marlow's tale; idolatry from which, it is to be hoped, the frame narrator is now free.

In fact, since Marlow's final position is similar to his initial one, the structure of the story can be said to be circular. Marlow meditates and, having likened him to an idol, the narrator romanticises England's colonial history; Marlow speaks and, having again been likened to an idol (this time, specifically, Buddha), he equates idols with ideas and exemplifies this by his references to the pilgrims and to Kurtz, thus illustrating the falsity of the narrator's romantic notions; Marlow meditates again and, once more likening him to Buddha, the narrator broods on darkness. Thus, in some respects, the Buddhist references do perform some structural functions.

The Buddhist presence in "Falk" is represented by

37 "A Further Note on the Function of the Frame in 'Heart of Darkness,'" Modern Fiction Studies, 3 (1957), 170.
its religious edifices; the first of which appears during the narrator's pursuit of a thief, in which he is assisted by Hermann:

Realizing the situation as though he had eyes in his shoulder-blades, he joined us with a leap and took the lead. The Chinaman fled silent like a rapid shadow on the dust of an extremely oriental road. I followed. A long way in the rear my mate whooped like a savage. A young moon threw a bashful light on a plain like a monstrous waste ground: the architectural mass of a Buddhist temple far away projected itself in dead black on the sky. We lost the thief of course. . . .

(T, 158)

Here the temple and the moon appear as aloof spectators of the excitement going on beneath them; diminishing its apparent importance. As far as the narrative is concerned, their appearance serves to terminate the chase; the light of the moon reveals only barrenness whilst the "dead black" of the Buddhist temple serves to emphasise the nihilism with which Conrad (or his narrator) seems to equate the religion in this story. The temple also confirms the futility of the chase, already hinted at by the evident effort and noise that marks the progress of the Europeans in contrast to the apparently noiseless, effortless speed of the oriental. The narrator's excitement animates both moon and temple but their combined presence puts an end to the action.

The second reference serves to explain why the shallow bar still exists at the mouth of the river, since "the authorities of the State were piously busy gilding afresh the great Buddhist Pagoda just then,
and had no money to spare for dredging operations" (T, 164). Buddhism again, therefore, seems to negate action, in this case by diverting the energies of the State. The irony of "piously" seems to reflect the views of the narrator—there are no doubts about where he thinks their priorities should lie. Once out of the river, he comments:

There was nothing to look at besides but a bare coast, the muddy edge of the brown plain with the sinuosities of the river you had left, traced in dull green, and the Great Pagoda uprising lonely and massive with shining curves and pinnacles like the gorgeous and stony efflorescence of tropical rocks. You had nothing to do but wait fretfully for the balance of your cargo, which was sent out of the river with the greatest irregularity. (T, 165-66)

The Pagoda, whose presence has indirectly caused the problem, thus continues to dominate the scene; its size and apparent indifference again contrasting with the urge for action possessed by the narrator. Its comparison with rocks, however, and its evident isolation are far from comforting attributes. For rocks, to a sailor (like the narrator), are destructive and perilous; clearly a nihilistic view of Buddhism is again being projected. This view is continued on the Pagoda's next appearance by which time Falk has refused to tow the narrator's boat and the narrator has made ten demonic references in the space of sixteen pages (T, 177-93) to express his exasperation. He has also made efforts designed to sail his ship away from harbour without Falk's help, but Falk assures him
that he would have had his ship "very awkwardly a-shore at a spot two miles below the Great Pagoda" (T, 203). Though the disaster point would be "two miles below the Great Pagoda," the effect of the mention is once more a negative one, apparently compounding the comparison with rocks seen earlier.

The last and longest reference precedes Falk's revelation that he has eaten man:

During the afternoon I looked at times at the homely ship, the faithful nurse of Hermann's progeny, or yawned towards the distant temple of Buddha, like a lonely hill-ock on the plain, where shaven priests cherish the thoughts of that Annihilation which is the worthy reward of us all. Un-fortunate! He had been unfortunate once. (T, 210)

Here is a juxtaposition that can either be said to indicate a choice (domesticity opposed to annihilation) or (if one follows Johnson's deductions from the initial manuscript connections between Hermann and Buddha) different aspects of the same thing. There is obvious irony in the narrator's attitude towards the religion here; whilst he looks towards the ship, he yawns towards the Pagoda, and the use of "cherish" and "worthy" make the effect emphatic. But the next juxtaposition is between Buddhist Annihilation and Falk's misfortune; what can be unfortunate in the face of inevitable annihilation?

Falk's misfortune has been caused because he has refused to accept annihilation and has fought for life; he is now fighting for domesticity. Hermann's
horror on behalf of outraged decency does indeed reflect a negative attitude to the affair though he refuses to suggest what Falk should have done. Indeed his main horror is caused by the fact that the tug-master should have thought it necessary to reveal the fact (T, 222); clearly he wishes the innocence of his ship to remain. The narrator (whose own innocence has been mentioned once or twice but who is able to hear Falk's story), seems to approve of a struggle for life as opposed to the doctrines of Buddhism. These doctrines only prevail, therefore, if one accepts the narrator as unreliable; that his irony, in other words, simply betrays his ignorance as to reality and his clinging to western teleology. But his description of a "mute and unhearing heaven" as a backdrop to the fateful last days of the Borgmester Dahl shows no religious optimism in his make-up and there are no perceptible signs that he does not have his creator's approval. There is, besides, an autobiographical element about "Falk," many of whose details (the description of the dead captain and his empty violin case for example) are to be repeated in the avowedly autobiographical The Shadow-Line (T, 154; SL, 59-61). In each of their appearances, Buddhist temples are seen to negate action being seen as "dead black" in opposition to the "bashful light" of the moon, as a diversion from needful action by the authorities, as rocks, treacherous and deadly to seamen, as an indication of a place of probable shipwreck, and finally
as a symbol of annihilation. A lust for life may well be futile (Falk will obviously perish one day anyway) but whilst the Buddhist references clearly reflect this, such an outlook is rejected by the narrator and there are no signs that this nihilism is not similarly condemned by Conrad. The Pagoda appears again, dominating the horizon at the beginning of "The Secret Sharer," but it is far less pervasive in the later tale which again contains a fight for life on the part of one of its protagonists (Leggatt). If it functions symbolically at all in "The Secret Sharer," it is in much the same way as it does in "Falk."

In The Shadow-Line its one appearance seems to signify little more than a landmark, (SL, 47) though one could say more about the "temples, gorgeous and dilapidated" that are seen soon afterwards (SL, 48), since they could serve as a warning of the uncertainty of fate to the newly-appointed master in that tale.

ii. Hinduism

Unless one is to apply the same kind of interpretations as Bonney and Stein, however, there are very few other instances of Buddhism and Hinduism being a feature of Conrad's work, and these are really too isolated to have any deep significance. Patna may well be a Buddhist holy city as Bonney suggests but it was also a real ship which (as Norman Sherry points out) Conrad would have seen in Singapore
harbour immediately prior to taking command of the Otago. 38 Conrad frequently changed the names of ships in his fiction and, as was seen in a previous chapter, it can be a dangerous practice to make too much of the new names. Sherry's information suggests that the name Patna would have come to Conrad's mind firstly as a ship. There may well be irony in the choice but whether such irony was conscious is something that cannot be proved without additional documentation. Apart from the Hindu policeman Marlow sees "who looked up at me with orientally pitiful eyes as though his migrating spirit were suffering exceedingly from that unforeseen—what d'ye call 'em—avatar—incarnation" (LJ, 157), the Hindu with "a bright yellow caste-mark above the bridge of his nose" whose case follows Jim's (LJ, 158) and the child in attendance at Brown's death-bed "naked and pot-bellied like a little heathen god" (LJ, 345), there are no direct references to the two major eastern religions. The reference to the policeman may have relevance to Jim's situation (Jim has, in a sense, been incarnated into a character which he feels is false); the triviality of the assault case may serve to put Jim's into a wider perspective, and the apparent mocking effect of the small boy may serve to point out the futility of Brown's egotistical gestures—-but one could say little else. Chester's negotiations for a steamer are conducted with "a Parsee firm" (LJ, 161),

38 Sherry, Conrad's Eastern World, p. 45.
which may help to stress the diversity of religious systems in the book (Parsees being Zoroastrians), especially when the other religious references have been taken into account. This may then indicate the unlikelihood of any one religion being uniquely correct (as Jim's father in rural England seems to think) but it would clearly be out of the way to assume that Zoroastrian doctrines are therefore pertinent to the novel.

Similarly, in Victory, the strange view of Ricardo, who "Crossed-legged, his head drooping a little and perfectly still... might have been meditating in a bonze-like attitude upon the sacred syllable 'Om'" (V, 267), may indicate that he is a kind of fate (or Karma) for Heyst's attempt at total withdrawal (recommended by eastern philosophy); but, again, this is an isolated reference. When Heyst turns the bungalow into a funeral pyre for himself and Lena, he may be said to be reversing the custom of certain fanatical Hindu sects in which the wife must perish with the husband in this way. This reversal indicates his devotion to Lena; indeed, his very despair at losing her acts as a repudiation of non-involvement as a viable doctrine to live by. His participation in the death rite has a purifying effect, as Davidson makes clear (V, 411), but, in the absence of any other definite eastern religious imagery these two scenes can only be taken as a small element of the whole.\(^{39}\) In

\(^{39}\) In an intriguing postscript to an essay on narrative form, Muriel Bradbrook suggests that in
the eye of a hurricane, Captain MacWhirr, consulting his barometer, "resembled a booted and mis-shapen pagan burning incense before the oracle of a Joss" (T, 84) and here the religious reference is clearly used to illustrate man's dependence on the instruments of his fashioning. The Hindu term "avatar" is used to denote the transformation of de Barral into Mr. Smith in Chance (C, 377, 382) and, since the concept of the word is that of the same body in a different form, its use here indicates that Anthony's hopes that all problems will be solved by being at sea are doomed to failure since these are still present in a different form.

Essentially, then, Buddhism and Hinduism are used sparingly in Conrad's work. Buddhism forms one of the elements that gives "Heart of Darkness" and Victory, "Conrad presents the conflict of Eastern mythology with Heyst's Western philosophy" and claims that "at the mythological level Victory draws . . . upon the deeper faiths and rites of the region where it is set." She sees Lena as embodying "that eternal struggle of light and darkness, the subject of the Javanese or Balinese dance, the conflict between Goodness unarmed and the Sea Demon with his followers." To this end, "the Balinese Kris dance symbolises the struggle enacted in Lena's contest for Ricardo's knife. The ironic victory of Eastern mysticism over deathly Nihilism culminates in the Brahmin funeral rite of purification by fire" ("Narrative Form in Conrad and Lowry," in Joseph Conrad: A Commemoration, ed. Norman Sherry [London: Macmillan, 1976], pp. 147-42). In this view, Eastern mysticism (or Hinduism, at least) would thus become a positive force here, but it would have been interesting to see a more detailed application; one that incorporated Ricardo's "bonze-like attitude," for example.
its main narrator a sense of universality, as well as linking eastern and western idolatry. In "Falk," it appears as a nihilistic alternative to the life-force illustrated so determinedly by Falk. Conrad's sources of information seem most likely to have been Schopenhauer and Amiel rather than the religious texts themselves (just as Burton seems to have been his main source for Islam). Whilst he could have read the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad-Gita and many Buddhist scriptures if he had wished, there is no evidence to suggest that he did so. Indeed, his knowledge seems very peripheral if his comment to Cunninghame Graham about "the potbellied gods ... gods with more legs than a centipede and more arms than a dozen windmills" is a fair sample of his attitude. It is echoed, fictionally, by old Peyrol when considering Arlette's adoration of Real:

"She sat and stared at him as if he had been gilt all over, with three heads and seven arms on his body"--a comparison reminiscent of certain idols he had seen in an Indian temple. Though not an iconoclast, Peyrol felt positively sick at the recollection. (Ro, 179)

These are not positive comments but, more importantly, nor are they informed ones, and, overall, the deeper wells of Eastern mysticism appear to remain untapped, yielding only some familiar physical images to contribute towards the greater pattern of religious allusions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONRAD'S TREATMENT OF CHRISTIANITY

i. Conrad's Catholics

It will be recalled that the enormities of Conrad's Muslims in his early works provide an exaggerated reflection of the faults of his Christians; particularly in the areas of exclusiveness, superstition and hypocrisy. Conrad, as we have seen, hovered uneasily between belief and disbelief and attempted to fulfil himself spiritually in his literary career. To convey "things human" in "a spirit of piety" would clearly involve him with the whole human being, including what may be loosely called man's spiritual side; an intangible component from which, at least, the reaction to art is drawn (or so he seems to suggest in "The Ascending Effort"). "A moralist," he writes to Galsworthy, "must present us with a gospel—he must give counsel, not to our reason or sentiment, but to our very soul."¹

Theologically, of course, man's "very soul," the seat of his spirituality, should find the fulfilment

of his aspirations within religion, but this had not happened in Conrad's case and is denied to most of his major characters. The parlous state of Christianity at the turn of the century receives eloquent expression within the pages of Conrad's fiction, and, whilst it is going too far to brand all its clerical representatives therein as "unpleasant or stupid," very few of them appear in a positive light. ²

His first such character—the Basque priest of The Sisters—is fanatical and ignorant:

His brother, the genius of the family, had become a priest and now was in charge of a hamlet full of fiery Basque souls which he endeavoured to keep in the path of godliness with fierce denunciations, with menacing words, with gloomy fanaticism, knowing nothing of the world, hating it, for it was the hospitable playground of the devil, hardly able to bring himself to tolerate the impious sunshine that, by an inexplicable oversight of the Creator, shone indiscriminately upon the believing and upon the wicked. A tall lean priest with ... an ascetic yet coarse face. ... A mystical fanatic who ... saw visions ... heard voices; who living amongst simple men and women felt clearly that he was living in a world inhabited by damned souls. (Sis, 68-69)

The egoism inherent in this point of view is also emphasised, for "He believed in the wickedness of mankind with all the innocence of his soul. ... In the appalling desert of human sinfulness the blood of his race flowed pure like a miraculous stream" (Sis, 72). He is a monarchist for "With the rightful

monarch the fear of God would reign in the land" (Sis, 73).

In The Arrow of Gold, which seems to be Conrad's reworking of the fragment, the priest is similarly described as "The saintly uncle in his wild parish" (AG, 40), and as a "stern, simple old man" who will only accept a gift of snuff "the only gratification his big, ascetic, gaunt body ever knew on earth" (AG, 141), when he thinks it has come from the king. His niece, Rita, however, poses interesting questions:

As I mounted my mule to go away he murmured coldly: "God guard you, Senora!" Senora! What sternness! we were off a little way already when his heart softened and he shouted after me in a terrible voice: "The road to Heaven is repentance!" And then after a silence, again the great shout "Repentance!" thundered after me. Was that sternness or simplicity, I wonder? Or a mere unmeaning superstition, a mechanical thing? If there lives anybody completely honest in this world, surely it must be my uncle. And yet—who knows? (AG, 115-16)

Use of the word "mechanical" by Rita reminds us of Conrad's description of Abdulla's reciting of Islamic formula; the sense of unthinking ritual. In appearance, this priest is very similar to the abbe in The Rover—"a gaunt man with a long, as if convulsed face" (Ro, 147) who has similar Royalist sympathies (Ro, 152), and who also prescribes repentance when confronted by a concerned Arlette (Ro, 156). Both Rita and Arlette are regarded as being "for no man" (AG, 135; Ro, 225), but whilst Rita confirms this by leaving George, Arlette prays for the furtherance of her love affair with Real, with whom she
finally forms a life-fulfilling relationship in contrast to the life-denying advice offered by the abbé. The Rover also shows the life-negating effects of the doctrine of celibacy, which blights the life of Catherine (Arlette's aunt) when she falls in love with a priest and acquires the nickname of "la fiancée du prêtre" (Ro, 89), causing her to feel "cast out from the grace of God" (Ro, 232). It may be significant that when Arlette visits the priest, the view of the presbytery is not a hopeful one:

She pushed open the little gate with the broken latch. The humble building of rough stones, from between which much mortar had crumbled out, looked as though it had been sinking slowly into the ground. The beds of the plot in front were choked with weeds, because the abbé had no taste for gardening. (Ro, 147)

Here is an immediate feeling of decline; almost as if the building has no place in the present. In the light of what follows it would be tempting to regard this picture as being symbolic of the doctrines and character of its incumbent; the beds of Christianity being stifled by the weeds of priestly doctrine or outmoded dogmas that the priest is unwilling to relinquish. Certainly the abbé's advice draws forth an appropriate comment from Peyrol when the old seaman is told of it by Catherine:

"He wanted to shut her up from everybody," and the old woman clasped her meagre hands with a sudden gesture. "I suppose there are still some convents about the world."
"You and the patronne are mad together," declared Peyrol. "All this only shows what
Here then, is one mould for a priest; that of a "gaunt" ascetic whose mind is fixed upon sin and repentance and who reflects his Church's support for absolutist and little-wanted monarchies. This kind of priest possesses an acute awareness of the dignity of his position, combined, in some cases, with a sense of condescension; traits that are best exemplified by the abbe of *The Rover*:

He had accepted, without a word, the charge of this miserable parish, where he had acquired influence quickly enough. His sacerdotalism lay in him like a cold passion. Though accessible enough, he never walked abroad without his breviary, acknowledging the solemnly bared heads by a curt nod. *(Ro, 148)*

The sense of pride and ambition revealed by the use of "miserable" to describe his parish is taken up on a larger scale with Father Carpi in *Suspense*. There are also obvious affinities between these priests and the more exalted figure of Father Corbelàn in *Nostromo*.

This picture of the clergy is grim and forbidding but, except for Rita's question (which is unresolved), there is no reason to suspect that the fanaticism and superstition they exhibit is not genuine, nor that their intentions are not good. Conrad's second type of priest is of a very different kind. He first appears in "The Idiots"—a story which derives from an incident of Conrad's honeymoon in
Brittany whilst he and Jessie were being driven by a friend (Prijean). Jessie Conrad reports that they saw the actual idiots during the ride and that "the story had its origin in Prijean's remark just after we had passed them sprawling in the ditch. 'Four-heine. And all in the same family. That's a little too much. And the priests say it's God's will!'" The implications of an unfeeling clergy, inherent in this statement, are taken up more explicitly in Conrad's story, in which the birth of idiot twins and a further idiot boy to Jean-Pierre and Susan Bacadou causes the local priest "to deliver himself with joyful unction of solemn platitudes about the inscrutable ways of Providence" to "the rich landowner, the Marquis de Chavanes." The priest, likened to "a black bolster" and gesticulating "with a fat hand," is "exulting and humble, proud and awed" (TU, 64-65).

The cause of these contrasting emotions is the decision of Jean-Pierre—"the enraged republican farmer"—to attend mass and to offer "to entertain the visiting priests at the next festival of Ploumar! It was a triumph for the Church and for the good cause" (TU, 65). Clearly evident here is the lack of compassion on the part of the priest and the sense of well-fed indolence he enjoys; both aspects tending to support Jean-Pierre's habit of comparing the clergy with scavenging crows. The marquis shares the priest's

3 Joseph Conrad as I Knew Him, p. 38.
joy since he sees the conversion as a matter of political advantage.

Jean-Pierre, however, regards his act as a decision to "sacrifice his convictions," proceeds to show hospitality "when a black soutane darkened his doorway" and feels "like a man who had sold his soul" (TU, 67). Though seen from Jean-Pierre's point of view, such inversions stress the negativity of the arrangement. Jean-Pierre's conversion is for a specific purpose—a non-idiot child—and, like the expiatory advice given by the abbe to Arlette, this is another attempt at spiritual bargaining; the practice Conrad so abhorred. In The Sisters, the father, dismayed at the departure of his son, Stephen, from his native land, "made a solemn vow to build a church in which the misguided son could have his peace with God by painting, on a gold background, a gorgeous altar-piece" (Sis, 48), only for the narrator to remark that "Providence, unlike the powers of this earth, was impervious to the effect of a splendid bribe" (Sis, 49). The father's earlier attempts to enlist "the help of renowned saints" has been answered only "by the meaningless stare of naïve art" (Sis, 47). Use of the word "bribe" gives an unpleasant perspective to the act (and seems very much in line with Conrad's view); whilst "naïve" is an indication of the futility of the old man's belief in miracles. Both these aspects have been more subtly transferred to "The Idiots." When the condition for Jean-Pierre's conver-
sion is not fulfilled (his fourth child is also an idiot), he recants his faith by shouting at the church and receives a similar response to the "trustful prayers" of Stephen's father, in this case "The song of nightingales" beating "on all sides against the high walls of the church," and flowing back "between stone crosses and flat gray slabs, engraved with words of hope and sorrow" (TU, 69). When, fearful of conceiving a fifth idiot, Susan has killed him, she complains at the injustice of Heaven which seems not to distinguish between blasphemy and prayer (TU, 75-76), and does, indeed remain "high and impassive" during her final cry for help (TU, 84), indicating the falsity of a belief which regards misfortune in this life as punishment for sin and felicity as the just reward for piety.

The unpleasant influence of the priest intrudes again since Catholic theology prohibits the burial of a suicide in holy ground. But the Marquis, to whom Susan's mother applies, has influence in such matters and, since it would be politically expedient for the old lady to be in charge of the farm, he agrees to "speak to the Cure" (TU, 85). The priests, therefore, can be seen as subservient to wealthy interests; their concerns, seemingly, very much material.

Two extremes of clerical shortcomings have so far come to light—indolent self-seeking and fanatical and superstitious asceticism. In Nostromo, these and other failings are more subtly presented. The familiar
elements of a superstitious laity, influenced by a powerful clergy (the epitome of the Church in Poland) are quickly introduced in that novel with the legend of the wandering sailors who disappeared during a search for treasure:

The impious adventurers gave no other sign. The sailors, the Indian, and the stolen burro were never seen again. As to the mozo, a Sulaco man--his wife paid for some masses, and the poor four-footed beast, being without sin, had been probably permitted to die; but the two gringos, spectral and alive, are believed to be dwelling to this day amongst the rocks, under the fatal spell of their success. Their souls cannot tear themselves away from their bodies mounting guard over the discovered treasure. They are now rich and hungry and thirsty--a strange theory of tenacious gringo ghosts suffering in their starved and parched flesh of defiant heretics, where a Christian would have renounced and been released. (N, 5)

This legend has more importance to the novel than as a simple reflection of superstition, but the elements of belief that it reveals are worthy of note. For evident in this extract are the religious concerns of the simple Catholic laity of Sulaco: a preoccupation with sin, a belief in ghosts, the regarding of all non-Catholics as heretics (and, therefore, non-Christians) and the need to pay for masses to aid the progress of a dead man's soul--all of which indicates a combination of primitive superstition and priestly indoctrination. The need to pay for masses necessarily not only enhances the prestige of the clergy but augments their incomes as well.

The pervading nature of this heritage is illus-
trated later by the way Nostromo is affected by his refusal to bring a priest to Teresa's deathbed. Despite his disbelief in the "sacerdotal character" of priests, he feels "uneasy at the impiety of this refusal" (N, 255). Once "the admired publicity of his life" has gone, he is ready "to feel the burden of sacrilegious guilt descend upon his shoulders." The cause of this vulnerability is cited as lack of scepticism, whose absence delivers the masses "to the wiles of swindlers"—which may, indeed, include the clergy—"and to the pitiless enthusiasms of leaders inspired by visions of a high destiny" (N, 420).

Scepticism, one recalls, was extolled by Conrad to Galsworthy (to whom Nostromo was dedicated), as "the tonic of minds, the tonic of life, the agent of truth,--the way of art and salvation." 4

The way the superstitious nature of the Costa-guanan laity is deliberately perpetuated by the clergy is illustrated by the stories of the infamous dictator Guzman Bento who:

... reached his apotheosis in the popular legend of a sanguinary land-haunting spectre whose body had been carried off by the devil in person from the brick mausoleum in the nave of the Church of Assumption in Sta. Marta. Thus, at least, the priests explained its disappearance to the barefooted multitude that streamed in, awestruck, to gaze at the hole in the side of the ugly box of bricks before the great altar. (N, 47)

4 "To John Galsworthy," 11 Nov. 1901, LL, I, 301.
Three priests are specifically named in Nostromo. The first of these to appear is Father Roman and he too can be seen to be encouraging ignorance and superstition (and may be also revealing his own) by purporting Europe to be "a country of saints and miracles", (N, 103). Roman is the spiritual pastor of the silver miners and seems to have spent much of his past serving in wars during which he "had shriven many simple souls on the battlefields of the Republic" (N, 103). The priest is a likeable character, fond of his game of cards and apparently genuinely fond of his charges. But the concern he shows for their fate during the revolt of Montero reveals other aspects of his character as well:

He entertained towards the Indians of the valley feelings of paternal scorn. He had been marrying, baptizing, confessing, absolving, and burying the workers of the San Tome mine with dignity and unction for five years or more; and he believed in the sacredness of these ministrations, which made them his own in a spiritual sense. They were dear to his sacerdotal supremacy. Mrs. Gould's earnest interest in the concerns of these people enhanced their importance in the priest's eyes, because it really augmented his own. (N, 399)

What is evident in this passage is the sense of importance Roman feels, deriving from the sense of superiority he has over his flock. The more important his flock becomes, the more important he becomes, and it is also self-evident that this power will be greatly diminished if Montero should succeed. He has, therefore, a vested interest in seeing that the status
quo should be maintained. Despite the influence of dogma, however, Romàn is still able to appreciate Emilia Gould, though not without this causing some confusion in his feelings, for "Padre Romàn was incapable of fanaticism to an almost reprehensible degree. The English senora was evidently a heretic; but at the same time she seemed to him wonderful and angelic" (N, 399).

This apparent disparity in the Catholic claim to exclusive saintliness causes Romàn to "shake his head profoundly," but he does not question further.

In reality, though, Romàn is serving the San Tome mine; a position that is made clear by the cynical but perceptive Dr. Monygham after the crisis has passed:

And the heroic Father Romàn--I imagine the old padre blowing up systematically the San Tome mine, uttering a pious exclamation at every bang, and taking handfuls of snuff between the explosions--the heroic Padre Romàn says that he is not afraid of the harm Holroyd's missionaries can do to his flock, as long as he is alive. (N, 507)

Romàn's duty to God and his flock is thus confused with his devotion to the San Tome mine, that symbol of material interests which to some extent will claim the allegiance of almost every character in the book. His egotistical sense of control over the simple souls of the miners is also evident in the last few words of the passage which refer to the arrival of Protestantism to the area. Though a Catholic priest, as his name helps to emphasise, Romàn is really an illustra-
tion of how, in a subtle way, religion can be manipulated to serve other ends, in this case those of material interests.

Father Corbelán, the most dominant religious figure in the novel, first appears through the eyes of the sceptically observant Martin Decoud whose analysis is perceptive. Decoud reports how the priest "said Mass for the troops" before "an altar of drums" with "wooden saints" standing "militarily in a row... like a gorgeous escort attending the Vicar General," who "glittered exceedingly in his vestments with a great crimson velvet cross down his back. And all the time our saviour Barrios sat in the Amarilla Club drinking punch at an open window" (N, 187-88).

This first, dramatic appearance of Corbelán shows him as one who is very conscious of the trappings of the church and very keen to perpetuate them. The wooden saints seem to recognise in him a member of the church militant but Decoud's ironical reference to Barrios as "our saviour" helps to undercut this sense of importance and Corbelán's harangue of the general soon afterwards is a quick reaction to Barrios' apparent flouting of ecclesiastical (and Corbelán's) authority. The ill-fated journalist is also perceptive enough to realise where the priest's true passions lie:

But I know him, too, our Padre Corbelán. The idea of political honour, justice, and honesty for him consists in the restitution of the confiscated Church property. Nothing else could have drawn that fierce converter
of savage Indians out of the wilds to work for the Ribierist cause! Nothing else but that wild hope! He would make a pronunciamiento himself for such an object against any Government if he could only get followers! (N, 188-89)

Corbelan's view of "an outraged Church waiting for reparation from a penitent country" (N, 195) causes the less informed citizens of Sulaco to murmur that the greater part of the land will be taken from the people and "go to the padres" (N, 195), and, indeed, Don Pepe has earlier confirmed that, in the past, "it was everything for the Padres, nothing for the people; and now it is everything for these great politicos in Sta. Marta, for negroes and thieves" (N, 89). Church and corrupt government are, thus, clearly linked. Even at the end, Corbelan is described as "everlast-ingly worrying the Government about the old Church lands and converts"; conduct which, Mitchell believes, is approved of in Rome (N, 478).

Corbelan fails to see that his temporal demands are anachronistic. The ruined Convent in which he meets Nostromo (N, 196) and the battered "moss-stain-ed effigy of some saintly bishop" which adorns premises that were "once the residence of a high official of the Holy Office" (N, 98), are clear indications that the days of ecclesiastical splendour in Sulaco belong to the past; a fact that is confirmed by the exchange between Emilia Gould and Sir John in the early stages of the novel (N, 35-36).

Romàn and Corbelan are the cream of the priests,
however, and their fearlessness is in marked contrast to the characteristics of their fellow clergy. When Teresa is dying, Nostromo reveals that "the populace are much incensed against the priests. Not a single fat padre would have consented to put his head out of his hiding-place to-night to save a Christian soul, except, perhaps, under my protection" (N, 268). The phrase "fat padre" implies that the priests have been living well off the people, in a similar way to those of "The Idiots."

Under the notorious regime of Guzman Bento, they have appeared in a still more unfavourable light, from the "trembling, subservient Archbishop of his creation" who celebrates solemn Masses of thanksgiving on his behalf "in great pomp in the cathedral of Sta. Marta" (N, 139), to the slovenly army chaplains in attendance at executions (N, 138), to the sadistic Father Beron whose exhortation to prisoners, "Will you confess now?" (N, 373) is a clear perversion of the confessional. Under Bento the "power of Supreme Government" becomes "an object of strange worship, as if it were some sort of cruel deity" (N, 137). This easy manipulation of the clergy and its subservience to whatever power is predominant is seen, in a symbolic sense, when Pedro Montero enters Sulaco to the peal of Cathedral bells and those of "every church, convent, or chapel in town" (N, 381). The clergy are presumably still in hiding at this stage, but the easy utilisation of religious edifices is a clear
reflection of their own pliability. Little wonder old Giorgio should consider that "the sea, which knows nothing of kings and priests and tyrants, is the holiest of all" (N, 341), and should advise Giselle to pray "not to the God of priests and slaves, but to the God of orphans, of the oppressed, of the poor, of little children" (N, 533); a concept that sounds much closer to the ideals of Christianity as advocated in the Gospels than the version current in Sulaco.

There is, therefore, much scope for a "purer form of Christianity"; that pet dream of the American financier, Holroyd (N, 240). But this proves to be little more than an adjunct to material interests and its introduction into Sulaco simply starts a sectarian battle for souls. Indeed, Corbelan's elevation to Cardinal is thought to be "a counter-move to the Protestant invasion of Sulaco organized by Holroyd's Missionary Fund" (N, 509). The term "invasion" again denotes a power struggle and seems, once more, to connect the outlook of institutionalised religion with that of governments.

Nostromo, in fact, is Conrad's most comprehensive consideration of Christian inadequacies, embracing not only the church of his native land but also one akin to that of his adopted country. The Catholic laity is shown to be suffering under the heritage of persistent and insidious superstition and also to be harbouring resentment against their
clergy, the main purveyors of this heritage. Their priests prove to be either subservient to or even willing allies of ruthless tyranny and, under milder regimes, either fight for church power (Corbelàn), live lives of ease at their flocks' expense ("fat padre"), or are subtly manipulated by material interests (Romàn). The Protestant wing of the religion is still more closely linked with materialism and offers no hope of succour for the oppressed masses. The literal religious language of Nostromo, therefore, reveals a spiritual void and (as will be seen later) it is the purpose of the figurative religious terms in the novel to indicate attempts to fill this void; attempts that prove to be just as unsuccessful.

Conrad's treatment of Catholicism rarely strays from the pattern laid down in "The Idiots" and Nostromo. Even his unfinished Suspense, written in the early 1920s, contains a simple villager whose beliefs extend to the efficacy of exorcism and the inevitability of all Englishmen (heretics) having "their wickedness written on their faces" (S, 160); this is a further indictment of priestly influence, although, as was noted earlier, Father Romàn had similar problems in assessing Emilia Gould. It also contains a calculating priest in Father Paul Carpi, whose "first stirrings of ambition" cause him to be judiciously perceptive and subservient when in the presence of the powerful Count Helion (S, 163), though the count shows an awareness of priestly pretensions to power
by equating "the reign of God" with the reign of priests (§, 162). When confronted with the problem of the troublesome Clelia, Father Paul proves to be a master of evasion:

To gain time he smiled, a slight non-committal smile.

"We priests, M. le Comte, are recommended not to enter into discussion of theological matters with people who, whatever their accomplishments and wisdom, are not properly instructed in them. As to anything else I am always at Monseigneur's service."

He gave this qualification to Count Helion because it was not beyond the bounds of respect due from a poor parish priest to a titled great man of his province. (§, 164)

This is clear hypocrisy since it is soon revealed, after a comment by Helion "that the only thing which seemed to put a limit to the power of God was the folly of men," that the priest "had too poor an opinion of Count de Montevesso to be shocked by the blasphemy" (§, 165). Father Paul also possesses an enduring capacity to swim with the current, as is seen by his earlier treatment of the probable suicide of Clelia's mother:

He had consented to bury her in consecrated ground not from any compassion but because of the revolutionary spirit which had penetrated even the thick skulls of his parishioners and probably would have caused a riot and shaken the precarious power of the Church in his obscure valley. (§, 166)

His lack of "compassion" and concern for the "power" of the church (not to mention the low opinion he holds of his flock) are noteworthy here, exhibit-
ing a willingness to compromise with supposedly sacred principles and questioning the whole Catholic attitude to suicide at the same time. Faced with the (to him) inexplicable behaviour of Clelia and the "sense of his own powerlessness" (S, 166), he is reduced to futile (and unsuccessful) threats of exorcism.

In the eyes of Attilio, the clergy can be linked with Austrian spies or Piedmontese police (S, 11). To him, the "old tyrannical superstitions of religion" which they engender are allied to "the oppression of privileged classes. . . . He respected all religions but despised the priests who preached submission" (S, 257). Together with this familiar linking with autocracy are signs of corruption within the Church. Catholic laws can also be circumvented at times, it seems, not only when inconvenient to enforce (as seen above) but also when wealth or position is involved. Madame de Montevesso describes how, on the early breakdown of her marriage, "Some of these good friends offered him [Helion] their influence in Rome for the annulment of the marriage, for a consideration of course" (S, 139), which would effectively side-step the Catholic prohibition on divorce. Suspense thus adds deliberate cunning to the composite picture of a Conradian priest and reveals the easy corruption of Catholic doctrines where material advantage is involved.

This unpleasant picture of Catholicism in Conrad's
novels is completed by two characters in *The Arrow of Gold*, members of the laity this time. The introduction of Therese at once sounds the chord of ostentatious religion and likely hypocrisy, for J.M.K. Blunt comments not only on the "rosary at her waist" but also on her love of money (*AG*, 40). M. George describes her as "Therese of the whispering lips and downcast eyes slipping out to an early mass from the house of iniquity into the early winter murk of the city of perdition, in a world steeped in sin" and as being afraid of the "impious streets" as if of a "contamination" (*AG*, 40). She regards Rita as sinful, trying to persuade her sister to "cast off" her "evil ways with the help of saints and priests" (*AG*, 118), but, despite her "really nun-like dress" (*AG*, 40), her inner passions are less ascetic and are made explicit at the end when she runs off with the wounded Ortega (*AG*, 341-42). Therese proves to be miserly (*AG*, 155), vain (*AG*, 156), and hypocritically complacent, as when she masters "the feelings of anger so unbecoming to a person whose sins had been absolved only about three hours before" (*AG*, 157). Indeed, part of her animosity towards Rita seems to stem from her feelings that salvation is less assured in the sinful city than in the country, "serving a holy man, next door to a church, and sure of my share of Paradise" (*AG*, 160). She is capable of displaying "a distracting versatility of sentiment: rapacity, virtue, piety, spite, and false tenderness" (*AG*, 289) but when she confronts
George and Rita, who have spent the night together after the dramatic scene with Ortega, her claim that she will never desert her sister brings the perceptive comment from Rita, "What is it . . . my soul or this house that you won't abandon" (AG, 335)? knowingly or unknowingly, Therese's bigotry acts as a mask for her selfish desires and may, indeed, be used as a means to attain them.

The picture of Don Rafael de Villarel, on the other hand, not only emphasises the fanatical side of the Church but gives reminders of its past cruelties too:

Of him I had only heard that he was a very austere and pious person, always at Mass, and that sort of thing. I saw a frail little man with a long, yellow face and sunken fanatical eyes, an Inquisitor, an unfrocked monk. One missed a rosary from his thin fingers. He gazed at me terribly and I couldn't imagine what he might want. I waited for him to pull out a crucifix and sentence me to the stake there and then. (AG, 82)

This is Rita's description but George confirms the impression later in the book (AG, 250-53). This, then, is the man who equates service to the deposed monarchy with service to religion—accompanying his references to the king with the pious words "whom God preserve" (AG, 250, 251)—and who crosses himself whenever he makes mention of "our Holy Mother the Church" (AG, 251, 252).

Villarel seems like a figure from the past, reflecting the Church's inclinations to move back in
time instead of forward. Support of the Carlists in The Arrow of Gold and of the monarchy in Suspense can be seen in the same light as Corbelàn's fixation with the restoration of Church lands; these are examples of an unrealistic and reactionary intransigence that (as was noted earlier) seems to have been the hallmark of Catholicism in the nineteenth century.

ii. Conrad's Non-Catholics, I: Greek Orthodox

Roman Catholicism was not alone in being an ally of autocracy, of course. In Under Western Eyes, the Greek Orthodox Church of Russia appears in a similar light; so much so that Mrs Haldin is moved to remark, "With us in Russia the church is so identified with oppression, that it seems almost necessary when one wishes to be free in this life, to give up hoping for a future existence" (UWE, 103). This view is later endorsed by another revolutionary, Sophia Antonovna, who explains, "As I could not go to the Church where the priests of the system exhorted such unconsidered vermin as I to resignation, I went to the secret societies" (UWE, 263).

Even those priests who have good intentions (unless they actively rebel like Father Zosim, "the priest-democrat" [UWE, 136]) are forced to adhere to the system. The old priest who reveals to Natalia Haldin and her mother that he has "been ordered to watch and ascertain in other ways too (such as using
his spiritual power with the servants)" all that goes on in their house, fears that his deacon will "make the worst of things to curry favour" if he disobeys:

He did not wish to spend the evening of his days with a shaven head in the penitent's cell of some monastery--"and subjected to all the severities of ecclesiastical discipline; for they would show no mercy to an old man," he groaned. (UWE, 139)

Here is a picture of the clergy as a network of spies, not only on their parishioners, but also on each other; a picture of Christianity in league with the secular government to such an extent that non-cooperation with autocracy is regarded as a sin meriting strict penance. That priests could be so punished if they strayed from autocratic prescriptions is confirmed by Conrad in A Personal Record, though here he gives due credit to the Greek Orthodox priest who vainly attempted to prevent an unruly mob of peasants from ransacking the home of the author's great-uncle, Nicholas Bobrowski. The immediate promise of gold, however, outweighed the more distant prospect of salvation for these country-folk, and there is a bitter irony in the fact that "a small ivory crucifix" was all that remained after the priest's efforts proved unavailing (PR, 61-62). The event seems to form the basis for an incident in The Rover where Scevola, the intransigent supporter of revolution, is rescued from irate villagers by the speedy intervention of their newly restored abbe (Ro, 42).
iii. Conrad's Non-Catholics, II: Protestant Clergy

Conrad's Protestant clergy are less pervasive in his fiction but are also generally inadequate and unworldly. The easily flustered curate of "Typhoon" is a mild example of this, his misunderstanding of "Solomon says..." being a source of humour in the story (T, 16). Having a grandfather who was "a preacher" (Re, 22) does not prevent Shaw, Lingard's mate in The Rescue, from being bigoted and acutely aware of racial superiority. In The Secret Agent, the Professor, the ultimate anarchist, ready to destroy at a moment's notice, is the son of "an itinerant and rousing preacher of some obscure but rigid Christian sect" (SA, 80), and here it is suggested that the fanaticism of the father has contributed to that of the son.

The most extended example of an inadequate clerical parent comes in Lord Jim, in which Jim's religious background is introduced as early as the fourth paragraph:

Originally he came from a parsonage. Many commanders of fine merchant-ships come from these abodes of piety and peace. Jim's father possessed such certain knowledge of the Unknowable as made for the righteousness of people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerring Providence enables to live in mansions. The little church on a hill had the mossy greyness of a rock seen through a ragged screen of leaves. It had stood there for centuries, but the trees around probably remembered the laying of the first stone. (LJ, 5)
The red front of the rectory is said to possess "a warm tint" exuding a sense of cosiness, but two inadequacies are immediately evident. The parson keeps noticeably silent about the privileged among his flock, suggesting that his truths stay a comfortable distance away from home. The other hint of inadequacy is given in the comparison of age between the church and the trees. The church gives the impression of being older than it actually is but nature is much older; the implication being that there is an ancient wisdom not possessed by the comfortable rural style of religion practised by Jim's family who have had the living for generations. It is a bitter irony for Jim that his parson father, who, by virtue of his calling, should be expected to have an understanding and compassion for most human failings, "wouldn't understand" (LJ, 79)—or, at least, so Jim believes.

Marlow receives an insight into the father's character by reading the last letter he has written to Jim, and his picture of the old man, "grey haired and serene in the inviolable shelter of his book-lined, faded and comfortable study, where for forty years he had conscientiously gone over and over again the round of his little thoughts about faith and virtue, about the conduct of life and the only proper manner of dying" (LJ, 341), reveals how out of touch the parson is with the harsh realities with which Jim is confronted. The father's "little thoughts" are shown to be combined with a pretentious assumption of
exclusive wisdom which is, ironically, shown to be derived from ignorance.

Just as unrealistic is the missionary who thinks he is converting Gentleman Brown "to a better way of life" when, in fact, that notorious robber, who is giving him such hopes of "a remarkable conversion," is preparing to seduce the missionary's wife (LW, 384). Both the missionary and Jim's father (and, by implication, the church they represent), for all their book learning, are incapable of realising the perfidy that exists among the human race. This dangerous innocence is shared by Jim, whose treatment of Brown is, indeed, comparable to the missionary's and leads to disaster.

iv. Conrad's Non-Catholics, III: Protestant Laity

Conrad's Protestant laity show up in no better light. In Almayer's Folly, the hypocritical and racial character of the proper Mrs. Vinck's "Protestant wing" is a factor in alienating Nina Almayer from white society. In The Nigger of the "Narcissus", Podmore is complacent (being assured of his own salvation), bigoted (being equally assured of the ultimate damnation of his shipmates), and fanatical, and his egotistical conviction that he will save the soul of the dying James Wait succeeds only in provoking a near-mutiny on board the ship. His Christian fundamentalism—a belief in "lilies, gold harps and brimstone" (as Conrad observed to Cunninghame Graham)⁵

⁵ "To R.B. Cunninghame Graham," 6 Dec. 1897,
--creates only disruption, therefore, and it is made clear that his duty towards the ship is not to preach but to cook.

The inadequacies of religion among Conrad's adopted countrymen are at their most pervasive in his fiction between 1896 (when he began The Nigger of the "Narcissus") and 1902 (when he completed "The End of the Tether"). "Amy Foster" (written in 1901) is a damning indictment of Christian practice in an English village. The churches of Brenzett and Colebrook--one with its "spire in a clump of trees," the other with its "square tower" (T, 105)--are both prominent features of their respective villages, but the early mention of a Martello Tower (built to thwart invasion), is a reminder of a heritage which has not been overtly welcome to those from overseas. The unfortunate shipwrecked foreigner, Yanko Goorall, is regarded with suspicion by the villagers so that their response to his appeal "in God's name to afford food and shelter" (T, 120) is to shut him up as a dangerous lunatic; the action being performed by a Mr. Smith whose name may serve as a cynical reflection of English normality. It may be indicative of the test that Goorall's presence creates for the community that Kennedy, the narrator, should liken the ship's rigging to "another and slighter spire to the left of Brenzett Church," and an indication of the community's response that

Letter 3, Conrad to Cunninghame Graham, p. 49.
the dead bodies should be "laid out in a row under the north wall of the Brenzett Church" (T, 123). It may also be significant that the only person to aid Yanko and render him sustenance (as all Christians are enjoined to do) should be Amy Foster whose subsequent love for the man has previously been described as primitive and pagan (T, 110).

Once Yanko begins to settle, his observations act as a telling expose of Christian hypocrisy. After noting that "the aspect of the people, especially on Sunday, spoke of opulence" he is moved to wonder "what made them so hard-hearted and their children so bold" (T, 128), and confesses that, but for "the steel cross at Miss Swaffer's belt he would not . . . have known whether he was in a Christian country at all" (T, 129). The emphasis on Miss Swaffer (with her reputation for piety) being "Church--as people said (while her father was one of the trustees of the Baptist Chapel)" (T, 128), adds an element of sectarianism to the scene.

Yanko's unconscious exposure of hypocrisy becomes still more incisive as time passes whilst the concern of the villagers is simply to convert him to their own sect of Christianity:

He became aware of social differences, but remained for a long time surprised at the bare poverty of the churches among so much wealth. He couldn't understand either why they were kept shut up on week-days. There was nothing to steal in them. Was it to keep people from praying too often? The rectory took much notice of him about that time, and I believe the young ladies attemp-
ted to break the ground for his conversion. They could not, however, break him of his habit of crossing himself. (T, 131)

Yanko, in fact, retains his simple Catholicism and, after the manner of his father, recites the Lord's Prayer every evening "in incomprehensible words" (T, 131); a phrase which indicates the prejudiced and ignorant view of the villagers. But his "slow, fervent tone" implies sincerity, and, indeed, at his wedding to Amy, it is suggested that "The crooked cross made by the castaway" acts as "the most solemn part of the whole ceremony" (T, 134). When she has become a mother, however, Amy objects to his praying habits and his expectations of his son repeating the prayer after him (T, 137), which shows, in fact, an intransigence on both their parts. Eventually she deserts him when, during a fever, he asks for water in his own language and he dies in Doctor Kennedy's arms, perplexed and miserable:

She had left him--sick--helpless--thirsty. The spear of the hunter had entered his very soul. 'Why?' he cried, in the penetrating and indignant voice of a man calling to a responsible Maker. A gust of wind and a swish of rain answered. (T, 141)

Yanko receives the familiar empty response from the heavens, giving a sense of futile belief. Certainly, faced with the heartlessness of man, Kennedy, at least, can see no evidence of supernatural intervention. "Amy Foster," then, exposes the emptiness of Christianity; like one of the dead bodies in the
streets that bedeck the pages of the Book of Revela-
tions, it possesses the appearance but not the real-
ity of a living entity.

Bigotry and hypocrisy are the most obvious and
most unpleasant of religious failings but there is
still another aspect of an unsatisfactory Christian
outlook that draws Conrad's critical attention in "The
End of the Tether." Captain Whalley, initially, appears
to be a fine exemplar of the faith he professes but
his belief extends to a fatal presumption of continu-
ing good health, inconsistent with his age, when he
enters into partnership with Massy:

"Let that go," Captain Whalley had said with
a superb confidence in his body. "Acts of
God," he added. In the midst of life we are
in death, but he trusted his Maker with a
still greater fearlessness--his Maker who
knew his thoughts, his human affections, and
his motives. His Creator knew what use he
was making of his health--how much he wanted
it. (Y, 271)

Though Whalley claims to expect "no miracles" (Y,
291), this presumption causes him to ignore certain
ominous signs, for life has not been as he would have
planned. Thoughts of his dead wife, for example,
frequently distract him from his Bible reading (Y, 172)
and indicate that death or misfortune can come between
the man and his faith. Hints of earlier delusion
quickly follow:

It was like an article of faith with him
that there never had been, and never could
be, a brighter, cheerier home anywhere a-
float or ashore than his home under the
poop-deck of the Condor, with the big main
cabin all white and gold, garlanded as if for a perpetual festival with an unfading wreath. (Y, 172)

But the festival has not been perpetual, nor has the wreath been unfading and, whilst this has only been "like" an article of faith with him, it has not proved enduring. The passage reveals Whalley’s failure to understand the transitoriness of life and should cause him to question his blithe presumptions. Finally, during his conversation with Captain Eliott, the cathedral in the background seems to symbolise his situation:

The sacred edifice, standing in solemn isolation amongst the converging avenues of enormous trees, as if to put grave thoughts of heaven into the hours of ease, presented a closed Gothic portal to the light and glory of the west. The glass of the rosace above the ogive glowed like fiery coal in the deep carvings of a wheel of stone. (Y, 198)

This is especially ominous for the "light and glory of the west" is, of course, the sun setting on the day that has gone (just as Whalley's glory belongs to the day that has gone), and to this light the cathedral presents a "closed Gothic portal" amidst its sense of age and opulence. The building seems to belong to the past also and gives no hint that it (or what it represents) will be of any service to Whalley; the suggestion, in fact, is that it will not.

Whalley’s belief—an expectation of earthly favours for faithful conduct—is a subtle variation
on the "bargaining with the eternal" theme that Conrad had already exposed in "The Idiots." Consequently, when Whalley's sight fails, he regards it as a "punishment" which is "too great for a little presumption, for a little pride" and begins to question his faith (Y, 324-25). This presumption, together with a pride that could not accept the idea of his daughter running a boarding-house, leads him to feel "forgotten" by God (Y, 338), and the mercy of the death he finally prays for comes about only by his own hand.

Whalley's plight, however, has been the saving of Mr. Van Wyk, who comes out of his seclusion to re-enter the affairs of the world. Whether Whalley's daughter will thank "a God merciful at last" (Y, 338) seems unlikely but, materially, her position is also improved by her father's death. Clearly, though, the practice of treating belief in God as a kind of charm that will ward off misfortune is condemned here as totally invalid. Though one of the most humane of Conrad's practising Christians, Whalley's outlook on life is still shown to be based on a false premise.

iii. Summary

Wherever it exists and whatever its institutionalized form, therefore, Christianity, as practised in Conrad's fiction, is shown to be inadequate to the needs of the human race. In their dogged support of legitimacy, Conrad's churches support tyranny and this alliance, together with their acute consciousness of
their own power, brings oppression instead of relief to the people by perpetuating medieval superstition. Their priests, with a very few exceptions, are either grim fanatics, proclaiming outworn shibboleths to a credulous populace, or indolent self-seekers, prospering at their parishioners' expense. Very few of the clergy exhibit the signs of compassion, understanding and love that should be the hallmarks of their calling. Both the Catholic and Protestant Faiths are shown to be riddled with hypocrisy and bigotry; true to the trappings of belief but false to its spirit. Their uninformed laity seeks in vain for earthly bounties to reward righteous conduct—an example of the "shent-per-shent" business that Conrad condemned. Whalley apart, the virtues lacking in the clergy are also absent from their more obtrusive laity and we generally have to look elsewhere, to those who do not make a performance of their belief, for the most humane of Conrad's characters. All in all, the state of Christianity within the Conradian canon is pitiful and it is little wonder that, faced with such a background, bewildered souls (such as Flora de Barral in Chance) should find no consolation at religion's door (C, 164). Little wonder too, perhaps, that the real gods to whom mankind pays homage should be shown to be outside religion altogether.
CHAPTER EIGHT

DEVIL AND SOUL

i. The Demonic and **Egoísmo**

Two aspects of Conrad's use of religious language merit special attention: the demonic and its natural prey, the soul. Both terms seem to have meanings beyond their traditional theological ones and their usage is frequently closely connected with the novelist's major themes. Inevitably there are times when devil and soul inter-connect; for the time being, however, they will be kept apart.

There are warnings to be heeded in any analysis of Conrad's use of the demonic. When an age-old concept of a Satanic scapegoat, at whose door can be laid all the wrongdoings of mankind, has been so firmly imbedded in the consciousness, one has to be very careful to distinguish between deliberate usage for a specific effect and the mere repetition of age-old phraseology. Terms such as "poor devil" and the use of "infernal" as an adjective were in such common use at the turn of the century (appearing frequently within Conrad's correspondence) that one could make too much of their appearances. The cry of "Not a pice more! You go to the devil!" from an unnamed
member of the crew of the Narcissus, for example (NN, 4), is unlikely to have meaning beyond its obvious colloquial abuse. When, however, the term is used with definite meaning—literal or figurative—there is a need to probe further. The questions posed in a previous chapter have now to be answered. What makes a character "Satanic?" Is he Satanic because demonic terms are associated with him or because he possesses Satanic attributes? What are Satanic attributes? If a character has been "possessed," what has possessed him? Presumably the devil. But what is the devil?

To answer these questions, one must look very carefully at the actions and attributes of those characters with whom the demonic associations have been made. Conrad, clearly, had no belief in the traditional depiction of Hell and its overlord; his use of the terms must surely be taken to indicate some fault, some destructive mode of behaviour in a character that exerts a pernicious influence upon all around it.

Wait is regarded as Satanic chiefly because of the effect he has over the crew. Ted E. Boyle attempts to link him with Milton's Satan because of his bearing, height and pride but this is an example of identification by literary association rather than through instantly recognisable religious language.¹ Paul

Kirschner has pointed out that the manner of Wait's death closely resembles that of Forestier in Bel-Ami, but there is, presumably, no intention of linking Wait with Maupassant's character.  

A succession of demonic images does become attached to Wait, though it is important to note that these are always given through the eyes of the crew. There are two narrators in The Nigger of the "Narcissus"—one omniscient, the other an unnamed seaman—which produces the dual effects of involvement and detachment. Demonic images become attached to Wait either by the seaman-narrator or the cook but not by the more knowledgeable officers or the omniscient narrator (or, indeed, by the patriarchal Singleton), to whom he is just a dying man.

Wait is demonic in the sense that he brings disruption to the essential orderliness of life at sea. Devotion to the ship is the necessary creed, the true religion of the Narcissus, and is so equated by the omniscient narrator. Destiny for the sailor is controlled by "the immortal sea" which is described as a kind of presiding deity, possessed of a "disdainful mercy," conferring "in its justice the full privilege of desired unrest" as an example of "the perfect wisdom of its grace" (NN, 90). Existence on its surface


depends on the solidarity of a ship's crew in their working of the ship. This devotion, this solidarity is undermined by Wait who, in thus opposing true religion (in the nautical sense at least), can be considered demonic.

All this is commonplace; the basis from which most critics work, whatever their interpretation of Wait's symbolic purposes may be. The build-up of demonic imagery associated with Wait has also been carefully noted from time to time—notably by Martin and by Boyle—but noted without its referent. Podmore comments of Wait, "I thought I had seen the devil" (NN, 19) which, initially, tells us more about the cook and his fundamentalism than it does of Wait. Obviously his thought is dictated by Wait's colour; the immediate association of blackness with darkness and evil. When Belfast steals the pie, the cook decides that "Satan was abroad amongst those men" (NN, 38) whilst on the previous page the seaman-narrator has compared Wait's influence over the crew to that of a prince over his subjects and has spoken of "the infernal spell which that casual St. Kitt's nigger had cast upon our guileless manhood" (NN, 37). Later he affirms: "Had we been a miserable gang of wretched immortals, unhallowed alike by hope and fear, he could not have lorded it over us with a more pitiless assertion of his sublime privilege" (NN, 47). From their different standpoints, therefore, cook and crew are now essentially in agreement; fundamentalistic
assertion and observable effect thus concur.

During the fury of the storm, Jimmy is forgotten, but once the ship is on her side and there is nothing more that can be done, he is remembered and has to be rescued. As four of the sailors attempt to reach him, their endeavours are accompanied by an image of hell for "Wamibo . . . remained glaring above us--all shining eyes, gleaming fangs, tumbled hair; resembling an amazed and half-witted fiend gloating over the extraordinary agitation of the damned" (NN, 66). The true religion here, it must be remembered, is the devotion towards the proper running of the ship. Wait's presence takes the men away from that essential belief. Thus, during the rescue, the seamen hand nails up to the boatswain who "as if performing a mysterious and appeasing rite, cast them wide upon a raging sea," and Belfast sets to "cursing the Clyde shipwrights for not scamping their work" (NN, 68). Both are acts of blasphemy in this particular religious context giving point to the demonic image that preceded this.

Finally Wait is seen in the light of "a black idol, reclining stiffly under a blanket," which "blinked its weary eyes and received our homage" (NN, 105). Traditionally Satan was guilty of the sin of pride which has its roots in an immoderate egoism. It is an excessive egoism that causes Wait to become a disruptive force of such potency that, with Donkin's aid, he almost succeeds in creating a mutiny. Wait's egoism brings to the fore the egoism of others; nor is he the only one to be accused of possessing
Satanic attributes.

The catalyst for the revolt is the attempt of Podmore to convert Jimmy to Christianity before he dies, thus ensuring his salvation. But if one applies the association of devil and egoism to Podmore, he too can be seen as demonic.

Podmore is one of the few men on the ship who can see clearly (and correctly) that Jimmy is dying, but the cook simply aggravates the situation through his own sense of mission. Already he has appeared frequently in the pages of the story, self-righteous and bigoted in the exclusiveness of his belief. His complacent assurance, "I am ready for my Maker's call ... wish you all were", causes Belfast to rage "You holy fool! I don't want you to die. . . . You blessed wooden-headed ould heretic, the divvle will have you soon enough. Think of Us.... of Us ... of Us!" (NN, 20). It is unlikely, of course, that Belfast is really consigning all non-Catholics to Hell, though this is, in fact, a comic inversion of Podmore's own attitude. The comment should, however, make Podmore pause in the light of this evidence that there are other, contrary views concerning his salvation, and cause him to consider that he should be giving more thought to others and less to himself.

The cook's fanatical Christianity, therefore, serves as a harbour for his own excessive egoism and threatens his devotion to the ship and to the rest of the crew. He is described as "beaming with the inward consciousness of his faith, like a conceited
saint unable to forget his glorious reward" (NN, 32). He does his duty according to the creed of the sea by making the coffee which warms the crew, but instead of regarding this action as part of his devotion to the ship, he declares himself "to have been the object of special mercy for the saving of our unholy lives" (NN, 83). His prayer during the "fiendish noises" of the storm, when he implored "the Master of our lives not to lead him into temptation" (NN, 61), seems not to have been answered. The crew's good opinion of themselves after the storm (NN, 101-02), persuaded by Donkin, is thus already evident within the cook. When he decides to "save" Jimmy, his mind is filled up with traditional images of heaven and hell, but that decision has been influenced by "the pride of possessed eternity" (NN, 115) and his true emotions are made explicit a moment later. He hesitates because "A spark of human pity glimmered yet through the infernal fog of his supreme conceit" (NN, 116); a statement that links very clearly the demonic and the ego. This "supreme conceit" finally causes the cook to identify himself with Christ:

He had prayerfully divested himself of the last vestiges of his humanity. He was a voice—a fleshless and sublime thing, as on that memorable night—the night when he went walking over the sea to make coffee for perishing sinners. (NN, 116)

Wait gasps afterwards that "he talked about black devils—he is a devil—a white devil" (NN, 119) and, in the terms of the devil/egoism equation, "Wait is
right. The pride of an excessive egoism is a Christian vice not a Christian virtue and it is essentially an opposition of egos that causes the commotion in Wait's cabin.

The strange alliance between Podmore and Donkin that follows is fully appropriate since both have acted as disruptive elements challenging the essential devotion of seamen for their ship. Podmore's Christianity, if properly applied, should be able to prevent the crew from falling under Jimmy's spell; the cook, at least, has correctly gauged the state of Wait's health. But the hypocrisy, bigotry and sheer egocentricity of the application of his religion has prevented any possibility of this knowledge being conveyed to the crew whilst the wisdom of Singleton and Allistoun is prevented from having any impact on the men by the machinations of Donkin (NN, 43, 101). The true faith of the sea, held unflinchingly by the officers and by Singleton, is thus attacked by the forces of egoism inherent in Podmore and Wait and indicated by demonic imagery; forces that are orchestrated by the virulent negativity of Donkin, attain their peak, appropriately enough, in the darkness of night and are dissipated meekly in the light of day. It is indeed an "infernal spell" that James Wait casts upon the crew; undermining their solidarity, drawing out the egotistical fanaticism of the cook and compelling devotion that, for their own safety, should be directed elsewhere.
Two things link Podmore and Wait; their association with the demonic, made by each other and by different narrators (it would be beyond the limited perspective of the seaman-narrator to discern infernal attributes within the prayerful cook), and their deistic connections (Wait with "a black idol," Podmore with Christ). Here, then, are two means by which Conrad reflects an excessive egoism; either or both are used frequently within his early works. Thus, in the early pages of _An Outcast of the Islands_, the state of Willems' ego is quickly indicated by his relations with the De Souza family:

That family's admiration was the great luxury of his life. It rounded and completed his existence in a perpetual assurance of unquestioned superiority. He loved to breathe the coarse incense they offered before the shrine of the successful white man. (_OI_, 3-4)

He operates "without any guide than his own convenience and that doctrine of success which he had found for himself in the book of life—in those interesting chapters that the Devil has been permitted to write in it, to test the sharpness of men's eyesight and the steadfastness of their hearts " (_OI_, 21). The doctrine in question involves an arrogant unscrupulousness (_OI_, 8), based on Willems' belief in his own genius (_OI_, 6), which reflects the state of his ego. Similarly, when Aissa tells him "You taught me the love of your people which is of the devil" (_OI_, 144), the best definition of devil would again be "self" or
"ego." Almayer claims that the outcast "appeared in this courtyard as if he had been jerked up from hell --where he belongs" (OI, 165), and the question of demonic possession is mentioned more than once. Thus Babalatchi tells Lingard:

"I was glad; for a white man's eyes are not good to see when the devil that lives within is looking out through them."

"Devil! Hey?" said Lingard, half aloud to himself, as if struck with the obviousness of some novel idea. (OI, 228)

Later, Lingard does indeed suggest to Willems that he has been "possessed of a devil" (OI, 273). Willems seems to agree claiming that "After the thing was done, I felt so lost and weak that I would have called the devil himself to my aid if it had been any good--if he hadn't put in all his work already" (OI, 274). Aïssa adds to this idea by asking her erstwhile lover "Is there a bad spirit in you? A bad spirit that has eaten up your courage and your love?" (OI, 336).

These admissions and accusations have some point for Willems has indeed been possessed but possessed by his passion for Aïssa; the fate, as Babalatchi has already remarked, of those who worship many gods. This again derives from the fact that Willems never thinks beyond himself; the egoism that has caused his first downfall leaves him incapable of resisting Aïssa's spell despite his struggles. Even when Lingard is taking him to Sambir, Willems' response to the information he is given is simply the feeling that it has come to him too late since he could have used
it profitably before (OI, 43). In betraying Lingard's secret, therefore, Willems is acting consistently; instead of betraying it to Hudig to satisfy his ambition he betrays it to Abdulla to satisfy his sexual passion for Aissa. The specific goal may be different but the motive remains essentially the same—personal advancement, of which the root is an excessive egoism.

Willems is not alone in his egoism; the fellow white men are similarly endowed. Lingard's "absurd faith in himself" (OI, 13) is an early indication of this failing which results in the wrecking of his ship (OI, 173). He too is likened to a deity, his judgment of Willems being accompanied by sympathetic climatic elements to which he is closely compared:

This last thought darkened Lingard's features with a responsive and menacing frown. The doer of justice sat with compressed lips and a heavy heart, while in the calm darkness outside the silent world seemed to be waiting breathlessly for that justice he held in his hand—in his strong hand—ready to strike—reluctant to move. (OI, 224)

When Lingard has given judgment, an apocalyptic storm breaks with "violent louder bursts of crashing sound, like a wrathful and threatening discourse of an angry god" (OI, 283). His egoism is not only clearly reflected in this way but also in the way he regards his betrayal which causes him to become confronted "With a situation that discomposed him by its unprovoked malevolence, by its ghastly injustice, that, to his rough but unsophisticated palate tasted distinctly of
sulphurous fumes from the deepest hell" (01, 235-36). This is clearly a more serious consideration of possible demonic elements than the use by Muslims and Europeans of such terms as "Satan the Stoned" (01, 103) or "that hellish crowd" (01, 164) to refer to each other and, as has already been noted, Lingard does tell Willems that he has been possessed. To assume demonic opposition, then, can be taken as another indication of excessive egoism since it elevates the importance of the person being opposed.

In a sense, however, Lingard can himself be regarded as demonic in the way he claims a hold over the course of people's lives, as an accusation of Willems makes clear:

"You talk like that! You, who sold your soul for a few guilders," muttered Willems, wearily, without opening his eyes.
"Not so few," said Almayer, with instinctive readiness, and stopped, confused for a moment. He recovered himself quickly, however, and went on: "But you—you have thrown yours away for nothing; flung it under the feet of a damned savage woman." (01, 91)

Almayer's consideration of his office furniture, repeats the thought as he reflects on having "sold himself to Lingard for these things—married the Malay girl of his adoption for the reward of these things and of the great wealth that must necessarily follow upon conscientious book-keeping" (01, 300).

Almayer's own ego, of course, is similarly enlarged. The outrage upon him is a "fiendish outrage" in his words (01, 180) because it outrages his dig-
nity (and thereby his ego). This reading of the word could also be applied to Almayer's Folly, where the "devil of gin" (AF, 135, 137), which makes Almayer curse and shout, is a devil because it reinforces the disappointed ego of its consumer.

In these early novels, therefore, we see the demonic used principally to indicate excessive egoism (or passions that have the ego as their root) that proves destructive and disruptive. Whilst writing "Heart of Darkness," however, whose Mr. Kurtz is both deified and demonised in the now familiar fashion (though to a greater extent), Conrad wrote "C'est l'égoisme qui sauve tout—absolument tout, tout ce que nous abhorrons, tout ce que nous aimons. Et tout se tient." Kurtz, of course, had egoistic intentions of pervading the natives with "tout ce que nous aimons" and ended, instead, by bringing "tout ce que nous abhorrons." Conrad's letter was chiefly concerned with International Fraternity (about which he was cynical), and seems to imply that, in his view, egoism stands alone. A letter to the New York Times two years later gives a more modified opinion:

Egoism, which is the moving force of the world, and altruism, which is its morality, these two contradictory instincts of which one is so plain and the other so mysterious cannot serve us unless in the incomprehensible alliance of their irreconcilable antagonism. Each alone would be fatal to our ambition. For in the hour of undivided

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triumph one would make our inheritance too arid to be worth having and the other too sorrowful to own.\footnote{Congo Diary and Other Uncollected Pieces, ed. \textit{Zdzisław Najder} (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1978), p. 75.}

The topic of this letter (written to be published, of course) is \textit{The Inheritors}, but the view of egoism that it contains seems more easily applicable to the novels than the extreme view of the better known letter to Cunninghame Graham. When ego is denoted by the demonic, therefore, it indicates that "the incomprehensible alliance of their irreconcilable antagonism" has not taken place and it stands fatally alone—in Wait, in Podmore and in Willems for example. In a letter to H.G. Wells, Conrad stated that "An enlightened egoism is as valid as an enlightened altruism—neither more nor less."\footnote{"To H.G. Wells," Wed. to Fri. 1904, \textit{LL}, I, 329.} Here, then, is a further modification; egoism is valid when it is enlightened (which it clearly is not in Wait, Podmore and Willems). One could consider Lingard here too. He is both egoist and altruist; since both seem to be unenlightened, both are invalid. One could suggest, therefore, that the combination of enlightened egoism with enlightened altruism would produce an angel; enlightened egoism produces a devil or suggestions of demonic possession; enlightened egoism combined with unenlightened altruism produces, unwittingly, effects that can be demonic.
In "Heart of Darkness" (whose very title suggests demonic habitation), Marlow gives new definitions for devil during his time at the outer station:

I've seen the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire; but, by all the stars! these were strong, lusty, red-eyed devils, that swayed and drove men—men, I tell you. But as I stood on this hillside, I foresaw that in the blinding sunshine of that land I would become acquainted with a flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly. (Y, 65)

The demonic here has become a set of immoderate human passions (violence, greed, hot desire), all of which are manifestations of unenlightened egoism, which Marlow considers are being taken to unprecedented lengths. But the devil is also equated by Marlow with "a rapacious and pitiless folly" where the selfish (and cruel) connotations of the two adjectives are what makes an unenlightened state demonic. This kind of devil comes not from an immoderate and egotistical passion, but from an immoderate and egotistical stupidity (or mania) that causes Africans to die in a place likened by Marlow to "the gloomy circle of some Inferno" (Y, 66). Little wonder that "big flies buzzed fiendishly, and did not sting but stabbed" (Y, 69)—this place is clearly a kind of hell; a hell that, at the Central Station at least, has "the flabby devil" in charge of it (Y, 72), causing the bewitchment of its pilgrims (Y, 76).

The now familiar, deistic element is there too, not only in the attitude of the "faithless pilgrims"

to the ivory, whose name "rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed" so that one "would think they were praying to it" (Y, 76), but also in their attitude to the eldorado expedition which "came in sections during the next three weeks, each section headed by a donkey carrying a white man in new clothes and tan shoes, bowing from that elevation right and left to the impressed pilgrims" (Y, 87). This scene seems to echo Christ's entry into Jerusalem, but Marlow refers to it as "an invasion, an infliction, a visitation" (Y, 87); language more appropriate to the plagues of Egypt. Indeed, he has already made an ironical reference to that section of Exodus with his comment about the brickmaker who "could not make bricks without something, I don't know what--straw maybe" (Y, 77).

Hell has been caused here, as has been seen, by a particularly destructive kind of folly and within this environment it is not surprising to find many demonic terms which invite closer scrutiny. Kurtz refers to a presumably debilitated assistant as a "poor devil" (Y, 89) and, whilst this is a common and usually meaningless phrase (it is the "poor" that generally carries the meaning, not the "devil"), it is tempting to interpret "poor" as "inadequate" here. On the journey up-river Marlow considers the noise of the natives as a "fiendish row" (Y, 97). This is a case of the demonic being used to describe a European attitude to primitive rites but, presumably, it is

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8 In a letter to Roger Casement (dated 21 Dec. 1903) Conrad wrote that "the Belgians are worse than the seven plagues of Egypt" (Zdzisław Najder, "Conrad's Casement Letters," Polish Perspectives, [Dec. 1974], p. 29).
also "fiendish" because it has appeal. On board the steamer, the demonic is utilised by Europeans to control the native fireman who tends the boiler in the belief that there is an evil spirit within. When, soon after, Marlow comments "the boiler seemed indeed to have a sulky devil in it" (Y, 98), though this is, of course, simply a simile on one level, on another it indicates that Marlow is beginning to empathise with the natives; an empathy that seems complete when he throws his blood-filled shoes into the devil-god of that river" (Y, 114), and can later accept that the steamer appears as a "fierce river-demon" (Y, 146). This reflects on one hand the primitive superstitions of the natives and on the other the cold reality of European progress, for the steamer, of course, is the means of transportation (and, therefore, a significant tool) for the controlling "flabby devil." Darkness is equated with ignorance as a rule; here the superstitious ignorance of the natives is being equated with the folly of the Europeans. Each has its tempter, resisted by Marlow; the appeal of the drums being the one, the papier-mâché Mephistopheles representing the other (Y, 81).

But there are other kinds of devilry too. There are the "gnawing devils of hunger" (Y, 104) that Marlow suspects must be afflicting the cannibals where devil, on a surface level, appears to be simply that which causes torment. The cannibals ignore these "gnawing devils," however; they show restraint.
Marlow continues:

Don't you know the devilry of lingering starvation, it's exasperating torment, its black thoughts, its sombre and brooding ferocity? Well I do. It takes a man all his inborn strength to fight hunger properly. It's really easier to face bereavement, dishonour, and the perdition of one's soul - than this kind of prolonged hunger. (Y, 105)

To Marlow it is an enigma, but restraint implies control of the self or the ego; essentially by the claims of an enlightened egoism outweighing the selfish desires of unenlightened egoism and accepting the demands of altruism. In the cannibals' case, of course, it may simply be their awe of the white man that restrains them, or perhaps, the absence of certain ritualistic factors, but the implication is clear; devilry once more is an appeal to unrestrained egoism, and unrestrained egoism, it seems, is what claims Kurtz.

At the Central Station, Kurtz's name attracts contradictory adjectives. To the brickmaker, he is "a prodigy ... an emissary of pity, and science, and progress and devil knows what else" (Y, 79), and a later comment by the same speaker that "he feared neither God nor devil, let alone any mere man" (Y, 84) reinforces the effect; an effect that Marlow himself has emphasised:

I could see a little ivory coming out from there, and I had heard Mr. Kurtz was in there. I had heard enough about it too--God knows! Yet somehow it didn't bring any image with it--no more than if I had been
told an angel or a fiend was in there. (Y, 81)

Whether Kurtz turns out to be angel or fiend seems to depend very much on the extent to which his egoism and altruism become enlightened. Marlow, already aware of the two types of temptation (savagery and folly), considers the vulnerability of mere human beings:

Of course you may be too much of a fool to go wrong—too dull even to know you are being assailed by the powers of darkness. I take it, no fool ever made a bargain for his soul with the devil: the fool is too much of a fool, or the devil too much of a devil—I don't know which. Or you may be such a thunderingly exalted creature as to be altogether deaf and blind to anything but heavenly sights and sounds. Then the earth for you is only a standing place—and whether to be like this is your loss or your gain I won't pretend to say. But most of us are neither one nor the other. (Y, 116-17)

The first part of this comment seems to look forward to the advent of the harlequin who, having been told to "go to the devil" by his Dutch employer (Y, 124), seems to have done just that in coming to Kurtz, but continues to be ruled by "the absolutely pure, uncalculating, unpractical spirit of adventure" (Y, 126). Fool is equated with dullness here; it could hardly apply to the kind of folly engaged in by the pilgrims since that has already been connected with the demonic. Kurtz is clearly neither fool nor "a thunderingly exalted creature," though his problems may stem from believing that he is the latter.
Kurtz's report for the Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs argues that the Europeans must appear to the natives "in the nature of supernatural beings—we approach them with the might as of a deity" (Y, 118). Instead, of course, Marlow considers that Kurtz "had taken a high seat amongst the devils of the land—I mean literally" (Y, 116). Kurtz is "literally" a devil to the natives (from Marlow's viewpoint) since he has succumbed to the temptation of being deified; the manifestation of an enormous, unrestrained egoism indicated also by the echoes of Christ given by Kurtz's promise to return (Y, 137). Kurtz has reached this position, Marlow surmises, by way of "the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation" (Y, 115), but Kurtz is also demonic in the "flabby devil" sense since his conduct is the logical extension of a "rapacious and pitiless folly," whose ivory deity he has come to resemble (Y, 115).

"Heart of Darkness," then, makes use of the demonic more extensively than earlier works. Ego is still at the root but its heartless manifestations take the form of folly as well as passion. The demonic also functions to link primitive natives and civilised Europeans, emphasising the similarities between superstitious savagery and the cause of progress. This cause has been described with glowing, positive religious imagery in the early pages of the book (especially by Marlow's aunt); the negative imagery of the demonic reveals in religious terms its
true reality.

The use of demonic terms in Lord Jim follows the pattern of usage in these early stories and can be simply summarised. The extent of Jim's romantic egocentrism is indicated by the assumptions of demonic opposition—the Patna incident being a "joke hatched in hell" (LJ, 108)—and by the apparently deistic associations with Jim in Patusan which end with his willingness to take the blame on his own head (LJ, 415) to the background of an apocalyptic sky. As a water clerk Jim is described as "a regular devil for sailing a boat. . . . a yelling fiend at the tiller . . . . more like a demon than a man" (LJ, 194), which reflects the way his ego pushes him to become the foremost water-clerk. Marlow makes mention of the "Dark Powers" whose "tremendous disdain" has caused the events on the Patna; and "whose real terrors, always on the verge of triumph, are perpetually foiled by the steadfastness of men" (LJ, 121). "Dark" suggests the unknown or the unforeseen with connotations of evil. To Jim, of course, such powers are evil, but to Marlow they could simply stand for fate since he is here (as elsewhere) something of a fatalist; a trait he shows by his comment on Jim's desire for a clean slate: "As if the initial word of each our destiny were not graven in imperishable characters upon the face of a rock" (LJ, 186).

As Marlow suggests, fate cannot be foiled, but "the steadfastness of men" is foiling the "real
terrors" of the "Dark Powers," not the "Dark Powers" themselves. Marlow, in other words, is extolling those who can stand up to adversity and conquer their hidden fears (which Jim has failed to do). The imagery continues into Patusan where Jim is undone once more by Brown, "a blind accomplice of the Dark Powers" (LJ, 354), who also rejoices in the title "the Scourge of God" (LJ, 370), which shows the extent of his egoism as well as indicating his role as a form of Nemesis for Jim. It is ironic, of course, that whilst his self-proclaimed title suggests a deliberate assumption of this role, to Marlow, he is a "blind accomplice," indicating that his part in the affair is an unwitting one. Brown's enormous egoism gives him "a blind belief in the righteousness of his will against all mankind" (LJ, 370); in a milder form this could apply to Jim. But Jim is not totally self-seeking, desiring, as he does, the welfare of Patusan and justice for all. He is, like Lingard, an example of unenlightened egoism and unenlightened altruism. His ego extends only to a belief that his will is the best way of achieving justice, but he does not have the monstrous egoism of Brown that would seek unlimited and ruthless power. Perhaps it is this factor that causes Brown to comment, "Rot his superior soul! He had me there—but he hadn't devil enough in him to make an end of me" (LJ, 344). Indeed, in regarding him on his death bed, Marlow directly connects evil and egoism as he reflects how
much certain forms of evil are akin to madness, derived from intense egoism, inflamed by resistance, tearing the soul to pieces, and giving factitious vigour to the body" (LJ, 344).

Marlow's diagnosis is clearly an accurate one for it is Brown's excessive egoism that destroys Jim. Brown has a "satanic gift of finding out the best and the weakest spots in his victims" (LJ, 385), frequently mentions the devil (LJ, 381), and is so successful that it seems "as if a demon had been whispering advice in his ear" (LJ, 386). He desires, demon-like, "to get in and shake his twopenny soul around and inside out and upside down—by God" (LJ, 384). Here, then, is demonic opposition (in Marlow's eyes this time) to deistic pretensions (in actions and words, at least, if not in conscious claim); the devil in Brown (intense egoism) opposing and awakening the devil in Jim (unenlightened romantic egoism). The resultant empathy this produces in Jim proves fatal.

The evocation of the demonic (by Brown) thus pre-figures disaster; just as, earlier, a similar evocation pre-figured disgrace. On the Patna, shortly before the collision, the dreamy cosmic lyricism of the narrator is abruptly terminated by a shaft of more immediate reality:

The ship moved so smoothly that her onward motion was imperceptible to the senses of men, as though she had been a crowded planet speeding through the dark spaces of ether behind the swarm of suns, in the appalling and calm solitudes awaiting the breath of future creations. "Hot is no name
for it down below," said a voice. (LJ, 21-22)

This sudden descent (from the heavens to hell) is effected by the second engineer who makes the polarity more explicit by commenting that "he did not mind how much he sinned, because these last three days he had passed through a fine course of training for the place where the bad boys go when they die—b'gosh he had" (LJ, 22). This is prophetic as far as Jim is concerned for he too is musing (just as the narrator seemed to be) and an unpleasant fact from down below is about to turn his life into a kind of hell as Marlow, by the implications of his own first-mate's behaviour, seems to realise (LJ, 156). Hell and an engine-room are easily compared, of course, but in the light of what happens, the possible function of the demonic as an evil portent is clearly evident, especially since the second engineer also reveals that the hellish conditions are partly caused by the precarious state of the Patna below decks.

At this stage it may be instructive to consider the views of other critics on egoism in Conrad. Bruce Johnson notices a connection between egoism and sympathy in The Nigger of the "Narcissus"—supported by the seaman-narrator's reference to the "latent egoism of tenderness to suffering" (NN, 138);9 Lawrence Graver sees the relationship between egoism and

9 Conrad's Models of Mind, pp. 31-32.
altruism as a key to much of Conrad's fiction, and suggests, for example, that *The Shadow-Line* concerns "the education of a young egoist."\(^{10}\) There is no general agreement as to whether egoism is good or bad. Discussing Marlow's role in "Heart of Darkness," Johnson argues:

But the result of such journeys, far from being selfless and an ascetic renunciation of the world, is for Conrad an intensification of the need for sustaining ego. The purification of sympathy that Conrad envisions in so many of his characters involves their learning more about ego and coming to terms with it (often tragically) rather than fleeing toward Nirvana. If anything is as sacred to Conrad as the protean idea of human solidarity, it is the value of the individual ego."\(^{11}\)

Paul Kirschner, having quoted from Turgenev's *Rudin* the phrase "Egoism ... is suicide,"\(^ {12}\) argues that "The problem was not to cut away the self's egoism ... but to let it flower luxuriantly. This is what Stein attempts to do for Jim, with limited success, and if Jim's egoism does ultimately lead to suicide, it is an ennobling, not a withering form of self-destruction."\(^ {13}\) He, like Graver and Johnson, sees the doctrines of Schopenhauer (in which egoism becomes "the form of the will to live") as an influence here.\(^ {14}\)


\(^{11}\) Models of Mind, p. 45.

\(^{12}\) Kirschner, p. 246.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 247.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 269.
R.R. Hodges, on the other hand, sees both Kurtz and Jim as examples of Messianic egoism, derived from Conrad's Polish background and thoroughly criticised.\textsuperscript{15} Royal Roussel, citing \textit{An Outcast of the Islands}, claims that "The relationship between Willems and the Da Souza family reveals why, for Conrad, egoism destroys the foundations of society,"\textsuperscript{16} and sees egoism as the source of isolation in the early novels.\textsuperscript{17} Stanton de Voren Hoffman is another who seems to emphasise the negative aspects of egoism:

Implicit in one tradition of Western culture--its art and belief in subjective individuality, its idealism--is the sense of immortality, limitlessness, excessiveness, and destructive egoism. In a creating element, in other words, lies a destroying element--an identification of saint with Satan.

Ted E. Boyle, speaking of "Heart of Darkness," feels that "Through work Marlow is saved from the spiritual disintegration to which unrestrained egoism leads,"\textsuperscript{19} but comments (rather strangely) when considering \textit{Almayer's Folly} that "The last time Almayer speaks to Nina, however, his anger seems temporarily to transcend his egotism. He vows that he will never forgive

\textsuperscript{15} Hodges, pp. 38-39.


\textsuperscript{17} Roussel, p. 39.


\textsuperscript{19} Boyle, p. 89.
her for leaving him."\(^{20}\) It seems more likely, in this last instance, that egotism is the very cause of Almayer's anger.

There is, clearly, no consensus here on Conrad's attitude to egoism per se, though there is, in general, an agreement that egoism can be destructive. It is this kind of egoism that, in the early novels at least, has been shown to be indicated by the imagery of the demonic.

After *Lord Jim*, however, the function of such imagery is to develop. Apart from "The End of the Tether"—where Whalley's presumption (stemming from pride, stemming from ego) is equated with the demonic by both Massy (Y, 231, 233) and by Sterne (Y, 254-55)—and *The Shadow-Line*—where the narrator's high opinion of himself is again reflected by the assumption that opposition must be demonic and supernatural—the emphasis undergoes a change from excessive egoism (always a factor) to the process of linking a character with destruction, to the externalisation of destructive inner urges and finally to modes of conduct that are, effectively, denials of life.

ii. The Demonic as Catalyst and Reflector

In *Nostromo*, there are three main areas in which the demonic is to the fore; two of them geographical. The Golfo Placido on cloudy nights is said to be so

\(^{20}\) Boyle, p. 76.
dark that "The eye of God Himself . . . could not find out what work a man's hand is doing in there; and you would be free to call the devil to your aid with impunity if even his malice were not defeated by such a blind darkness" (N, 7); the San Tomé gorge is referred to as a "paradise of snakes" (N, 105) and Nostromo maintains a suspicion, towards the latter half of the book, that Doctor Monygham is a representative of the devil. Such references can be seen to operate on different levels; the most obvious of which is the literal superstitious belief held by most of the uneducated inhabitants of Costaguana, illustrated by their acceptance of priestly tales of "the devil in person" removing Guzman Bento's dead body (N, 47). On this level, Nostromo's view of the doctor as tempter can be seen to indicate the power of a pervading heritage to fill the vacuum left by the loss of his sense of importance. Indeed, like the "barefooted multitude" he too proves not immune to priestly indoctrination:

"I mean that the king of the devils himself has sent you out of this town of cowards and talkers to meet me tonight of all the nights of my life."

Under the starry sky the Albergo d'Italia Una emerged, black and low breaking the dark level of the plain. Nostromo stopped altogether.

"The priests say he is a tempter, do they not?" he added, through his clenched teeth.

"My good man, you drivel. The devil has nothing to do with this." (N, 462)

Monygham's denial questions the superstition and
invites a less traditional interpretation. One of the reasons for Nostromo's accusation is that the doctor had already mentioned the idea of taking the whole treasure before Nostromo and Decoud set sail in the lighter (N, 259), as Nostromo seems to remember:

"Maladetta! You follow me speaking of the treasure. You have sworn my ruin. You were the last man who looked upon me before I went out with it. And Sidoni the engine-driver says you have an evil eye." (N, 463)

The authority for Nostromo's assumptions, it will be noted, has now descended from the priests to Sidoni the engine-driver; sources that would have been ignored by the Capataz of earlier times. The comments are made because the thought of stealing the silver has already been planted; the demonic thus indicates the means of awakening what will become a destructive obsession and heralds the eventual downfall of the character. Monygham is identified as demonic by Nostromo, not for anything he represents or opposes, but for the effects his words achieve.

Nostromo's downfall takes place in the blackness of the Golfo Placido where, supposedly, God and devil cannot operate. This saying, at its initial level, simply indicates the extent of the darkness and seems ironic in its exclusion of the devil from what is, traditionally, his natural element. On another level, it can mean that man in such a situation is entirely responsible for his actions since, here at least, he has no supernatural agency to praise or blame; the
kind of attitude Monygham seems to have adopted in his talk with Nostromo. It could be said, therefore, that Nostromo is externalising a temptation that is wholly within himself; originating in his bruised vanity, perhaps (which goes back to ego again). A third interpretation could be that the events of the novel prove the saying to be incorrect and that Nostromo's invoking of "the curse of Heaven" to "fall upon this blind gulf" has been all too effective (N, 269). It could also indicate a place where faith is to receive its severest tests, which would have special relevance for Decoud.

After its initial appearance in the opening chapter, the saying appears twice more (in quick succession) towards the end of the novel at a time when the blackness seems peculiarly connected with Nostromo. His admission to Giselle of having obtained treasure "Like a thief!" causes "The densest blackness of the Placid Gulf . . . to fall upon his head" (N, 540). Her acceptance of this circumstance changes his sense of enslavement into "an exulting conviction of his power" but his thoughts encompass the sense of being "betrayed . . . deceived, tempted," his desire to build a fairy-tale world for Giselle and his sense of guilt at the cost. It is significant that this new conviction should be followed by the renewed (and repeated) reminder of darkness:

The Capataz de Cargadores tasted the supreme intoxication of his generosity. He flung the mastered treasure superbly at
her feet in the impenetrable darkness of
the gulf, in the darkness defying—as men
said—the knowledge of God and the wit of
the devil. (N, 541)

The saying is then repeated as Giselle looks into
"the black night" (N, 543) for Nostromo to return to
her. Nostromo now seems to dwell in darkness, there­
fore, so that even when he has returned to Giselle,
the light in her room goes out as he clasps her (N,
545). This clearly reflects his internal condition,
emphasised by his "soul" dying within him at the
thought of what he has to do to enjoy his treasure (N,
542). (If his soul is dead, of course, it can go to
neither God nor devil.) His ego, therefore, must sub­
mit itself to the performance of "that work of a cra­
ven slave!" (N, 542) and, by invoking the previous ego­
isim-devil equation, this may explain why his darkness
defies "the wit of the devil." Certainly, the four
interpretations of the saying could all be applied to
Nostromo's state at this time. Nostromo's association
of Monygham with the demonic can be seen not only as
temptation but also as warning; the darkness is the
result of the temptation being followed and the warn­
ing being ignored.

This double-definition can also be applied to the
demonic imagery that Charles Gould encounters. In his
introduction to the San Tomé gorge, Don Pépe "stretch­
ing his arm up the gorge, had declared with mock sol­
lemnity, 'Behold the very paradise of snakes, senora'"
(N, 105). Literally this probably means that the
gorge would be an ideal place for a snake to dwell but the Edenic overtones are inescapable and have attracted much comment, particularly from Claire Rosenfield, whose archetypal analysis was noted earlier. The concept of this phrase denoting a fallen world (accepted by Rosenfield, Bruce Johnson and others) is, however, relatively meaningless unless it is meant to indicate that the paradise envisaged by Charles Gould is foredoomed. The snake in Eden was a tempter but paradise was lost only when man yielded to the temptation. A "paradise of snakes" indicates, therefore, not a fallen world but an unfallen one which contains an abundance of negative potential. The San Tome' gorge thus presents the promise of paradise with the threat of the Fall through destructive temptations. The phrase is remembered later by Emilia:

"We have disturbed a good many snakes in that Paradise, Charley, haven't we?"
"Yes, I remember," said Charles Gould, "it was Don Pépe who called the gorge the Paradise of snakes. No doubt we have disturbed a great many. But remember, my dear, that it is not now as it was when you made that sketch... It is no longer a Paradise of snakes. We have brought mankind into it, and we cannot turn our backs upon them to go and begin a new life elsewhere." (N, 209)

The obvious implication of this exchange is that the temptations have been succumbed to and the warning ignored. By the end of the novel Emilia Gould can see clearly where the invasion of this paradise has led to:
She saw the San Tomé mountain hanging over the Campo, over the whole land, feared, hated, wealthy; more soulless than any tyrant, more pitiless and autocratic than the worst Government; ready to crush innumerable lives in the expansion of its greatness. He did not see it. He could not see it. (N, 521)

Thus:

...she saw clearly the San Tomé mine possessing, consuming, burning up the life of the last of the Costaguana Goulds; mastering the energetic spirit of the son as it had mastered the lamentable weakness of the father. (N, 522)

Gould is thus a slave of the silver mine in the same way as Nostromo is a slave of his treasure; the legend of the spectral gringos on Azuera applies to both men. Gould's entry into the San Tomé gorge is equivalent to Nostromo's meeting with Monygham; both events attract demonic imagery, indicating a fatal step in the future of each character, though, whilst Nostromo is aware of his true position, Gould is not. The demonic thus functions as a fateful link between the character and his disaster. It is not for nothing, then, that the silver escort should always proceed through the waking Sulaco "from end to end without a check in the speed as if chased by a devil" (N, 114), for the silver mine of San Tomé can, it seems, employ the arts of insidious possession commonly connected with this being.

The demonic is used most pervasively in Under Western Eyes and it is its presence there that has
attracted most critical attention (as will be seen presently). Now, however, it is not just individuals to which the terminology adheres; systems attract it too. Haldin uses language, biblically associated with hell, to describe the work of the man he has killed when he talks of "the sound of weeping and gnashing of teeth this man raised in the land" (UWE, 16), and Tekla's hatred for the Ministry of Finances is similarly expressed:

Upon my word, I would think that finances and all the rest of it are an invention of the devil; only that a belief in a supernatural source of evil is not necessary; men alone are quite capable of every wickedness. (UWE, 151)

The demonic here is that which causes oppression and ruins lives, though Tekla's use of the conditional is significant; she, at least, will not lift responsibility from man himself. Autocracy, which attracts these comments, follows the now familiar Conradian pattern of having deistic pretensions to sanction its activities. Mr. de P--- declares that "God was the Autocrat of the Universe" (UWE, 8); Razumov's decision to aid the authorities is described as a religious conversion (UWE, 33-34); and the teacher of languages notes that "Whenever two Russians come together, the shadow of autocracy is with them" (UWE, 107), this being a cruel parody of the promise of Christ to be present "when two or three are gathered together in my name" (Matt. 18:20). Autocracy, it appears, is present whether the gathering is in its name or
against it.

Revolution, however, makes similar claims. Hal­
din's mother regards his friends as "disciples" and
remembers that "Even amongst the Apostles of Christ
there was found a Judas" (UWE, 115); Madame de S---
can anticipate revolutionary triumph in biblical
terms (UWE, 223); and Peter Ivanovitch is likened to
a missionary (UWE, 129) and "a monk or a prophet"
(UWE, 329), though it takes "half a dozen young men"
to come together "in a shabby student's room" before
one can be sure of his name being mentioned (UWE,
227).

But the realities of revolution have very quick­
ly undermined such high-flying claims. To Haldin,
Ziemianitch is a "bright soul" but when Razumov en­
quires for him at the eating-house he finds that he
is also regarded as a "cursed driver of thieves" and
as "that driver of the devil" (UWE, 28). Ziemianitch
is to be found in "a long cavernous place like a neg­
lected subterranean byre" (UWE, 29). Here, Razumov's
guide "pawed in the straw with his foot" (UWE, 29)--
an indication of how human beings are being reduced
to the state of animals--and his words reinforce the
connection of the driver with the devil:

A proper Russian driver that. Saint or
devil, night or day is all one to Ziemian­
itch when his heart is free from sorrow.
'I don't ask who you are, but where you
want to go,' he says. He would drive Satan
himself to his own abode and come back
chirruping to his horses. (UWE, 29)
These conflicting views of Ziemianitch set to question Haldin's idealistic pretensions of the revolutionary movement. For if Ziemianitch will drive "saint or devil," in which of these categories would Haldin come? On leaving the eating-house, Razumov regards him as "a subtle pest that would convert earth into a hell" (UWE, 32), which is the kind of comment Haldin made about Mr. de P---, but Razumov is chiefly thinking of himself here (egotistical concern revealed by assumed demonic opposition again). Just as the cause of revolution induces Kostia to break the commandment concerning theft (with an appropriate cry of "to the devil with the ten commandments" UWE, 313), it has provoked Haldin, who "wouldn't hurt a fly" (UWE, 22), to break the commandment concerning murder. This augurs badly for revolution which, in opposing obvious tyranny, has to deviate from the rules of commonly accepted morality. The higher the pretensions, it seems, the greater the potential for destructive results.

Ziemianitch hangs himself not long after Haldin's death but the devil continues to hover about his person, as Sophia Antonovna complains about the illogical absurdity of the people:

"For instance—that Ziemianitch was notoriously irreligious, and yet, in the last weeks of his life, he suffered from the notion that he had been beaten by the devil."
"The devil," repeated Razumov, as though he had not heard aright.
"The actual devil. The devil in person.

"But you, Sophia Antonovna, you don't
believe in the actual devil?"
"Do you?" retorted the woman curtly.
"Not but that there are plenty of men worse
than devils to make a hell of this earth.
(UWE, 280-81)

The devil in this case is Razumov, of course, who had beaten the drunken sledge-driver in "a weird scene" when possessed by "A terrible fury—the blind rage of self-preservation" (UWE, 30); the most fundamental example of egoism coming to the fore. This association of the devil with Razumov is not new either. Earlier in the book he has restrained a "diabolical impulse" to tell Haldin what he has done (UWE, 55), ironically, since such an impulse would have him telling the truth. Soon afterwards he avoids with difficulty "a burst of Mephistophelian laughter" (UWE, 60) and, after the police have searched his room, Kostia says, "A man doesn't get the police ransacking his rooms without there being some devilry hanging over his head" (UWE, 81). When he is with Peter Ivanovitch, he has "a satanic enjoyment of the scorn prompting him to play with the greatness of the great man" (UWE, 228), whilst, with Sophia Antonovna, he feels "an infernal circle bringing round that protest like a fatal necessity of his existence" and regards her news of Ziemianitch's death as "a perfect, diabolic surprise" (UWE, 280). He is ironically amused "At the devil being still young after all these ages" (UWE, 281) and at the fact that all is now well for him "Thanks to the devil" (UWE, 283); a circumstance that causes him to think that "It was as if
the devil himself were playing a game with all of them in turn. First with him, then with Ziemianitch, then with those revolutionists. The devil's own game this... He interrupted his earnest mental soliloquy with a jocular thought at his own expense. 'Hello! I am falling into mysticism too'" (UWE, 283-84).

What is happening at this stage is that the lie Razumov is living is becoming more and more secure, and, since the perpetuation of falsehood is a traditional role of the devil, the evocation of the demonic is entirely appropriate here. It is similarly appropriate for the bearer of the news concerning Ziemianitch, Sophia Antonovna, to have "Mephistophelian eyebrows" (UWE, 245, 247) and a "Mephistophelian frown" (UWE, 253), though the narrator is struck by "The quaint Mephistophelian character of her inquiring glance, because it was so curiously evil-less, so --I may say--un-devilish" (UWE, 327). She is Mephistophelian because she encourages the continuance of the lie and "un-devilish" because she does this unwittingly. The note of demonic temptation is continued by the narrator when considering the meetings between Razumov and Mikulin:

To the morality of a Western reader an account of these meetings would wear perhaps the sinister character of old legendary tales where the Enemy of Mankind is represented holding subtly mendacious dialogues with some tempted soul. It is not my part to protest. Let me but remark that the Evil One, with his single passion of satanic pride for the only motive, is yet, on a larger modern view, allowed to be not quite so black as he used to be painted.
With what greater latitude, then, should we appraise the exact shade of mere mortal man, with his many passions and his miser­able ingenuity in error, always dazzled by the base glitter of mixed motives, everlast­ingly betrayed by a short­sighted wisdom. (UWE, 304-05)

This accords, in some respects, with Tekla's view (quoted earlier), that man can be evil enough on his own without any supernatural assistance. Pride, how­ever, is, once more, a manifestation of ego of which much has been seen already in this chapter.

Even the teacher of languages is not free of demonic associations for Razumov is frequently align­ing him with the devil (UWE, 186, 199). In his letter to Natalia he writes:

He talked of you, of your lonely, helpless state, and every word of that friend of yours was egging me on to the unpardonable sin of stealing a soul. Could he have been the devil himself in the shape of an old Englishman? Natalia Victorovna, I was possessed! (UWE, 360)

One of the functions of the demonic here is, there­fore, to act as link between the character and de­structive action. Razumov regards Haldin's remark that his sister has trusting eyes as meaning that she is "a predestined victim ... Ha! what a devilish suggest­ion" (UWE, 349) and, in this crucial scene with Nata­lia, continues with the idea of being led by the devil:

You know, Natalia Victorovna, I have the greatest difficulty in saving myself from the superstition of an active Providence.
It's irresistible. ... The alternative, of course, would be the personal Devil of our simple ancestors. But, if so, he has overdone it altogether—the old Father of lies—our national patron—our domestic god, whom we take with us when we go abroad. He has overdone it. It seems that I am not simple enough. (UWE, 350)

Sophia Antonovna thinks of a more practical source when she meets the narrator after the drama is over:

Well, call it what you like; but tell me, how many of them would deliver themselves up deliberately to perdition (as he himself says in that book) rather than go on living, secretly debased in their own eyes? ... It was just when he believed himself safe and more—infinately more—when the possibility of being loved by that admirable girl first dawned upon him, that he discovered that his bitterest railings, the worst wickedness, the devil work of his hate and pride, could never cover up the ignominy of the existence before him. (UWE, 380)

According to Sophia, therefore, the devil possessing Razumov is "hate and pride" and such is Russia that even to escape the possession is to finish up in perdition. The tempter figures that Razumov encounters are therefore externalizations of his own negative emotions; reflections, one could say, of his inner state, and indications of the destructive path he is following.

This picture of the demonic can be usefully augmented by the considerations of some of the critics. Claire Rosenfield comments thus:

What is important is that in its spaceless immensity, in its search for some valid
timelessness whether within the mind, within history, or within eternity, in its constant "burning," Russia and all Russians reveal characteristics that our Hebraic-Christian heritage assigns to the Devil. In his satanic allusions, Conrad is moralizing anarchy, rebellion, lawlessness, "Unthinking forces"—indeed all that we include in the word "irrational."\(^1\)

Here is an all-embracing interpretation of demonic usage but the associations with the "irrational" are interesting ones. Rosenfield continues:

The irony of his situation is that, externally in the intellectual context of a Christian society but in a world abandoned by God, his suffering takes its meaning from God's Adversary rather than God's Son. Where revolution becomes religion and where man may serve two gods or two devils or a god and a devil whose traditional attributes are reversed, personal suffering becomes socially meaningless.\(^2\)

Under Western Eyes does indeed show those claiming a belief in God acting like devils (that is, in a destructive manner), but one fails to see how there are demonic characters attracting god-like attributes to fulfil Rosenfield's assertion of reversal.

Rosenfield also has some pertinent comments to make about Sophia Antonovna:

... whose Mephistophelian eyebrows define her as Razumov's temptress and 'personal adversary' and who has an extraordinary instinct for perpetuating falsehood. Here he meets Natalia Haldin, whose soul he wishes

\(^{21}\) Rosenfield, p. 149.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., p. 150.
to steal but who in reality possesses him as her brother's agent. Each unconsciously acts as a temptress because she accepts the role that he is playing, the role that the "falsehood-breeding spectre" Haldin and the "father of Lies" have forced upon him.23

To Harriet Gilliam, Razumov is a "Faust" figure who "sells his soul to the Devil in the form of Councillor Mikulin."24 In an essay which looks at the "Daemonic" in the book, Gilliam quotes Rollo May's definition of the word as "any natural function which has the power to take over the whole person" and which can be creative or destructive but is normally both.25 This definition could be applied to many of Conrad's characters, most of whom are obsessed by one thing or another, for the sense of the irrational is implicit in the definition; in fact Gilliam notes that under daemonic influences, rationality appears as a mode of irrationality.26 Gilliam argues that Razumov is possessed by Haldin's phantom and that the narrator's apparent playing down of the demonic is an attempt to impose Western secularization upon Eastern mysticism but is "actually another defense mechanism to deprive the daemonic of its potency while at the same time admitting its attraction. This

23 Rosenfield, pp. 154-55.


25 Gilliam, p. 219. Gilliam uses "daemonic" to cover both aspects of possession and "demonic" to denote the negative ones only.

26 Ibid.
last statement seems to overlook, however, that both Tekla and Sophia Antonovna could also be said to be "playing down the demonic" as has already been seen.

J.E. Saveson, on the other hand, in a work which seeks to show the influence of Nietzsche on Conrad, suggests:

Conrad's view of diabolism is Nietzsche's view of the old morality--a mere superficiality to modern psychologists but religious motives are to be studied as 'touchstones' of the soul. In this spirit and to this end, I believe this twentieth century novel revives the demonic. Conrad means to illustrate in Razumov's career the diversion of resentment into spiritualized or disguised cruelty.28

Razumov, he suggests, becomes demonic when beating Ziemianitch and is only transformed by confessing to Natalia. His conversion to autocracy is an example of "bad conscience which in Nietzsche invents hell and the devil and all the supernatural."29 This sounds reasonable enough, but, as the previous pages have shown, this novel continues rather than revives the demonic and Saveson seems to ignore the "Holy Russia" myth which stands behind much of the religious imagery.

Lastly, Tony Tanner, having decided that "Conrad's insights are psychological more than theological,"30 concludes with a consideration of Sophia

28 Saveson, Later Moralist, pp. 82-83.
29 Saveson, p. 83.
Antonovna's statement that there was character in Razumov's discovery that he could not live a lie:

Character, not Christian salvation. Conrad's characters live in a remorselessly terrestrial world. Razumov's reward is limited to that peace which lies on the other side of nightmare and which is perhaps all we can hope for in an unredeemed world. Not heaven but the calmness of a heart at rest and a regained sanity of the senses.

In some ways the confession scene between Razumov and Natalia is a reversal of Marlow's interview with the Intended in "Heart of Darkness." Marlow had spoken in that book about his abhorrence of lies which had "a taint of death, a flavour of mortality... which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world--which I want to forget. It makes me miserable and sick, like biting something rotten would do" (Y, 82). Having said this, of course, he ends his narrative with a description of his lie to the Intended so she can continue to live with her illusions of Mr. Kurtz; he is forced into it by the power of her belief. Razumov, who has been living a lie throughout most of Under Western Eyes, is forced into truth by the power of Natalia Haldin's trusting honesty and the initial effect on her is akin to what Marlow must have feared would happen if he revealed the truth about Kurtz. Much of the demonic in Under Western Eyes, therefore, is connected with falsehood from the

31 Tanner, p. 213.
Father of Lies and we have already seen how Sophia Antonovna and the teacher of languages are unwittingly demonic in aiding the lie; perhaps the narrator seems to rage "like a disappointed devil" because the lie is no more (UWE, 361). It is safe to assert that Conrad would also have hated the concept of a lie since the very idea of falsehood is antithetical to the simple notion of Fidelity that he claimed to cherish so much. The comments of Tekla, Sophia Antonovna and the professor of languages thus serve as a warning to the reader that the demonic references should not be taken literally. Irrationality can be accepted as a condition of the demonic; faithlessness as its likely result.

Conrad's attitude to falsehood, in fact, carries over into his letters and seems particularly to have affected his sense of artistic integrity. This sense seemed to be offended by the thought of writing for money; so much so that he refers to this process, on a number of occasions, as selling his soul to the devil. Thus, he wrote to Garnett in 1896, "There is only 6,000 words in it ["The Lagoon"] so it can't bring in many shekels ... Don't you think I am a lost soul?"32 Twelve years later he is writing similarly to Galsworthy:

I want on the obvious lines and on these lines I developed my narrative to give it some sort of verisimilitude. In other

words, I offered to sell my soul for half a crown,—and now I have neither the soul nor the gain,—(for the novel is not finished yet).  

In 1917 he described The Arrow of Gold as "the thinnest possible squeaky bubble" which he was going to sell in the market place for many times the price he had received for The Nigger of the "Narcissus". And, whilst not refusing this new-found abundance of the "noble metals" the author was still able to maintain that "because I have not enough satanism in my nature I can't enjoy it."  

Such comments are not earnest ones, of course, but even jokingly they reveal some embarrassment at apparent instances of infidelity to the writer's creed that the image of a bargain with the devil is meant to reflect. The falseness that attracts the demonic imagery in Under Western Eyes is also evident, therefore (though with far less intensity), within the author's letters.  

iii. The Demonic and the Denial of Life  

In the novels that follow Under Western Eyes—Chance and Victory—Conrad's focus changes from the social obsessions of their three predecessors to obsessions relating to self-conception and the demonic  

imagery is adapted accordingly. To date it has indicated excessive egoism (by identification, possession or opposition), immoderate human passions or mania, the link between a character and a potentially destructive course of action, a warning, irrational conduct and falsehood. Now it is to indicate life-negating attitudes on the part of Conrad's protagonists.

In Chance the demonic is quickly invoked as young Powell describes with what desperation he attempted to obtain his first berth as second mate. He would, he reveals, "have gone boldly up to the devil himself on the mere hint that he had a second mate's job to give away" (£, 7); a sentiment that he repeats when wishing that "my namesake Powell had been the devil himself. I felt somehow it would have been an easier job. You see, I never believed in the devil enough to be scared of him; but a man can make himself very unpleasant" (£, 10). Once he has located his man, Powell comments, "I walked up to him as boldly as if he had been the devil himself" (£, 13); a strange simile really since boldness is not the traditional demeanour for approaching the devil. Young Powell's previous comment may explain this, however.

Since Powell (in the shipping office) is by no means demonic, young Powell's emphasis is curious, signifying, at the very least, an ominous desperation on his part which could lead to disaster. As it
happens, it leads to the Ferndale, to which he is later assisted by a "little devil" (C, 27, 28). Young Powell's phraseology here is perhaps meant as a warning, as a harbinger of what is to come, for the demonic presides on the vessel (not intentionally but in effect), in the form of Anthony's excessive magnanimity, which causes him to commit (in Marlow's words) "a sin against life, the call of which is simple. Perhaps sacred" (C, 427). Part of the saloon has been "consecrated to the exclusiveness of Captain Anthony's married life" (C, 410) but Anthony is not performing the rites (consummation of marriage) for which the saloon has been consecrated. Marlow comments, "One may fling a glove in the face of nature and in the face of one's own moral endurance quite innocently, with a simplicity which wears the aspect of perfectly Satanic conceit" (C, 351). Conrad had written about nature to Cunninghame Graham some years before:

Yes. Egoism is good, and altruism is good, and fidelity to nature would be the best of all, and systems could be built, and rules could be made—if we could only get rid of consciousness. What makes mankind tragic is not that they are the victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it.

Anthony is clearly conscious of nature, just as he is unfaithful to it.

The demonic operates, in fact, at key points in the setting up of the situation on the Ferndale. The

35 31 Jan. 1898, Letter 9, Conrad to Cunninghame Graham, p. 70.
"unholy prestige" of Flora's governess (C, 263) has convinced Flora that she is unlovable whilst the "demon of bitterness" that has entered Little Fyne has persuaded Anthony that he is taking advantage of the girl and that she cannot love him. Marlow emphasises the spirit in which Fyne has conducted his argument by commenting that "The possibilities of dull men are exciting because when they happen they suggest legendary cases of 'possession' not exactly by the devil but, anyhow, by a strange spirit" (C, 251).

Such imagery has not been absent from de Barral's plight either; his ill-advised excursion into Thrift having been accompanied by the press "screeching in all possible tones, like a confounded company of parrots instructed by some devil with a taste for practical jokes" (C, 74). These inauspicious omens lead de Barral to prison; equated with the "Nether Regions" by Marlow and with "a real hell" by Anthony (C, 347). Marlow describes the process of releasing a man from prison as "Perfectly devilish" and considers that "there is something infernal about the aspect of every individual stone or brick of them, something malicious as if matter were enjoying its revenge of the contemptuous spirit of man" (C, 352). Once on board, de Barral is shunned by the crew of the Ferndale "as if he had been the devil" (C, 351). Since it is his extreme egoism that desires Flora's exclusive attention, even to the extent of trying to
poison Anthony, the comment has some point.

The demonic nature of the strange arrangement is emphasised by the comments of Franklin, the mate:

He begged Powell to understand that if Captain Anthony chose to strike a bargain with Old Nick to morrow, and Old Nick were good to the captain, he (Franklin) would find it in his heart to love Old Nick for the captain's sake. That was so. On the other hand, if a saint, an angel with white wings came along and--He broke off short again as if his own vehemence had frightened him. (Q, 301-02)

In a sense, of course, Anthony has made a bargain with Old Nick since his excessive magnanimity stems from his "satanic conceit." Franklin continues to be puzzled "by such devil-work," which, in this case, he associates with women, who are able "to bring their devilry to sea and fasten on such a man" (Q, 304-05). His last such reference is ominously prophetic in the light of what is to happen, for he comments, "Why the devil, you ask. Devil - eh. Well no man is safe from the devil and that's answer for you" (Q, 403).

The unnatural lack of normal marital relations, which defies nature and negates life, is thus equated with the demonic in Chance. De Barral, prior to poisoning himself, comments, "These conspiracies are the devil" (Q, 432-33) and he is correct, though not in the way he imagines. Again egoism is at the root of the arrangement, for Anthony's vanity is described as "immense" and he has been "touched to the quick" by Fyne (Q, 332). It has led him, though, to deny life,
and this form of devilry is taken to its logical extreme in Conrad's next novel, Victory.

Demonic identification is nowhere as explicit as with Mr. Jones who represents a total negation of life. His abhorrence of women prevents any chance of procreation on his part whilst the fact that he is a cold blooded murderer means that his negation is an active one. He will not help to create; only destroy. Even Gentleman Brown (whose arrival in Jim's Patusan Jones's invasion of Samburan so closely resembles) was no misogynist; Jones's total negativity is in a class of its own. He is, in fact, directly equated with the devil by Heyst:

Having been ejected, he said, from his proper social sphere because he had refused to conform to certain usual conventions, he was a rebel now, and was coming and going up and down the earth. As I really did not want to listen to all this nonsense, I told him that I had heard that sort of story about somebody else before. His grin is really ghastly. He confessed that I was very far from the sort of man he expected to meet. Then he said:

"'As to me, I am no blacker than the gentleman you are thinking of, and I have neither more nor less determination.'" (V, 317-18)

Here is demonic opposition once again, therefore, though it does not reflect excessive egoism on this occasion. It does reflect something within Heyst, however; a life-negating doctrine which Heyst has been trying to live by. Heyst's negation is passive (non-involvement) and benign but the scepticism that forms his attitude reaches its logical
extreme in Jones's total nihilism. As Lena is dying, Heyst bends low over her, "cursing his fastidious soul, which even at that moment kept the true cry of love from his lips in its infernal mistrust of all life" (V, 406). Heyst's attitude is also connected with the demonic, therefore, and in this respect there is point to the many devil references in the novel that are aimed at Heyst himself. Even Morrison wonders at one point whether Heyst has been sent by the devil (V, 17) and both Schomberg's comment to Davidson--"Make enquiries of the devil" (V, 46)--and Heyst's own remark that action "is devilish" (V, 54) can be seen as ironic; Schomberg's because, in a special sense, he is right (though he means only abuse), Heyst's because it is really lack of action that is devilish.

Schomberg himself, who negates life by his "diabolical calumny" (V, 381) which can "dry-rot the soul" (V, 362) has at times "a sort of Satanic glee" (V, 93); the association of the demonic with falsehood is, thus, once again emphasised. When Jones arrives at his hotel, this means that two kinds of life-negating forces meet and the demonic imagery intensifies when Schomberg speaks of his wife:

I wish you would carry her off with you to the devil! I wouldn't run after you.

The unexpected outburst affected Mr. Jones strangely. He had a horrified recoil, chair and all, as if Schomberg had thrust a wriggling viper in his face.

"What's this infernal nonsense?" he muttered thickly. (V, 114)
Schomberg, raising his eyes, at last met the gleams in two dark caverns under Mr Jones's devilish eyebrows, directed upon him impenetrably. He shuddered as if horrors worse than murder had been lurking there, and said, nodding towards Ricardo:

"I dare say he wouldn't think twice about sticking me, if he had you at his back. . . . Ah, well, I've been already living in hell for weeks, so you don't make much difference. (V, 115)

Schomberg is really living in hell in two senses, neither of which he intends. His lies and calumnies brand him as demonic; he is therefore living in hell as one of the devils. His meaning is, of course, that he is a suffering victim, but he has created this situation entirely by himself by his egotistical and ludicrous assumptions that he would be attractive to Lena. Part of his problem is the elevated way in which he regards his table d'hôte, for he enters the dining-room "as if into a temple, very grave, with the air of a benefactor of mankind" (V, 27) and his dislike of Heyst is largely based on the Swede's lack of patronage. Thus, for Schomberg, "Whenever three people came together in his hotel, he took good care that Heyst should be with them" (V, 27), which, as a perversion of Christ's promise, can be said to have its roots in devilry; in this case combined with the familiar equation of an excessive egoism. As seen earlier, though, Schomberg's bitter calumnies have some point so that when he comments "He's turned Hermit from shame. That's what the devil does when's he's found out" (V, 31), he is, in a sense, right,
for it is the devil in Heyst— that sceptical negation of life—that keeps him in Samburan. Heyst's rescue of Lena is, naturally, the final affront; the music room which had previously harboured "an unholy fascination in systematic noise" (V, 68), is now described as "desecrated" by the card tables of Mr. Jones (V, 121). Negation attracts negation.

Martin Ricardo is another life-negating character. His instincts carry him towards rape (a perversion of the procreative function) and murder. He also (inadvertently) equates Jones with the devil when he considers how Pedro's being tied up "would daunt the arch devil himself—in time—in time, mind! I don't know but that even a real gentleman would find it difficult to keep a stiff lip to the end" (V, 143). He is, however, so equated himself when he reveals that once he has begun to play cards "I would play them for their souls" (V, 149). It is an ironic inversion that the guidance for Mr. Jones and his henchmen: to reach Heyst's island should be "a pillar of smoke by day and a loom of fire at night" (V, 168), since this is similar to the way the Israelites were led out of Egypt (Exodus, 13:21). It is ironic also that Ricardo should think, "with an unholy joy" that "the man on the wharf, were he in league with the devil himself, would pay for all their sufferings" (V, 238), not only because Heyst's scepticism can be shown to be devilish, but also because Ricardo himself, later described as "the viper" in Lena's para-
dise (V, 399), is clearly leagued with the destroying negative principle which passes for the devil in this book. There is thus purpose behind Wang's consideration that "the white woman might have been scuffling in there with an evil spirit" (V, 291), when Lena has been struggling with Ricardo, and also in Jones's estimate of Schomberg, that "he may be a very poor devil indeed" (V, 264).

This sense of the demonic indicating the negation of life is carried through into *The Arrow of Gold*, though there is more emphasis here on the condition of a victim of a life-negating obsession rather than on the attitude itself. *The Arrow of Gold* (and *The Rescue*) seem in many ways to hearken back to the early novels, particularly *An Outcast of the Islands*, since an overwhelming sexual obsession forms the pivot of each novel. Jones immoderately shunned women; three of the characters of *The Arrow of Gold* immoderately pursue one particular woman -- Rita de Lastaola -- and the obsession makes them devilish and damned.

Rita, described as having "the finer immobility, almost sacred, of a fateful figure seated at the very source of the passions that have moved men from the dawn of ages" (AG, 146), is almost regarded as a goddess figure by some of her admirers. M. George becomes a follower of this cult which he likens to "some strange wild faiths that get hold of mankind with the cruel mystic grip of unattainable perfection, robbing them of both liberty and felicity on earth" (AG, 140).
This veneration leads him to a night which is "the abomination of desolation" (AG, 154); an apocalyptic image which echoes an earlier one by J.M.K. Blunt that "the end is not yet" (AG, 38). It is certainly bleak enough for George as he lies in "that purgatory of hopeless longing and unanswerable questions to which I was condemned" (AG, 155).

M. George, then, suffers purgatory but Ortega, one of Rita's other worshippers, suffers still more. He is, it seems, the logical extension of the cult of female attraction and the imagery that surrounds him is the imagery of hell. To M. George, Ortega gazes at him "in a way in which the damned gaze out of their cauldrons of boiling pitch at some soul walking scot free in the place of torment" (AG, 271), and it seems that "his soul was absent in some hell of its own" (AG, 271). It is, of course, the hell that could await M. George as he watches "the man's very soul writhing in his body like an impaled worm" and pities Rita "for having that damned soul on her track" (AG, 276). Since George is willing to entertain thoughts of killing Ortega, it is clear that he too is dangerously close to the "facile descent into the abyss" (AG, 276), and with the description of Ortega as "an extraordinarily chilly devil" comes an appropriately warning apocalyptic image with the "sickly gas flame" which "was there on duty, undaunted, waiting for the end of the world to come and put it out" (AG, 277).

The ultimate fate of those who worship eternal
woman is, thus, to become a "damned soul" (AG, 310). Ortega finally attempts (but fails) to commit suicide (just as Conrad did it seems), whilst M. George is wounded in a duel with Blunt (just as Conrad claimed, it seems). For both Ortega and M. George, the obsession with Rita has led almost to death. Such an obsession is also responsible, perhaps, for Blunt appearing "positively satanic" (AG, 37) and knitting his brows "very devilishly indeed" (AG, 38), as he relates Rita's story; it is certainly the cause of his duel with George.

It is, however, the sanctimonious and superstitious Therese who seems most pre-occupied with the devil, although it is George who first provokes her:

"But you are very brave," I chaffed her, "for you didn't expect a ring, and after all it might have been the devil who pulled the bell."

"It might have been. But a poor girl like me is not afraid of the devil, I have a pure heart. I have been to confession last evening." (AG, 137-38)

Therese has heard of a murder committed:

"That's what carnal sin (pêché de chair) leads to," she commented, severely and passed her tongue over her thin lips. "And then the devil furnishes the occasion."

"I can't imagine the devil inciting me to murder you, Therese," I said, "and I didn't like that ready way you took me for an example, as it were." (AG, 138)

As has already been seen, George is certainly to contemplate murder before the book is over.

Therese is convinced that Rita is evil (AG, 158)
and advises George to make "a practice of crossing yourself directly you open your eyes... It keeps Satan off for the day" (AG, 159). This is not such crazy advice as it sounds since George certainly needs something to keep his obsession at bay. Therese continues by asserting her rights to the house which makes George think that "Satan himself would never manage to tear it out of her hands" (AG, 159). His warning to keep Rita and Ortega apart brings forth another condemnation as Therese reports, "I said to her, 'Rita, have you sold your soul to the Devil?' and she laughed like a fiend: 'For happiness! Ha, ha, ha!'... She is possessed" (AG, 235). Therese also considers that Rose (Rita's faithful servant) is "leagued with the devil" (AG, 235).

These, again, may be more than simply fanatical rantings, for the effects of Allègre's aesthetic but ultimately sterile world (epitomised, perhaps, by the lifeless dummy that once gave service as the empress of Byzantium—just as Rita has [AG, 267], and the ephemeral relationships she has observed thereafter have made Rita deeply suspicious of any kind of emotional attachment. Madame Leonore is correct when she pronounces that "She is for no man" (AG, 135) and Rita's ringing of the bell, just when she and George seem to be sinking into an embrace, emphasises her apprehensions of such a relationship (AG, 219-20). Rita is indeed possessed, therefore; possessed by the fear of succumbing to love, and this fear can be seen
to be life-negating since there will be no issue and certainly no happiness.

One can also say that M. George is deluding himself slightly when he remarks later "It is only the Devil, they say, that loves logic. But I was not a devil. I was not even a victim of the Devil" (AG, 283), for he is a victim of both his own obsession and of Rita's life-negating fear of a relationship; both aspects, figuratively, of the devil. When Ortega claims that Rita is "perdition" (AG, 318) and "more fit to be Satan's wife" (AG, 318) this not only highlights his own obsession and its consequences but also Rita's denial of life; a denial she carries through to the end by finally leaving George, once he is recovering from his duel with Blunt.

A more positive outlook is realised by Arlette in The Rover, of whom it is also said that "She is for no man" (Ro, 225). She, at least, is able to escape the life-negating spell that has possessed her; indeed she is almost able to recognise the nature of the possession:

"And what if I have been possessed," she argued to herself, "as the abbe' said, what is it to me as I am now? That evil spirit cast my true self out of my body and then cast away the body too. For years I have been living empty. There has been no meaning in anything." (Ro, 159)

Basically, then, the demonic imagery in Conrad's novels indicates a destructive outlook, characteristic, obsession or passion. It is used to reveal an
excessive or unrestrained egoism by demonic identifica-
tion or association (Wait, Podmore, Kurtz and
Brown), by demonic possession (Willems) or by demon-
ic opposition (Lingard, Jim and the narrator of The
Shadow-Line); such usage frequently being combined
with aspects of deification either by the character
or by others (Wait, Podmore, Willems, Lingard, Jim,
Kurtz and the systems of autocracy and revolution).
It can also indicate an immoderate passion (Willems,
Ortega and M. George), a cruel and selfish stupidity,
or mania (the pilgrims in "Heart of Darkness"), or a
life-negating doctrine or obsession (in Chance, Vic-
tory and The Arrow of Gold). It acts as a link be-
tween savagery and civilisation and between reality
and illusion in "Heart of Darkness," and between a
character and his obsession (in the form of catalyst
or temptation) in Nostromo and Under Western Eyes.
It can also act as a warning of future calamity (as
it does in Lord Jim, Nostromo and Chance); as an
epithet for the cause of oppression (Under Western
Eyes); or as the externalization of a character's
destructive inner compulsions (Nostromo and Razumov).
It is, finally, inseparable from falsehood (parti-
cularly stressed in the instances of Razumov and
Schomberg), infidelity (Willems), and irrationality
(in most of the novels), and its effects are gener-
ally destructive or disruptive.
iv. The Soul and the Will

With such an extensive use of demonic imagery to accompany the destructive elements of his fiction, it is hardly surprising that the part of man that seems to suffer most as a result is his soul. This, too, is sometimes used in its literal, theological sense; at least characters such as Podmore would have that intention. The word is also used without deep meaning in such phrases as "not a soul" where it simply indicates a human presence or (in this case) absence. The word was used in a number of ways during the time Conrad was writing but generally retained the sense of being a spiritual or animating element.

Most of Conrad's readers, then (without thinking very much about it), would have a vague idea of soul as some part of man separate from mind and body, apparently transcending both. If they were of a literal turn of mind then Conrad's novels would seem to show man's soul being entrapped by the devil; if not, then some vital life force within man would appear to be at the mercy of his excessive egoism or his destructive obsessions. When Willems tells Lingard "If you want to drive my soul into damnation by trying to drive me to suicide you will not succeed," he is using the term literally in this remembrance of Catholic doctrine (Ol, 278). But his relationship with Aissa is described as a loss of soul and clearly
the word here means something a little different:

Pressing against him she stood on tiptoe to look into his eyes, and her own seemed to grow bigger, glistening and tender, appealing and promising. With that look she drew the man's soul away from him through his immobile pupils, and from Willems' features the spark of reason vanished under her gaze and was replaced by an appearance of physical well-being, an ecstasy of the senses which had taken possession of his rigid body; an ecstasy that drove out regrets, hesitation and doubt, and proclaimed its terrible work by an appalling aspect of idiotic beatitude. (01, 140)

It is whilst he is in this position that Willems seems to see a vision of himself moving away (01, 145) and is aware of the murderous approach of the blind Omar without being able to take any evasive action (01, 149-50). Even the instinct for self-preservation, then (usually the most powerful of egotistical drives), is subservient to the immoderate sexual passion to which he has succumbed.

Bruce Johnson calls his chapter on Conrad's first two novels "The Paralysis of Will" (referring to Schopenhauer for an understanding of the term), and, indeed, the will could serve well as a synonym for soul in this context. The passion of Dain Maroola for Nina is described in almost identical fashion:

She drew back her head and fastened her eyes on his in one of those long looks that are a woman's most terrible weapon; a look that is more stirring than the closest touch, and more dangerous than the thrust of a dagger, because it also whips the soul out of the body, but leaves the body alive.

36 Models of Mind, pp. 8-23.
and helpless, to be swayed here and there by the capricious tempests of passion and desire; a look that enwraps the whole body, and that penetrates into the innermost recesses of the being, bringing terrible defeat in the delirious uplifting of accomplished conquest. (AF, 171)

Little wonder that Dain should say to Nina soon after "I have delivered my soul into your hands" (AF, 178); she is his source of motivation just as Aïssa is for Willems. Almayer is in a similar plight since his daughter is "that small and unconscious particle of humanity that seemed to him to contain all his soul" (OK, 320). His action of having sold himself to Lingard (noted earlier) could be said to come under the same heading. The use of the word "soul" reflects the totality of the man's passion or obsession; the completeness of his captivity. He is no longer an independent being; his whole view of life is seen by way of the woman he adores and it is, indeed, his will that becomes subject to her domination since he can no longer conceive of any action or ambition that is not related to her. It is this circumstance that makes Ortega a "damned soul" and M. George confess that "The soul was already a captive before doubt, anguish, or dismay could touch its surrender and its exaltation" (AG, 124).

With different shades of application, this definition of soul as will can be applied widely throughout the canon, but before noting the variations it is necessary to look carefully at the terms. Will usually denotes determination, desire or the
power of conscious choice; clearly overcome in the foregoing instances with disastrous results (only Dain does not suffer from surrendering his soul to a woman). Bruce Johnson's invoking of Schopenhauer, however, brings a far more comprehensive concept of will to the fore:

... not merely willing and purposing in the narrowest sense, but also all striving, wishing, shunning, hoping, fearing, loving, hating, in short, all that directly constitutes our own weal and woe, desire and aversion, is clearly only affection of the will, is an excitation, a modification, of willing and non-willing, is just that which, if it takes outward effect, exhibits itself as an act of will proper. 37

To Schopenhauer, the will was the "thing-in-itself"; 38 its true operation being seen only in action since "It is only in reflection that to will and to act are different; in reality they are one." 39 The form of the action depended on incentives, the chief of which was egoism, but Schopenhauer identified three fundamental incentives of human action, claiming that "all possible motives operate solely through their stimulation" and detailing them as follows:


39 Schopenhauer, World, I, 130; quoted in Gardiner, p. 159.
a) Egoism: this desires one's own weal (is boundless).
b) Malice: this desires another's woe (goes to the limits of extreme cruelty).
c) Compassion: this desires another's weal (goes to the length of nobleness and magnanimity).

Every human action must be attributable to one of these incentives, although two can also act in combination.

The intellect seems to have been regarded as an "instrument" of the will; a provider of information upon which action might be based but not capable itself of independent decisions. The will is thus likened to "the strong blind man who carries on his shoulder the lame man who can see." 41

Johnson likens Conrad's "ego" to Schopenhauer's "will," 42 but, in this case, ego would not only be the source of man's prime incentive but become the thing-in-itself, a transcendental reality, independent of time, space and causality. Neither "will" nor "ego" appears with any frequency in Conrad's works; in Lord Jim, for example, "will" appears only ten times other than as an auxiliary verb and "ego" does not feature at all. In contrast, "soul" appears on forty-five occasions and "devil" on forty-nine, 43 but Johnson ignores both concepts, leaving them,

41 Schopenhauer, World, II, 421; quoted in Gardiner, p. 166.
42 Models of Mind, p. 43.
43 Parins et al, Concordance, pp. 151-82.
presumably, to be defined in their traditional theological senses.

Conrad (as was noted earlier) felt that "C'est égoisme qui sauve tout" and that egoism was "the moving force of the world," which suggests his acceptance of it as man's prime and most potent source of motivation. The Conradian model would thus have "soul" as "will," urged initially (and inevitably) by egoism, tempered (ideally) by altruism and enlightened by the intellect. The portrait of Gentleman Brown suggests that, under Conrad's scheme of things, malice is bound up with "intense egoism" and is not separate (as it is in Schopenhauer). Compassion is included under altruism, whose source is external, but several characters (Anthony in particular) fall into difficulties because what they take to be altruism is actually subtle egoism.

When egoism and altruism have been enlightened and work in conjunction with each other, this combination produces a healthy soul (or will) which is relatively detached and able to make balanced decisions. Such a balance becomes affected when some aspect of the ego achieves dominance (as it does with Jim) or when the source of enlightenment (the intellect) acts upon a false premise (as it does in the cases of Flora de Barral and Heyst). In these cases, the actions directed by the soul (or will) become circumscribed or controlled by the assumption or false premise which has become an obsession, overwhelming the intellect and pervading every motivation produced by the ego.
Schopenhauer speaks only occasionally of the "so-called soul,"\textsuperscript{44} and concentrates on the will which he regards as a "vital force,"\textsuperscript{45} as "the core of our true being,"\textsuperscript{46} as being sole possessor of "a metaphysical reality by virtue whereof it is indestructible through death"\textsuperscript{47}—all of which, in other eyes, would seem to describe the soul. His separation of "will" and "intellect" seems to be followed by Marlow who makes such a distinction when describing the shock he receives when he finds that Kurtz has left the cabin, feeling "as if something altogether monstrous, intolerable to thought and odious to the soul, had been thrust upon me" (\textit{Y}, 141). Kurtz's conduct is "odious to the soul" (or will) because Marlow is reluctant (or unwilling) to accept it, and the seaman immediately tries to prevent him from attending the native rites:

\begin{quote}
I tried to break the spell—the heavy mute spell of the wilderness—that seemed to draw him to its pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions. This alone, I was convinced ... had beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations. (\textit{Y}, 144)
\end{quote}

Instincts, passions and aspirations are all recognisable urges; thus far the equation seems to fit. And, as Marlow carefully considers the state of Kurtz's soul, he once more clearly distinguishes it from the intellect:

\textsuperscript{44} Parerga and Paralipomena, II, 162.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., I, 20.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., I, 114.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., I, 306-07.
Soul! If anybody had ever struggled with a soul, I am the man. And I wasn't arguing with a lunatic either. Believe me or not, his intelligence was perfectly clear—concentrated, it is true, upon himself with horrible intensity, yet clear; and therein was my only chance. . . . But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad. I had—for my sins, I suppose—to go through the ordeal of looking into it myself. No eloquence could have been so withering to one's belief in mankind as his final burst of sincerity. He struggled with himself, too. I saw it,—I heard it. I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggled blindly with itself. (Y, 144-45)

Marlow is confused at this point, having previously confessed that "I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air" (Y, 144). What is perplexing him is that Kurtz is not just the benign (though egotistical) idealist he set out to be or the ruthless ivory hunter partaking in unspeakable rites that he has become; he is both. The struggle within Kurtz is caused by his conflicting desires, by two opposed aspects of will, and the apparent insanity of this inner force is caused by the irreconcilability of those desires. This becomes clearer when Marlow adds:

The shade of the original Kurtz frequented the hollow sham, whose fate it was to be buried presently in the mould of primitive earth. But both the diabolic love and the unearthly hate of the mysteries it had penetrated fought for the possession of that soul satiated with primitive emotions, avid of lying fame, of sham distinction, of all the appearances of success and power. (Y, 147-48)
It is, then, Kurtz's will, his power of choice, that has been "sealed" to the wilderness "by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation" (Y, 115). In a sense his soul is the heart of darkness since, if an aspiring angel can become a fiend when civilised restraints have been removed in the wilderness, this fate must be possible for all of us; this is "the potential hell in the heart of every man." Heart, in fact, is another word to bear in mind when considering the soul if it is used in its non-physical sense of the seat of emotions, the source of loyalty, fidelity and love. It is, indeed, a term used by M. George in The Arrow of Gold when he speaks of Azzolati as having "A criminal soul (or shall we say heart)" (AG, 119).

Theologically, of course, the struggle within Kurtz is a sense of guilt, engendered by his conscience and harrowing his tempted soul (man's inner reality). It reflects a clash between intentions and desires derived from competing motivations (high ideals and primitive attractions). Kurtz's final-cry, "The horror! The horror!" (Y, 149), which Marlow considers as "a judgment upon the adventures of his soul on this earth" (Y, 150), can thus be regarded as the idealistic side of Kurtz's will commenting on the overwhelming temptation (motivation) of the wilderness that has controlled his plans and actions among the natives; a final recognition, perhaps, of the dual nature of man,

of his primitive heritage co-existing with his civilised present.

It is this discovery that Marlow must keep back from the Intended, "a soul as translucently pure as a cliff of crystal" (Y, 151-52), and he must keep it back "for the salvation" of that "soul" (Y, 156). As he listens to her idealistic words, he links her with Kurtz's native mistress (Y, 160-61); clearly the primitive heritage would be present in her also. The lie which saves her soul, therefore, enables her to retain her idealistic volition; her will is not exposed to the knowledge of primitive motivations.

Schopenhauer's idea of will does not fit here, since, to him, only desires could conflict. Within his philosophy, man "can wish two opposing actions, but will only one of them. Only the act reveals to his self-consciousness which of the two he wills."49 Conrad's "soul," then, is closer to "will" in the dictionary sense of power of choice—neither as all-embracing nor as directing as Schopenhauer's term. It is under this lesser definition that "will" serves as a synonym for "soul" in "Heart of Darkness." Kurtz "had the power to charm or frighten rudimentary souls into an aggravated witch-dance in his honour . . . "—which suggests the primitive uncultivated nature of the natives (a very basic volition in other words)—"he could also fill the small souls of the pilgrims with bitter misgivings . . ."

suggesting the narrow fixation for ivory and personal aggrandisement that forms their only motivation—"and he had conquered one soul in the world that was neither rudimentary nor tainted with self-seeking" (Y, 119)—presumably the Intended though it could also be the harlequin.

When Marlow talks of "the perdition of one's soul" (Y, 105) or of making "a bargain for his soul with the devil" (Y, 117), he seems to be using the word in its traditional sense of a non-physical entity in man that survives after death to partake of some eternal reward or punishment; and evoking the Faustian legend in the process. But, if one interpretation of the devil is an image of unrestrained or excessive egoism, then to sell one's soul to the devil may indicate a betrayal of one's principles (or subjugation of one's will) for egotistical gain. It was noted earlier how Conrad would use the term to relate to any sense of prostitution of the arts, though that seems more a case of one's will being dominated by financial considerations.

Soul as "will" does prove capable of general application. When Jim's dreams "carried his soul away with them and made it drunk with the divine philtre of an unbounded confidence in itself" (LW, 20), this means that his romantic egoism is directing his will and laying down the path that he should follow. When the instinct of survival momentarily (and disastrously) obtrudes on these desires, it is this frustrated will that writhes within him (LW, 32) and causes Marlow to
feel that "he was only speaking before me, in a dispute with an invisible partner of his existence—another possessor of his soul" (LJ, 93). When the crew of the Patna push "with all the might of their souls" (LJ, 104), this represents a total commitment on their part; mind, body and will. Similarly, when Nostromo returns to Sulaco after leaving Decoud and the treasure on the Great Isabel, he is fearful of being seen because "with his own knowledge possessing his whole soul, it seemed impossible that anybody in Sulaco should fail to jump at the right surmise" (N, 424). Knowledge thus governs behaviour here and continues to do so throughout the remainder of the book. When he goes to ask Giorgio for the hand of Giselle, he cannot frame the words because "neither dead nor alive, like the Gringos on Azuera, he belonged body and soul to the unlawfulness of his audacity" (N, 531). His freedom of choice (free-will) is thus confined and he allows himself to be affianced to Linda, which prompts Giorgio to comment, "And so the soul of the dead is satisfied" (N, 532). It was, of course, Teresa's wish (or will) that Nostromo and Linda should marry. Finally the soul of Nostromo is said to die within him as he finds that he cannot even reveal the whereabouts of the treasure to Giselle (N, 542); he is truly its slave since it controls his will.

This reading can be applied to other characters, too. Hirsch's "mercantile soul" (N, 203) reflects his motivating volition; Monygham's soul is "withered and shrunk by the shame of moral disgrace" because his will to act is circumscribed by the knowledge that it
succumbed under Father Beron's torture (N, 431); Decoud has "the strangest sensation of his soul having just returned into his body" (N, 262) because the blackness of the Golfo Placido seems to have taken from him, momentarily, any power to make a decision and, once alone on the Great Isabel, his solitude becomes "a state of soul in which the affectations of irony and scepticism have no place" (N, 497), causing him to kill himself, presumably because, without "faith in himself and others" (N, 496), his will can only turn from life and not towards it.

Such a definition can also explain how, in Chance, the influence of the governess remains with Flora de Barral "like a mark on her soul, a sort of mystic wound" (G, 118-19) since Flora's power of decision is circumscribed by the memories of the other's cruelty. The governess has "the soul of a remorseless brigand" (G, 93) where "character" would fit as well as "will." It explains Franklin's "ulcerated and pathetic soul" (G, 375) since his good wishes for the captain are being thwarted by the unusual situation that pertains on the Ferndale. In Victory, it shows how Ricardo and Jones are "identical souls in different disguises" (V, 130) since, apart from the matter of females, their wills are at least similar; it explains the "uneasy soul" of Heyst's father (V, 91), the power of calumny, which, according to Heyst, "can even destroy one's faith in oneself--dry-rot the soul" (V, 362), and the reason why Heyst's "fastidious soul" still keeps "the true cry of love from his lips in its infernal mistrust of all life" (V, 406).
Clearly, however, the equation of soul with will works rather better in some places than it does in others. When Conrad speaks of the "soulless autocracy" of Russia, separated by a "black abyss" from "the be­nighted, starved souls of its people" (NLL, 89), "soul­less" can hardly mean "without will" since it is rather too much will on the part of the ruling powers that is being complained of. The implication is that autocracy here is devoid of normal human characteristics (the more positive ones, that is) and is, therefore, heart­less, devoid of pity, compassion or love and crushing the individual wills of its people. To pin one's faith to a single definition and assume absolute application could be a presumptuous proceeding, therefore, and in no place more than in Under Western Eyes where some 57 references to soul imply a more than usual importance to the use of the term. Rosenfield, indeed, has a dif­ferent idea of what "soul" means, especially as the word is used by Haldin:

Haldin does not conceive of the soul in the theological sense—as that immaterial essence that animates life and survives the death of the body. Rather, he uses the religious word to designate the infusing spirit of rebellion, the idea "which never dies."50

Haldin, in fact, has spoken at length about Russian souls:

Where did you get your soul from? There aren't many like you. Look here, brother!

50 Rosenfield, p. 128.
Men like me leave no posterity, but their souls are not lost. No man's soul is ever lost. It works for itself—or else where would be the sense of self-sacrifice, of martyrdom, of conviction, of faith—the labours of the soul? What will become of my soul when I die in the way I must die—soon—very soon perhaps? It shall not perish. Don't make a mistake, Razumov. This is not murder—it is war, war. My spirit shall go on warring in some Russian body till all falsehood is swept out of the world. The modern civilisation is false, but a new revelation shall come out of Russia. Ha! you say nothing. You are a sceptic. I respect your political scepticism, Razumov, but don't touch the soul. The Russian soul that lives in all of us. It has a future. It has a mission. (UWE, 22)

This passage contains many words which have religious connotations, of course ("sacrifice," "martyrdom," "faith," "revelation"); "soul" sits naturally with such rhetoric. But Rosenfield seems to equate motivation (the idea) with that which is motivated (the soul), and these must, surely, be separate. "Will" would, in fact, fit again here; the will to continue with the idea.

The "infusing spirit" Rosenfield speaks of is really the impetus for the soul, therefore, not the soul itself. When, later, Sophia Antonovna talks of "an unstable state of soul" which accompanies the conversion to revolution (UWE, 261), this is clearly "will" once more; the "infusing spirit of revolution" is simply the cause of the temporary instability.

"Soul" is rather harder to define when Razumov considers the word in connection with the visions he has of Haldin. "Souls do not take a shape of clothing," he comments at one stage (UWE, 84) and later he decides "It was not his soul, it was his mere phantom
he had left behind on this earth" (UWE, 94). But he is
to change his mind when confronted by Madame de S---
who claims "I can see your very soul" (UWE, 224).
Razumov speaks of "Some sort of phantom in my image,"
supposing that "a soul when it is seen is just that.
A vain thing. There are phantoms of the living as well
as of the dead" (UWE, 224).

"Will" seems less applicable here since Razumov
appears to be thinking along almost theological lines,
and, indeed, the constant use of the word reinforces
the religious language that accompanies revolution.
But when he writes of stealing Natalia's soul from her
(UWE, 359), this would essentially mean dominating her
existence or will. The solitude of Razumov's soul,
however, tempts the teacher of languages to try a
definition:

This was Mr. Razumov's feeling, the soul, of
course, being his own, and the word being used
not in the theological sense, but standing, as
far as I can understand it, for that part of
Mr. Razumov which was not his body, and more
specially in danger from the fires of this
earth. And it must be admitted that in Mr.
Razumov's case the bitterness of solitude
from which he suffered was not an altogether
morbid phenomenon. (UWE, 291-92)

As a definition, this is not helpful since it is
better at explaining what it is not (soul in the theo-
logical sense) rather than what it is (which remains
vague). The very vagueness, of course, reveals a con-
fusion within the teacher of languages, whose under-
standing of events is always strictly limited. It
does reveal, however, that torment for Razumov was on
this plane (fires obviously denoting tortures of some kind). What seems to be indicated here is some life force, some inner controlling reality, the core of his existence from which his free-will radiates. After betraying Haldin, "it was as if his soul had gone out in the night to gather the flowers of wrathful wisdom. He got up in a mood of grim determination and as if with a new knowledge of his own nature" (UWE, 78). This could mean soul as will again but it could also signify soul as source for will. When Conrad speaks of "the soul of a great truth,"51 he is clearly speaking of some heart, of the essence, the epitome, the totality, the exemplification of something. When Shaw, in a cancelled passage of The Rescue, comments "when I once ship aboard a hooker, I am hers, body and--mind" (fol. 21), he is clearly reflecting his limited loyalty to the ship by changing the well-known phrase. "Soul" here would denote a whole-hearted and total commitment. But the dangers of attempting to over-define are just as great as accepting a less specific term; once one has started to probe the core of existence, one could define ad infinitum. That Conrad had no clear belief in a soul is made evident by a letter from him to Cunningham Graham, written in 1920:

As to the soul You and I cher ami, are too honest to talk of what we know nothing about. Still, after all these years, I think I may venture to say to you this: that if there is such a thing, then yours Don Roberto is a very fine one, both in what it

receives from the world and in what it gives to it. 52

This should, at least, preclude assumptions of literal usage on the part of the author except when reflecting the beliefs of his characters. Indeed, the whole process of defining terms can come dangerously close to obscuring their metaphorical possibilities. If soul is taken to mean "will," for example, to the extent of this being regarded as a viable definition, one is then taking the word literally and ignoring the fact that Conrad probably used the religious term for a purpose. Soul and devil are simple two features of religious language that may form part of a metaphorical backcloth to Conrad's major themes. In isolation, their roles have been carefully scrutinised and found to be secular. To rely solely on literal theological interpretations is, thus, to lessen their value, almost to ignore them. It remains to be seen how, in their secular roles, they form part of a pattern set up by the religious language as a whole.

52 23 December 1920, Letter 75, Conrad to Cunninghame Graham, p. 190.
It was noted earlier that Conrad's literal use of religion reveals a world in which little spiritual sustenance is available for a despairing mankind, and, accordingly, very few of Conrad's characters can give a definite answer to any question of faith. Thus, when Razumov questions Haldin about his belief in God (UWE, 23) and later asks Sophia Antonovna, firstly whether she is "a materialist" (UWE, 251) and then (in contrast) whether she believes in "the actual devil" (UWE, 281), the answer he receives in each case is equivocal. When questioned about hell and eternal punishment by her father, Flora de Barral can only make a vague and inarticulate reply (G, 394); questioned about his belief by Heyst, Morrison's response, despite his admission of prayers, is similarly indirect (V, 14); and M. George completely evades the accusations of "scoffing and irreverence," brought by the fanatical Villarel (AG, 251). For the most part, therefore, the certainties of belief or disbelief are not held by the inhabit-
ants of Conrad's fiction; even the sceptical Martin Decoud will not admit the charges of being "godless—a materialist" and a "victim of this faithless age" (N, 198). In the few cases where faith is proclaimed (such as Whalley), the claim is rigorously tested and the nature of the belief shown to be illusory. Thus, with this source of comfort apparently inadequate or unavailing, many of Conrad's characters are forced to look elsewhere for their spiritual fulfilment, and figurative religious language is used to indicate these new objects of devotion. The chief engineer in Nostromo speaks truly when he refers to "the spiritual value which everyone discovers in his own form of activity" (N, 318), and Martin Decoud is no less perceptive when he says of the materialists in Charles Gould's salon, "Those gentlemen talk about their gods" (N, 199).

Two of these terms have been noted already—the devil and the soul. The aspects that remain can be categorised as biblical allusions, classical allusions and religious terms of a general nature. Since they inter-lock as part of an overall pattern, it is not really satisfactory to divide them up, but Conrad's use of biblical allusions, in particular, has attracted frequent comments from critics (most of whom have studied them in isolation), and (keeping in mind the overall picture), it will be necessary, briefly to consider them on their own.

A number of critics use such allusions as sign-
posts to allegory and, though this procedure has already received some attention in chapter one, it is still necessary to consider a few specific cases here. Dennis Walsh, for example, feels that "The most common biblical pattern in Conrad's fiction is that of innocence, temptation, betrayal, fall and redemption. Most of Conrad's important fiction contains a variant of this pattern."¹ Not surprisingly, Walsh has to resort to some manipulation to fulfil his assertions, even when dealing with (in his words), "The best and simplest test case ["Youth"] where overt scriptural references are used ironically to achieve a comic, though sympathetic, vision of youthful experience."² Walsh sees Captain Beard and his wife as "a comic Adam and Eve"; the captain's "fall" coming when, during a collision, he jumps off the ship to save his wife, being thus "tempted by a woman."³ Despite this "fall", Beard "preserves a prelapsarian innocence,"⁴ whilst "his task, resembling that of Adam, is to 'get a wretched 600 ton cargo of coal to its port of destination' (4)."⁵

Not only does such manipulation seem over-ingenious, it is also inconsistent. If Beard has fallen, how is he able to retain his "prelapsarian


² Walsh, p. 11.

³ Ibid., p. 13.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., p. 12.
innocence"? Why should there be a connection between Adam and 600 tons of coal? If the story of "Youth" is "that of Marlow's 'fall' from his dreams of earthly paradise and belief in the immortality of his own youth," what is it that tempts him to fall? In his introductory chapter, Walsh talks of "the rather overt (and perhaps even clumsy) biblical motif in 'Youth,'" but blaming the author is hardly an answer. Over-extensions such as these tend to obscure points that might otherwise be more acceptable.

Walsh's analysis of "Typhoon" has been published and merits a more extensive appraisal. The "fall" is applied again; this time to Jukes, for whom the ordeal of the typhoon "becomes analogous to the loss of Eden." For Walsh, "The biblical story of creation is central to a deep understanding of 'Typhoon.'"

That Jukes goes through an initiation experience in "Typhoon" is reasonable enough but immediately an over-extension of the model can be seen. For Walsh compares his discovery of light in the engine room with the first stage of biblical creation and suggests that "For man to create light in

6 Walsh, p. 14. 7 Ibid., p. 4.


the universe is demonic," invoking the Prometheus myth to parallel the Edenic one. "This," he continues, "may link MacWhirr with fallen Adam. MacWhirr and his crew, without divine sanction, create order and light on the Nan-Shan." But now we are lost in allegory, far away from the main story. What kind of divine sanction should we expect, for example? In any case, MacWhirr is not creating order and light, he is restoring it. In a sense he has created chaos by stubbornly heading into the typhoon in the first place.

But the whole premise of Walsh's argument can be questioned too, for the story of Eden itself can be taken as a symbol of human experience; an illustration of the often disillusioning effect of the acquisition of knowledge. Such an experience is one of the growing pains of life; a transition each of us must make. It is almost impossible, therefore, to write about stages of human existence without describing this important period and, in this light, the use of terms such as "prelapsarian," "fall" and "Edenic" become almost meaningless; any story could be fitted into the scheme. In other words, the loss of Eden is itself an allegory of human life, not vice versa. This is not to say that the Genesis story of a lost paradise is not made use of in literature (clearly it is, and by Conrad too); but,

11 Walsh, "Christian Allusion," p. 27.
for such application to have validity, it must be discriminating. To describe all instances of initiation into experience as relating to the biblical story; to assume that biblical allusions must point to a biblical pattern within which a novel's events can, willy nilly, be fitted (no matter how ludicrous the final results may appear), is not only to lack this essential discrimination, but also to diminish in value those works which do seek to make use of the Bible in this way. We are back to allusions being regarded as synonymous with identification again (which was noted, earlier, in chapter one).

Walsh's concentration on Genesis and creation, moreover, is unduly selective since there are strong reminders, not only of the beginning but also of the end of the Bible. Of MacWhirr, it is said, "Had he been informed by an indisputable authority that the end of the world was to be finally accomplished by a catastrophic disturbance of the atmosphere, he would have assimilated the information under the simple idea of dirty weather, and no other" (T, 20). The setting sun "had a diminished diameter and an expiring brown, rayless glow, as if millions of centuries elapsing since the morning had brought it near its end" (T, 28). These ominous warnings (both biblical and scientific) are repeated with Jukes's impression of MacWhirr's voice during the typhoon:

And again he heard that voice, forced and ringing feebly, but with a penetrating effect of quietness in the enormous discord
of noises, as if sent out from some remote spot of peace beyond the black wastes of the gale; again he heard a man's voice—the frail and indomitable sound that can be made to carry an infinity of thought, resolution, and purpose, that shall be pronouncing confident words on the last day, when heavens fall, and justice is done. (T, 44)

There is, therefore, a combination of pre-creation chaos and apocalypse here—neither of which can be said to be unexpected in the circumstances. Jukes's reference to the Siamese flag as incorporating "a ridiculous Noah's ark elephant" (T, 9) may also be prophetic of the typhonic deluge to come.

To these allusions of chaos, deluge and apocalypse can be added images of hell. In the oppressive calm before the typhoon, "The smoke struggled with difficulty out of the funnel, and instead of streaming away spread itself out like an infernal sort of cloud, smelling of sulphur and raining soot all over the decks" (T, 21); the darkness caused by the storm is a "fiendish blackness" (T, 42); the depths of the ship are described as being "black as Tophet" (T, 70); the 'tween-deck, where the Chinese are fighting, is "A regular little hell" (T, 62); whilst the whole affair is (in Jukes's words), "an altogether fiendish business" (T, 99).

There are other allusions too. Walsh quotes the beginning of chapter three, in which Jukes is regarded as being "as ready as any half-dozen young mates that may be caught by casting a net upon the waters" (T, 39)—presumably a reference to the early
disciples—but says nothing more about it. Other gospel allusions include the reference to men like the second mate, who leave their berths "with an air of shaking the ship's dust off their feet" (T, 29). If this is a deliberate allusion, it is clearly ironic, since the admonition to "shake off the dust of your feet" is given by Christ to the disciples as the procedure to be adopted when departing from a heedless house or city (Matt. 10:14). Its use here reveals the self-righteous egocentrity of the second mate and his kind.

This last point raises a common problem about biblical allusions; how deliberate are they? The Bible is one of the main sources of European heritage and, as such, many of its verses have become little more than clichés (shaking the dust off one's feet being a good example). There may, moreover, be a warning early in the book to the effect that it is misleading to assume biblical import for an apparently biblical allusion. This, after all, is the mistake of the curate who causes Mrs. Rout so much mirth by his flustered reaction to "Solomon says" (T, 16). Inevitably a typhoon is going to evoke images of chaos, apocalypse and hell; the dangers of overapplication are obvious.

To ignore them, however, could be just as incorrect, for they are, clearly, a part of the whole. The effect created by the combined destructive imagery that has been noted, is that of a deliberate,
methodical assault. When the real power of the typhoon hits the ship, it comes "like the sudden smashing of a vial of wrath" (T, 40); an image of divine censure, in other words, that has come about because MacWhirr has proclaimed himself unable to follow his book's advice on avoiding storms "if every word in there was gospel truth" (T, 33). In thus refusing to circumvent "the winds of heaven" (T, 35), MacWhirr is making "his confession of faith" (T, 35) and Jukes, looking on, is "like a man invited to behold a miracle" (T, 34). But it is a false faith that MacWhirr confesses for, just as, in biblical terms, to turn away from the word of God (in this case the gospel) is to invite the wrath of God, so, to turn away from the word of storm strategy is to invite the wrath of the elements. In this kind of frame, an earlier incident can be considered too — MacWhirr's censure of the second engineer:

"A profane man," he said, obstinately. "If this goes on, I'll have to get rid of him the first chance."
"It's the heat," said Jukes. "The weather's awful. It would make a saint swear." (T, 25)

Jukes's concern is that the second engineer should be "A jolly good second," and in this case it is the mate who is the more correct as a later incident shows:

"Blowing off all the time," went on yelling the second. With a sound as of a hundred scoured saucepans, the orifice of a ventilator spat upon his shoulder a sudden gush
of salt water, and he volleyed a stream of curses upon all things on earth including his own soul, ripping and raving, and all the time attending to his business. (T, 71)

The last line is the important one here for it shows that the second engineer does not lose his head. As far as the Nan-Shan is concerned, he is a saint since he unflaggingly fulfils his duty—Conrad's constant criterion for a good seaman. The real act of profanity comes from MacWhirr in his deliberate flouting of recommended procedures which causes him to place his ship, its crew and passengers in deadly peril. Jukes's thoughts on MacWhirr's threat to fire the second engineer "out of the ship if he don't look out" are also pertinent, for he considers, "Of course it's the weather; what else? It would make an angel quarrelsome—let alone a saint" (T, 25)

MacWhirr is no angel, of course, but his actions once the typhoon has struck would perhaps qualify him for such a distinction in the sense of devotion to the well-being of the ship and the restoring of order throughout. When, in the eye of the hurricane, he appears before the barometer, he is said to resemble "a booted and misshapen pagan burning incense before the oracle of a Joss" (T, 84), and this may be a way of expressing (in religious terms) the falsity (or inadequacy) of his beliefs, as well as indicating his dependency on instruments. His immediate thought—that "if the books were right this worst would be very bad" (T, 84)—perhaps shows something of a con-
version, though he is still adamant (with regard to the equitable division among the Chinese at the end) that "There are things you find nothing about in books" (T, 102) and, indeed, he finds them simply confusing (T, 87).

Jukes's ironical connection between MacWhirr and a quarrelsome angel is indicative of the inconstant way in which he regards his commander. During the height of the typhoon, he leans heavily on MacWhirr; when he speaks to the captain through the speaking-tube from the engine room it seems to him that "a small voice shoved aside the shouting hurricane quietly" (T, 72). Though consistently exasperated by MacWhirr's instructions, Jukes still finds relief through the apparently unflappable tones of the master. The likening of MacWhirr to God, made by this incident, has been frequently cited by critics. C. Wegelin, for example, says, "In its quiet smallness, the voice in which MacWhirr directs Jukes may remind us of the 'still small voice' in which the Lord directs Elijah; its setting may recall the voice in which He answers Job 'out of the whirlwind.'"\(^ {12}\) Wegelin makes the point that this comparison illustrates Jukes's reliance on his captain at this stage but is misleading since (unlike Jehovah), MacWhirr is not in control of the elements that surround him. This is emphasised, in fact, by the apocalyptic allusion that was noted earlier, where "a man's voice" is "the frail and indomitable sound . . . that shall be pro-

\(^ {12}\) "MacWhirr and the Testimony of the Human Voice," Conradiana, 7 (1975), 47.
nouncing confident words on the last day, when heavens fall, and justice is done" (T, 44). Such confidence, therefore, is clearly unfounded, and MacWhirr's declaration --"I wouldn't like to lose her" (T, 86, 90) -- and his admission to his wife that he "did actually think that his ship could not possibly live another hour in such a sea" (T, 94), reveal that he has undergone some kind of initiation, albeit a very limited one. Jukes's experience, too, seems to have a limited effect, since the letter he writes at the end of the book reveals no hints of a chastened mate, newly aware of life's profundities and suitably strengthened as a result, certainly when compared with the more mature attitudes displayed by the narrators of "The Secret Sharer" and The Shadow-Line after their experiences.

Basically, then, in addition to reinforcing the obvious conflicts between light and darkness, order and chaos and man and nature, the biblical allusions of "Typhoon" (taken with other religious terminology),

13 Conrad produces a similar image of the "last day" in his essay on Henry James where he writes of the artist, "the imaginative man who would be moved to speak on the eve of that day without to-morrow" (NLL, 13-14). The apocalypse described in the essay is a scientific one as opposed to the more biblical aspects of the references in "Typhoon," but the implication is that man's voice represents life since, for the artist, "silence is like death" (NLL, 14). MacWhirr's voice can thus be taken, similarly, as a symbol of life on the ship, illustrating his defiance of the elements that are attempting to overwhelm him.
underline, once more, Conrad's familiar lesson of the essential devotion of a sailor to his ship and to his companions. MacWhirr tells Jukes that a saint who swears is "No more saint than yourself, I expect" (T, 25), but, since the mate still does his duty, though complaining and, in the early stages of the storm, "corrupted by the storm that breeds a craving for peace" (T, 53), Jukes, indeed, proves to be just as much a saint as the second engineer. One could almost build up a religious hierarchy; Jukes, as both saint and disciple, regards his captain as an angel and as godlike, whilst still continuing to lament the latter's stupidity in ignoring the "gospel" by steaming knowingly into the hurricane. MacWhirr hangs about Jukes's neck "as heavy as a millstone" at the time when Jukes' heart is rebelling "against the tyranny of training and command" (T, 53). This is, again, perhaps, a reminder of the necessity of following the creed since the image is used by Christ to stress the importance of children. The Bible states that, "whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged around his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:6). Drowning in the depth of the sea will be exactly Jukes's fate if he does not fulfil his duties.

It is necessary, therefore, to keep a sense of perspective when considering the impact of allusions. Broadly speaking, it is not so much the biblical
story of creation that "is central to a deep understanding of 'Typhoon,'" as an appreciation of the importance of men fulfilling their duties. Conrad's sense of vocation is uppermost here and his comment to Garnett about The Nigger of the "Narcissus"—"I must enshrine my old chums in a decent edifice"—could equally well be applied to some of the characters of "Typhoon," though there is a slighter sense of solidarity here caused by widely differing attitudes to the crisis. Jukes's momentary corrupting by the storm is shared by the crew, of whom the boatswain relates:

"They seemed to take it ill that a lamp was not instantly created for them out of nothing. They would whine after a light to get drowned by—anyhow!" (T, 54). This yearning for light may well be a reminder of the first act of creation in Genesis, but it also illustrates faithless hearts since to sit and wait for a miracle is never a valid form of conduct on Conrad's ships. The point is made more explicitly in "The Secret Sharer," when Captain Archbold relates how his ship survived a terrible storm:

"That reefed foresail saved you," I threw in.
"Under God—it did," he exclaimed fervently. "It was by a special mercy, I firmly believe, that it stood some of those hurricane squalls."
"It was the setting of that sail which—" I began.
"God's own hand in it," he interrupted me. Nothing less could have done it." (TLS, 118)

But the crucial order, it transpires, came not from the

captain but from Leggatt. Divine intervention in the Sephora's case is clearly incalculable but the solid actions of most of the crew have, just as clearly, had an effect and it is the area of duty on board ship that is the province of the captain, not an arrogation of providential power.

On the Nan-Shan, unlike the crew with their unwillingness to stir, Solomon Rout is described as "fighting this fight in a pair of carpet slippers" (T, 69), which implies that he is a true follower of this creed since the phrase is an echo of St. Paul's admonition to "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). But, just as the biblical solemnity of his Christian name is undercut by the curate's mistake, so the drama of the biblical phrase is undercut by the detail of the "carpet slippers," which brings an incongruous note of mundaneness into the action. Like most of Conrad's good seamen, Solomon Rout's heroism is a matter-of-fact affair, affording no time for gestures or slogans; he simply gets on with the job. The New Testament references relating to disciples and their conduct are, therefore, as important as those of creation and apocalypse since they bolster the spirit of resistance and underline the essential devotion to the ship, but all the allusions act as constituents of the pattern, not as the pattern itself.

A different kind of approach is taken by Dwight H. Purdy in his study of biblical allusions in Under Western Eyes. Purdy suggests that "the professor's allusions resemble mixed metaphors: tenor and vehicle,
scriptural and fictional contexts, collide. This wreckage reduces to absurdity typological interpretations of history, interpretations of life got by gazing into the dark glass of scripture."15 Purdy points out that "when the professor is outside his direct experience, scriptural texts flourish,"16 noting that such allusions are most abundant in parts I and III (for which the narrator relies on Razumov's notebook) and thinnest in parts II and IV (in which the professor participates).17 The old teacher of languages thus "tries to clothe the politics and passions of Russian mouvements with the decent black broadcloth of the English Bible,"18 and in doing so seems to achieve some misleading effects:

If Haldin seems a bizarre imitation of Christ, if Sophia Antonovna seems the Paul of Russian revolt, if Tekla is the Samaritan who, in a most unLukan vein, adores Razumov because he can "kill the monsters" (236), it is because Haldin's Gethsemane, Sophia's good fight, and Tekla's golden rule are products of an English rhetoric hopelessly at odds with Russian revolt and Russian mysticism.19

Purdy feels that the "allusions are too apt, their consistency too manifest, their interweaving too exact to be due to chance alone," and summarises them as follows:

15 "'Peace that Passeth Understanding': The Professor's English Bible in Under Western Eyes," Conradiana, 13 (1981), 83.
16 Purdy, p. 85.
17 Ibid., p. 88.
18 Ibid., p. 89.
19 Ibid., p. 90.
Tekla is twice the outcast, as Mrs. Haldin is twice the outcast grieving mother. Peter Ivanovitch is, as Tekla the Canaanite sees, the devil who would possess a girl. Sophia Antonovna is constantly the Paul of revolution. The parable of the wedding feast neatly frames Razumov's encounter with Victor Haldin. Haldin recites a variety of messianic texts, and a messianic text shows how he infects Razumov. Finally, the allusion to Armageddon (Kostia's theft) is a perfection of irony—the climax of New Testament historiosophy designed to show that our narrator is as much infected as Haldin or Razumov with the "contagious pestilence" of a typological imagination.

This is a more profound approach to the question than that of the simple allegorists, seeing each story as a variation on a specific set of biblical motifs. For a start, Purdy considers the fictional source of the allusions and sees them as reflecting aspects of the narrator. In so doing, he endorses a widespread view that the professor is not reliable as a narrator and cannot fully understand the story he is telling. One important point Purdy makes, however, is a very simple one; namely that the biblical allusions are taken directly from the English Bible, not from Conrad's recollections of his early religious teaching. But Purdy seems to go too far when he comments that "However these 'inconceivable' Russians may converse, we can be sure that they do not recite the English Bible," since, if Conrad wanted his allusions to be noted by an English audience, he would have to allude to an English Bible. There is, after all, no reason why

20 Purdy, p. 90.
21 Ibid.
Russians should not refer to a Russian Bible which, translated, becomes an English one. But the point about Conrad himself still stands. Clearly his interest in the Bible was such that he read substantial parts of it in English; as an adult in other words, when his faith was well on the wane. Purdy suggests that Conrad's attraction to the King James Bible "had ... less to do with religion than with literary history," since it "exercised formidable influence on nineteenth-century prose styles."22 The motivation for reading Christian scriptures remains unknown, however, and, in any case, this would be more pertinent to a consideration of Conrad's state of belief.

Explaining why scriptural texts do not flourish at the beginning of part IV (also based on Razumov's diary), Purdy comments that "the narrator never uses scripture to characterize the autocrats; they are made to refer to Providence and God, but not directly to scripture, perhaps because the professor's stable English mind can comprehend autocracy far more readily than revolt."23 But this statement comes close to revealing the danger of taking biblical allusions in isolation and separate from the other religious references. For the myth of Holy Russia hangs heavily over Under Western Eyes and counts both autocrats and revolutionaries among its adherents, as, indeed, the professor recognizes when citing "cynicism" as "the mark" of both. If "strange pretensions of sanctity"

22 Purdy, p. 91.
23 Ibid., p. 88.
form part of this "spirit" (UWE, 67), it is little won-
der that scriptural allusions should be included in the pattern. "Haldin's Gethsemane, Sophia's good fight, and Tekla's golden rule" are thus a natural part of Russian mysticism as Conrad understands it; not at all "hopelessly at odds" with it. If biblical allusions do reflect the professor's inadequate understanding, they do it by contrast; the contrast between the way he understands them and makes use of them and the way the Russians do. When Kostia comments simply, "It's done," after stealing his father's money, and continues "The old boy'll think the end of the world has come" (UWE, 313), this allusion to Revelations may well have come to us via Razumov's diary and the professor of languages, but one must still assume, surely, that the source of the allusion is the speaker, Kostia. Since he continues by sighing "I've made my little sacrifice," the allusion here serves to add to the "pretensions of sanctity" that revolution (like autocracy) arrogates to itself. The narrator's understanding of the events he relates may be defective but we must, surely, be allowed to rely on the accuracy of his transcription. The tone of Conrad's essay, "Autocracy and War," shows that the myth of Holy Russia is not the professor's invention. When Haldin tells Razumov that "the guests for the feast of freedom must be sought for in byways and hedges" (UWE, 56), this evoking of a biblical parable (Luke 14:23) helps to set up the speaker's
attitude to revolution; an attitude held by his fellow revolutionaries and sympathisers (such as Kostia). It is entirely appropriate, therefore, for Haldin's mother to be reminded of Judas when fearing her son's betrayal (UWE, 115); the connection is obvious and is not dependent on the professor. Purdy is probably closer to the crux of the matter in an earlier essay when (again discussing the professor) he comments: "The nature of Conrad's attack on both revolutionists and autocrats suggests that the Christian values which once provided a solution have been so perverted that they no longer serve."25

One of the problems encountered in studying Conrad's use of the Bible is that references to it were far more common in his day than they are now. That same phrase, "byways and hedges," for example, is also adopted by Galsworthy when describing how Winifred Dartie is let down by Augustus Flippard.26 Such allusions appear from time to time in Conrad's correspondence. Thus Conrad likens a visit "from a man out of the Malay seas" to "the raising of a lot of dead";27 he is "content to remain gratefully unexplained" to Sidney Colvin "as long as your charity prevents you casting stones";28 his diatribe against expiation includes a reference to "the

26 The Forsyte Saga, p. 224.
weeping and gnashing of teeth and the sorrow of weak souls"; 29 he laments that "my style is not more popular" and that "I don't write less slow" since "Of such that do is the Kingdom of the Earth"; 30 lastly he comments (about reviews), "D'you think I will get my share of loaves and fishes" 31—all manifest references to the scriptures, many of them sardonic. This is a random selection, of course, hardly sufficient for a general pattern to be discerned; nevertheless, the ironic tone that pervades is interesting, for irony is a useful term to have in mind when studying Conrad's use of the Bible. Purdy makes this point when dealing with the allusions to Belshazzar's Feast (the "writing on the wall"—Dan. 5:5ff.), indicating that this ominous portent is often misread by Conrad's characters as a favourable augury. He cites Captain Whalley and Charles Gould as examples of this; Whalley presuming upon his continued uninterrupted health on the Sofala "as though he had seen his Creator's favourable decree written in mysterious characters on the wall" (Y, 291-92); Gould imagining a letter to Holroyd about backing a revolution with the San Tomé mine, "as if written in letters of fire upon the wall" (N, 379). The latter example is cited as being especially pertinent since King Belshazzar "praised the gods of silver" (Dan. 5:23). But


Purdy also regards Sophia Antonovna as using the allusion in her cry, "Crush the Infamy! A fine watchword! I would placard it on the walls of prisons and palaces, carve it on hard rocks, hang it out in letters of fire on that empty sky for a sign of hope and terror--a portent of the end" (UWE, 263), and feels that she reads her evoked omen aright, understanding "that the letters of fire signify terror for the oppressors, hope for the oppressed."32 This interpretation seems to owe much to historical hindsight, however, since the novel itself gives no signs that Sophia's slogan is prophetic; indeed, the insurrection which the revolutionaries are so carefully plotting, proves a failure. (UWE, 330).

Elsewhere, the use of scriptural allusions must, for the time being, be swiftly summarised. Apocalyptic imagery is the most pervasive and has already been noted in "Typhoon." Apocalyptic skies accompany Lingard's arraignment of Willems in An Outcast of the Islands, are in attendance at Jim's death (LJ, 413) and pre-figure the final calamity in Victory (V, 355). A deluge follows Lingard's judgment (OI, 283-84), succeeds Razumov's confession (UWE, 357), precedes Peyrol's setting out on his final voyage (RO, 248), and receives detailed discussion from Heyst and Lena before Jones arrives (V, 191). The "abomination of desolation"--one of the signs of the time of the end (Matt. 24:15)--is evoked by Lena (V, 190) and by M. George (AG, 154).

But in each of these cases, the imagery pre-figures simply destruction or near-destruction, not a miraculous millenium. Except in the case of Peyrol, what is judged is the obsession of the character which has been attracting devotion and faith; an obsession frequently indicated by the use of biblical language.

Much the same kind of comment can be made of other favourite allusions. We have already seen (in chapter five) how Christ's promise to be present "when two or three are gathered together in my name" (Matt. 18:20), is echoed by the shadow of autocracy (UWE, 107), by Peter Ivanovitch (UWE, 227) and by Schomberg's evoking of Heyst at every opportunity at his table d'hôte (Y, 27). To these instances can be added that of Napoleon (S, 93, 261). Another repeated image is that of "a pillar of smoke by day and a loom of fire at night," which, already noted in Victory (Y, 168), can also be observed rising from Tengga's camp in The Rescue (Re, 367). But such allusions need to be more carefully studied in the context of religious language as a whole, which must now be considered.

ii. Egoism, Passion and Personal Illusions

Conrad's first novel begins with a statement of Almayer's illusions. Almayer likes to gaze at the river "about the time of sunset; perhaps because at that time the sinking sun would spread a glowing golden tinge on the waters of the Pantai, and Almayer's thoughts were often busy with gold" (AF, 3). The
dreams of "power and wealth" that absorb him, however, are, in reality, as illusory as the gold tinge on the water (the reflection of the sun), and, significantly (and prophetically), "There was no tinge on it this evening, for it had been swollen by the rains, and rolled an angry and muddy flood under his inattentive eyes" (AF, 4); an indication of the imminent end of his visions amidst the harshness of reality, to which he is "inattentive." The Christian background, which should protect him from such unrealistic speculations, is not in evidence, for Almayer applies the terms of religion to his visions, in which "crowning all, in the far future gleamed like a fairy palace the big mansion in Amsterdam, that earthly paradise of his dreams" (AF, 10). This inter-mingling of religious imagery with that of myth or fairy tale helps to underline not only the extent of Almayer's obsession (or folly) but also the falsity of its premise, and one recalls Ian Watt's point that folly may indicate a mania. 33 Almayer cannot abide the realities of Sambir; his imagination must soar into the west "where the paradise of Europe was awaiting the future Eastern millionaire" (AF, 63). When he realises that Nina will leave him for the warrior prince, Dain Maroola, it is like the foundering of a faith (AF, 192). Thereafter, the "commercial anchorite" (as Paul Wiley calls him) 34 can turn only to the opium of Jim Eng, his dreams of paradise having dwindled-

33 Conrad in the Nineteenth Century, p. 65.
34 Wiley, p. 35.
ed to his own new house, called by his Chinese lodger "House of heavenly delight" (AF, 205); his final ambition being to achieve the illusion of forgetfulness, which he seems to obtain prior to his death (AF, 208).

Almayer is not alone, however, in applying religious terms to non-religious objects. Nina evokes such attentions from Dain Maroola, a Brahmin (Hindu) and, in Mrs Almayer's eyes, "a son of Heaven" (AF, 51).

For the practical Abdulla, Nina would be the first of his nephew, Reshid's four wives, and Almayer's refusal is inferred and accepted (AF, 46). Reshid is not unduly troubled. The effect of Nina on Dain is rather different, for "Now he wanted but immortality, he thought, to be the equal of gods, and the creature that could open so the gates of paradise must be his—soon would be his for ever" (AF, 72-73). As was noted in chapter eight, the effects are felt in his soul, which he claims to have delivered into Nina's hands (AF, 178). Paradise, which for Almayer and Abdulla lies in the future (though, by Almayer's standards, Abdulla already has an earthly paradise), is thus immediately obtainable for Dain.

Nina's reaction to this adoration is also described in semi-religious terms, as she thinks "of moulding a god from the clay at her feet. A god for others to worship" (AF, 172). Their relationship is a happy one, however, and they have had a child by the time the story ends.

Paul Kirschner describes the religious feeling in Almayer's Folly as signifying "consolation, hope of
reward or the projection of a personal idea of superiority, \(^{35}\) which is a useful contribution to a summary. Almayer's obsessions, magnified by religious terminology, constitute his folly just as Dain's adoration for Nina (similarly described) becomes (in Nina's eyes) his weakness. In Sambir, Abdulla and the crafty Muslims triumph. In this life they do not seek the unattainable.

Figurative religious language in the early novels is confined to excessive egoism (the "temple of self"), personal illusions or sexual passion, and the ways in which these preoccupations involve Willems, Lingard and Almayer in *An Outcast of the Islands* have been indicated earlier. They also apply to two of the later novels, however—*The Arrow of Gold* and *The Rescue*—though, since each book had its conception in the 1890s, the circumstance is not surprising. There has already been cause to mention Conrad's problems with the sprawling maze of "The Rescuer" manuscript. The considerably shorter fragment of *The Sisters* seems to have been reworked into *The Arrow of Gold* since both works share such characters as the sisters, Rita and Therese, and their uncle, the fiery Basque priest. In the fragment, the predicament of Stephen, a young artist who (like Conrad) comes to France from the Ukraine, seems to epitomise the spiritual problem which Conrad's characters face. For, when the youth leaves his devoutly-believing father, his search becomes described explicitly as a quest for "an unveiled religion of art" (*Sis*, 34), and, accordingly, attracts religious terms.

\(^{35}\) Kirschner, p. 34
Stephen is "a lonely and inarticulate Mage, without a star and without companions" (Sis, 33), who senses a hypocritical attitude among his fellow artists towards "the august world of the infinite, the Eternal" (Sis, 36); who has "camped in the land of Bohemia; in that strange holy land of art abandoned by its High Priests" (Sis, 62); and who even applies Catholic theology to his quest when he refuses to return home after the death of his parents because he feels that this would be "worse than suicide, which is the unpardonable crime" (Sis, 53).

Stephen and Rita have not met by the end of the fragment and one cannot tell whether their relationship would have been akin to that of M. George and Rita de Lastaola in *The Arrow of Gold*. Certainly it seems that Stephen's quest would have been unsuccessful since, as early as the opening page, it is revealed that "his search for a creed" had uncovered only "an infinity of formulas" (Sis, 33).

The religious language of the later work is mainly concerned with the passion of M. George (and others) for Rita. Mills says of her, "I am not meddling with theology but it seems to me that in the Elysian fields she'll have her place in a very special company" (AG, 23), and feels "that she looked as though Allègre had caught her in the precincts of some temple . . . in the mountains" (AG, 33). This effect is heightened by a background of classical imagery which likens Henry Allègre to Jove (AG, 34) and Ortega to "a wretched little Prometheus with a sparrow pecking at his miser-
able little liver" (AG, 111). Once he has met her, M. George can talk of "the sovereign charm in that woman's form wherein there seemed to beat the pulse of divinity rather than blood" (AG, 88), and he is later to emphasise the timeless quality Rita seems to possess. To George, she sits "as if carved six thousand years ago in order to fix for ever that something secret and obscure which is in all women," with "the finer immobility, almost sacred, of a fateful figure seated at the very source of the passions that have moved men from the dawn of ages" (AG, 145-46).

M. George, it will be noted, adheres to the traditional biblical age of the world (6,000 years) in describing the object of his adoration; a feature of his obsession that adds to its religious connotations.

When he recalls, some time afterwards, the state this puts him into, he once again falls back on the terminology of religion to explain it, citing Rita's body as the cause of his "adorations" and "profanations," denying his "spiritual abasement before a mere image," and claiming to have nurtured "as clear a flame as ever burned on earth from the most remote ages before that eternal thing which is in you, which is your heirloom. And is it my fault that what I had to give was real flame, and not a mystic's incense" (AG, 299).

As we have seen earlier, however, the images of apocalypse, purgatory and hell figure most pervasively in the pursuit of this obsession. Thus, although Rita is usually described (by George and others) in classical terms, the effects she produces are alluded to in
gloomily theological ones, and only physical wounds succeed in releasing her admirers from their mutual predicament.

Such effects have been caused by the "cult" of aesthetic impressions (AG, 186), which, combined with a rampant intellectualism, has harnessed Rita's thinking. She comments to George, "I am sensible to aesthetic impressions, I have been educated to believe there is a soul in them" (AG, 211), whilst Mills, earlier, has spoken of the "intellectual dogs" to whom she has been exposed in Allègre's studio (AG, 56). Rita is later to admit this pervasive influence with regret:

I have too much reverence in me to invoke the name of God of whom clever men have robbed me a long time ago. How could I help it? For the talk was clever and ... and I had a mind. And I am also, as Therese says, naturally sinful. Yes, my dear, I may be naturally wicked but I am not evil and I could die for you. (AG, 300)

Typical of the life-negating force that pervades, this comment promises only death, but not life.

To George, Rita is a goddess; to Mrs. Blunt, she is an image belonging to that part of life "where art and letters reign undisputed like a sort of religion of beauty" (AG, 181); to Allegre, there is "something in her of the women of all time" (AG, 181); to Therese, she is possessed; to no-one, not even herself, is she just a normal woman, and it is the chance of love (a normal woman's right) that she has "sacrificed" by the end of the book (AG, 350). The faith she has lost is not just in religion but in life itself.
Essentially, in *The Rescue*, Conrad repeats the major themes of *An Outcast of the Islands*, the main difference being that, whilst Willems' passion for Aissa causes him to betray Lingard's secret intentionally, the betrayal effected by Lingard's passion for Edith Travers is unintentional, though just as comprehensive. In each story, religious imagery reveals the excessive extent of the protagonist's egoism and of the passion that envelops him.

Lingard's "absurd faith in himself," which was evident in the earlier novel, thus receives detailed attention in *The Rescue*; his self-regard being built up by a whole host of religious images from several different sources. He is seen to have the power to divert Muslims from their true belief, for his crew (including two Hadjis) endow him with the knowledge of "magic words" (*Re*, 47) and "charms" (*Re*, 48). Belarab, despite being "a professed servant of God famed for many charities and a scrupulous performance of pious practices" (*Re*, 281), still believes "absolutely both in Lingard's power and in his boldness" (*Re*, 434), and this apparent duality is also seen in the attitude of the faithful Jaffir:

"Yes. Our refuge is with Allah," assented Jaffir, who had acquired the habit of pious turns of speech in the frequentation of professedly religious men, of whom there were many in Belarab's stockade. As a matter of fact, he reposed all his trust in Lingard who had with him the prestige of a providential man sent at the hour of need by heaven itself. (*Re*, 334)
Lingard, himself, exchanges the sentiments of Islamic fatalism with Daman when taking charge of the Arab's prisoners, yet what he really believes is that "power, too, is in the hands of a great leader" (Re, 295). His rescue of Prince Hassim and his followers is accompanied by hints of supernatural assistance by the inhabitants of Wajo (Re, 86-87), whilst Lingard views that land as "unscathed and motionless under hooked darts of flame, like some legendary country of immortals, withstanding the wrath and fire of Heaven" (Re, 80). In Lingard's eyes, even his ship (the Lightning) becomes inflated by religious terms as she floats "at rest in a wavering halo, between an invisible sky and an invisible sea, like a miraculous craft suspended in the air" (Re, 203). His confidence that he can restore Hassim to his throne is overwhelming as he lives "in the long intoxication of slowly preparing success" (Re, 106).

This picture of Lingard's egoism is completed by echoes of Christ which become attached to him. When he visits Edith at night, he has "the appearance of standing upon the sea" (Re, 153), and he enjoins her, later, to "Follow me" (Re, 207). If these allusions seem forced, a far more specific one comes towards the end of the book:

"God knows," he answered. "What would have happened if the world had not been made in seven days? I have known you for just about that time. It began by me coming to you at night—like a thief in the night. Where the devil did I hear that? And that man you are married to thinks I am no better than a thief. (Re, 398)
He would have heard the phrase in biblical prophecies concerning the Second Coming (II Peter 3:10). Such references are complemented by the descriptions of Jørgenson to whom Lingard has given a new lease of life by involving him in the enterprise, for Jørgenson is likened to "a man raised from the dead" (Re, 116) with "resurrected eyes" (Re, 370). Since Jørgenson's past is much akin to Lingard's present, the Rajah Laut should take more heed of the warning of the uncertainties of life that his very presence conveys. D'Alcacer also sounds an ominous note when he refers to Lingard as "a rough man naively engaged in a contest with heaven's injustice" (Re, 346); a description that implies supernatural opposition rather than divine approval.

Once this self-appointed saviour pose has been annihilated by the final disaster, in which the neglected Jørgenson's "black scepticism of the grave" has overwhelmed "the fascinating trust in the power of life" (Re, 116) and brought death and destruction as the culminating fruits of his resurrection, Lingard's fall is correspondingly immense. He feels "a stranger to all men and abandoned by the All-Knowing God" (Re, 444); a term that he applies to Jaffir also, though it is not clear whether the god who abandoned Jaffir is the Almighty or Lingard. To Carter, it seems that his new captain has lost "his very soul in the attempt" whilst Lingard "might have believed his brig to lie under the very wing of the Angel of Desolation" (Re, 453).

There is in Lingard "crime, sacrifice, tenderness,
devotion, and the madness of a fixed idea" (Re, 215), but it is the dislodging of this idea by the presence of Edith that proves to be his undoing. Like Dain Maroola, Lingard receives a glimpse of paradise through a woman, but in Lingard's case it reduces him to "the state of a man who, having cast his eyes through the open gates of Paradise, is rendered insensible by that moment's vision to all the forms and matters of the earth; and in the extremity of his emotion ceases even to look upon himself but as the subject of a sublime experience which exalts or unfits, sanctifies or damns --he didn't know which" (Re, 415). This state and this image are repeated twice more (Re, 433, 436) and, once the fatality has occurred, the cause of his downfall is confirmed:

Once more Wasub raised his eyes to Lingard's face.
"Paradise is the lot of all True Believers," he whispered, firm in his simple faith.
The man who had been undone by a glimpse of Paradise exchanged a profound look with the old Malay. (Re, 449)

What the religious language of these novels reveals, therefore, is the true object of a character's devotion, and of the four characters whose point of adoration is a woman, only Dain Maroola benefits. Throughout the canon, the figurative terms function in this way, though the objects they become attracted to develop in accordance with Conrad's major themes. After these early works, where the pre-occupation remains on a personal level, the earthly deities become vocational, social and self-conceptual, and can be summarised under those headings.
iii. Vocational Obsessions: Life at Sea

Conrad's exalted attitude towards the life of a sailor and its fictional representation in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* have been noted in previous chapters; it remains here to illustrate the consistency with which this view of a seaman's duty as an exacting creed is maintained in other works.

This creed withstood assault in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, but the attack there was external, rather than from within. The threat that is posed in *Lord Jim* is more insidious and disturbing to the master mariners who encounter it. For Jim's act of jumping from the Patna undermines the whole basis of the faith. Allistoun had no difficulty in recognising Donkin and Wait for what they really were, and the misplaced fanaticism of Podmore caused him no real problems either. Three of the members of the crew who desert the pilgrim-filled, apparently sinking Patna also cause no concern; their non-appearance at the inquiry is in keeping with their image. But Jim does attend the inquiry and it is his appearance that seems so clearly to mark him down as "one of us" that causes such consternation among sailors like Marlow. This factor alone is enough to shake a belief. It causes one of the assessors, Brierly, to commit suicide, "as though on that exact spot in the midst of waters he had suddenly perceived the gates of the other world flung open wide for his reception" (*LJ*, 59); and suicide, theologically, is caused by a state of spiritual despair. Brierly, in
other words, has lost his faith; a faith which seems to depend on appearance denoting reality. Marlow has thought previously that "The sting of life could do no more to his complacent soul than the scratch of a pin to the smooth face of a rock" (LJ, 58), but appearances have deceived him here too.

Jim's presence also disturbs the other assessor, a "pious sailing-ship skipper" who "appeared excited and made uneasy movements, as if restraining with difficulty an impulse to stand up and exhort us earnestly to prayer and repentance" (LJ, 158). This would be the action of a priest, undertaken for the benefit of those in danger of straying from the sacred fold. Here the fold is seamen; their creed the solidarity that Jim's action has belied.

Marlow shows his adherence to this faith by using a religious comparison to describe the way he would feel if Jim took to drink; this eventuality being "more trying to a man who believes in the solidarity of our lives than the sight of an impenitent deathbed to a priest" (LJ, 224). Jim has, indeed, been treating the older man as a kind of priest, as Marlow makes clear:

Didn't I tell you he confessed himself before me as though I had the power to bind and to loose? He burrowed deep, deep, in the hope of my absolution, which would have been of no good to him. This was one of those cases which no solemn deception can palliate, which no man can help; where his very Maker seems to abandon a sinner to his own devices. (LJ, 97)

Whether "solemn deception" can be taken as a criticism of the Catholic confessional is, perhaps, by the way
here; what is clear is that the creed of the sea does not adopt such remedies. In any case, Marlow claims that he is "not particularly fit to be a receptacle of confessions" as he laments the "devious, unexpected, truly diabolical ways" in which all manner of men come to choose him "for their infernal confidences; as though, forsooth, I didn't have enough confidential information about myself to harrow my own soul till the end of my appointed time" (Ili, 34).

The "ways" are "diabolical" and the confidences "infernal," presumably, because they serve to undermine Marlow's faith in his creed. Together with his own doubts, he has those of others to contend with. Little wonder that Jim's story and his sudden question, "What do you believe?" should seem to Marlow to have startled him "out of a dream of wandering through empty spaces whose immensity had harassed my soul and exhausted my body" (Ili, 132). His desperate efforts to maintain the faith of solidarity are exemplified by his interview with the chief engineer, where he freely admits to "looking for a miracle," hoping "to obtain from that battered and shady individual some exorcism against the very ghost of doubt" (Ili, 51). Instead, a "wolfish howl" searches "the very recesses" of his soul (Ili, 52), and his faith remains shaken.

Jim's desertion of the Patna, therefore, has had a profound effect on at least three people: the pious assessor (unless his apparent desire to preach is a manifestation of Marlow's own disquiet), Brierly and Marlow himself. It attacks their ideas of solidarity,
exalted to a belief by the religious terminology; a
faith that Jim, unwittingly, undermines. For such a
belief attempts to ignore certain realities, one being
that in an emergency the instinct for self-preservation
can affect "one of us" just as easily as it affects the
likes of the master of the Patna. The external narrat-
or comments that "in our own hearts we trust for our
salvation in the men that surround us," and Jim regards
the obese master of his ship as "the incarnation of
everything vile and base that lurks in the world we
love" (LJ, 21). But Jim, in "contemplating his own
superiority" (LJ, 23), is, in this respect, similar to
Podmore. His egoism is different but is just as un-
suitable to the creed of the sea, and not only proves
disastrous for him but also creates severe doubts in
the minds of those who are upholders of that creed,
though, as Conrad points out at the end of his essay,
"The Life Beyond," doubt and melancholy have been
with mankind since his inception (NLL, 69).

In "Heart of Darkness," Marlow is referred to as
being "the only man of us who still 'followed the sea'"
(Y, 48), and the same phrase, with its vocational and
religious connotations, is repeated in Chance (C, 4).
It is in Chance, in fact, that one of the most direct
comparisons between religion and the vocation of sea-
men is made (by the external narrator):

But I have observed that profane men living
in ships, like the holy men gathered to-
gether in monasteries, develop traits of
profound resemblance. This must be because
the service of the sea and the service of a
temple are both detached from the vanities and errors of a world which follows no severe rule. (G, 32-33)

Of the varying objects that attract religious language, this seaman's vocation alone elicits the author's approval. A glib complacency on the part of any skipper is severely punished, however, and it is this that the narrator of The Shadow-Line must learn.

Conrad's Author's Note to The Shadow-Line disclaimed any intentions of evoking the supernatural in the story (SL, ix-x), and it may, therefore, be pertinent to begin with the elements that are said to constitute such an interpretation. Very early in the book, there are hints of supernatural power that no western mind would accept in the picture of the owner of the ship which the narrator is about to leave, "an Arab . . . and a Syed at that" who possesses "a great occult power amongst his own people" (SL, 4). Just as one can look on this from the outside, as it were, dismissing out of hand any actual mysterious power, so, presumably, one is supposed to regard the climactic scene on the voyage, where Mr. Burns' laugh releases the (till then) dormant winds, in the same light, despite the narrator's use of supernatural terminology to describe the process. He decides that "By the exorcising virtue of Mr. Burns' awful laugh, the malicious spectre had been laid, the evil spell broken, the curse removed. We were now in the hands of a kind and energetic Providence" (SL, 125).

To some degree, this parallels the situation on the Narcissus, where the winds seem to await the des-
patch of James Wait's dead body to the waves before springing into action, apparently in accordance with the prophecies of old Singleton. The position in The Shadow-Line is just as equivocal as it is in the earlier story but ties in very well with the attitude of the narrator to his charge. For the religious and supernatural references begin when he throws up his berth on the Arab's ship even though he confesses that "I could not have been happier if I had had the life and the men made to order by a benevolent enchanter" (SL, 5). When he signs off, the official hands him his papers "with a sorrowful expression, as if they had been my passport for Hades" (SL, 7), and the narrator reacts "in the hardened manner of an impenitent criminal" (SL, 8). These are ominous portents for his future.

The innocence and sense of importance of the narrator are manifested when he realises that there is a command waiting for him. The very way he regards Captain Ellis, who gives him this post, is a tacit recognition of the importance he begins to feel, even though this is conveyed as Ellis' own high opinion of himself:

Captain Ellis looked upon himself as a sort of divine (pagan) emanation, the deputy-Neptune for the circumambient seas. If he did not actually rule the waves, he pretended to rule the fate of the mortals whose lives were cast upon the waves. (SL, 29-30).

Ellis' self-esteem is relevant because it rubs off on the narrator, whose own feeling of importance is naturally increased by the high station of the
official appointing him. The obsequious behaviour of
the chief clerk once the appointment has been made
does the new captain to think of how "The favour of
the great throws an aureole round the fortunate object
of its selection" (SL, 34). He regards these atten-
tions as "only another miraculous manifestation of that
day of miracles" (SL, 35), and he is wrapped up in his
feeling of wonder "as if I had been specially destined
for that ship I did not know, by some power higher
than the prosaic agencies of the commercial world" (SL,
40). He likens himself to a character in a fairy tale,
taking possession of a "spellbound" ship, "unable to
move, to live, to get out into the world (till I came),
like an enchanted princess. Her call had come to me as
if from the clouds" (SL, 40). When he finally boards
her in Bangkok harbour, he has the feeling that "I was
brought there to rule by an agency as remote from the
people and as inscrutable almost to them as the Grace
of God" (SL, 62).

This combination of religion and magic, which
elevates the narrator's view of his command to the
realms of a mystic mission, builds an impression of
one who is in need of being brought down to reality.
Despite the problems he encounters, his state continues
to be described in religious terms. Thus, with sick-
ness aboard, he opens his medicine chest "full of faith
as a man opens a miraculous shrine" (SL, 79), and ex-
presses his belief that quinine, "like a magic powder
working against mysterious malefices," will secure his
voyage "against the evil powers of calm and pestil-
One will note from this that, not surprisingly, anything that tends to oppose the steady progress of this command is "evil"; the word being also associated with the late captain (SL, 62), the fever from the land (SL, 79), the becalming at sea (SL, 83) and the island of Koh-ring (SL, 86). A sudden adverse wind is regarded as having the motives of "purposeful malevolence" (SL, 87), "infernal powers" are evoked to explain the loss of the quinine (SL, 93) and the ship seems to be in the grip of a "fever-devil" (SL, 103). Meantime, the crew continues to suffer "the ordeal of the fiery furnace" (SL, 85), which, as an allusion to the biblical story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego (Daniel 3), implies their loyalty to a true creed.

The captain's faith is thus severely tested. His command becomes "A stubborn pilgrimage of sheer restlessness," and the view from the bridge seems like "the formidable Work of the Seven Days, into which mankind seems to have blundered unbidden. Or else decoyed" (SL, 97). Moreover, he likens himself to "a mad carpenter making a box. Were he ever so convinced that he was King of Jerusalem, the box he would make would be a sane box" (SL, 101). This appears to parody the earlier feelings of mystic mission within the narrator since Christ's background was that of a carpenter.

In this more humble mood, the captain becomes more aware of the fortitude of his crew. When they haul up the mainsail, it seems that "if ever a sail was hauled up by sheer spiritual strength it must have been
that sail" and their captain can feel "only the sickness of my soul. I waited for some time fighting against the weight of my sins, against my sense of unworthiness" (SL, 109).

Here is a complete volte-face from his earlier attitude; he has gone from heavenly messenger to unworthy sinner and, as is made clear later, neither feeling is valid. For what the narrator has learnt by the end of the book is that "one must not make too much of anything in life, good or bad" (SL, 131), from which one can assume that his attitude to the job of master mariner has changed. The religious terms have thus served to highlight his egocentricity, from his sense of mystic mission and demonic opposition to his contrasting sense of unworthiness. The breaking of the spell by Burns's laugh serves to dissipate the narrator's pre-occupation with his feelings; the apparent advent of the supernatural has bestowed upon him a more practical outlook, acting, in fact, as the logical culmination of the earlier religious and magical references.

The lesson learnt by the narrator of The Shadow-Line has already been experienced by Marlow and Young Powell by the time of their first discussion in Chance:

"I should call it the peace of the sea," said Mr. Charles Powell in an earnest tone . . .

"A very good name," said Marlow looking at him approvingly. "A sailor finds a deep feeling of security in the exercise of his calling. The exacting life of the sea has this advantage over the life of the earth, that its claims are simple and cannot be evaded."

"Gospel truth," assented Mr. Powell. "No! they cannot be evaded." (C, 31-32)
Powell's biblical approval of Marlow's statement is ironic in a way, since a helpless reliance on Providence (as exhibited by Archbold in "The Secret Sharer") is one way of evading these claims. The difference between land and sea values, as asserted by Marlow, is important to the shorter tale and supported by the use of religious terminology, particularly the biblical allusions to the Cain and Abel story. Such allusions would clearly form part of the world of Captain Archbold, of Leggatt's father, "a parson in Norfolk" (TLS, 101, 103), and (in all probability) that of "old 'Bless my soul--you don't say so'" (TLS, 103), the narrator's first mate, who has to be shaken into action in the final crisis in a milder version of the fatal scene on the Sephora. That violence is sometimes a necessary part of life at sea is shown in The Nigger of the "Narcissus" (NN, 40-41, 86, 167). Where devotion to duty is so vital to the existence of all, the proselytising of Podmore or a resigned hope of supernatural intervention by Archbold can only be dangerous aberrations. Leggatt is Cain by the values of the land but the circumstances of his action at sea would be beyond the understanding of a land-based jury (TLS, 103), and the biblical allusion is deliberately inappropriate in this case when set against the essential creed of the sea. The disobedience of Leggatt's victim has threatened the lives of his shipmates--"an Abel of that sort" (TLS, 107) is clearly some way from the good-hearted and innocent brother of the Bible story.
In his fictional writings also, therefore, Conrad set forth the vocation of seamen as a form of positive belief, though not without detailing the possible pitfalls of the creed. An undue innocence on the part of the crew of the Narcissus, which makes them vulnerable to the egotistical enigma of the dying James Wait, turns them away, temporarily, from their prescribed devotion to the ship, and only the firmness of their captain prevents disastrous results. The vulnerability of a creed which relies on a sailor's appearance and the trust that appearance must command is revealed in Lord Jim and shakes the faith of some of its senior practitioners. The innocent egoism of the narrator of The Shadow-Line requires the fever-racked horrors of his first voyage to chasten him to a more practical outlook. Any belief, Conrad seems to suggest (even the positively presented creed of the sea), has to be held with knowledge. An innocent trust is like a blind faith—vulnerable and precarious.

iv. Social Obsessions

Between the early novels and Chance, the main focus of the religious terms is on man's social preoccupations. In many cases this is caused by a sense of idealism which becomes confronted by an unruly reality and, as a starting point to this study, it is pertinent to consider "Youth" and the young Marlow's reverence for names. This outlook is invariably belied by the events of the voyage but it is only the older re-
miniscing Marlow that can recognise this; the youthful romanticism of the younger Marlow survives the tale. The very sound of the name, Judea, has a more heroic (and biblical) ring to it than the lingering Palestine (just as "Kurtz" is more abrupt and dramatic than "Klein"), and her gallant motto—"Do or Die" (Y, 5)—has an immediate appeal for the young Marlow.

But the ship begins by leaking so badly that she has to be returned to port and finishes by sinking after her cargo of coal has exploded. Marlow, however, can still regard her reverentially, commenting that "I would just as soon have abused the old village church at home for not being a cathedral" (Y, 18)—a comparison that continues the idea of following the sea being akin to following a religion—and he sees her sinking as "A magnificent death . . . come like a grace" despite the reality that is symbolised immediately after:

The unconsumed stern was the last to sink; but the paint had gone, had cracked, had peeled off, and there were no letters, there was no word, no stubborn device that was like her soul, to flash at the rising sun her creed and her name. (Y, 35)

To the waters that receive her, therefore, the Judea has become an anonymous hulk, indicating the insubstantiality of names and the futility of laying any importance upon them. The name "Abraham" evokes images of the steadfast Old Testament Prophet, but, early in the voyage, it is held by the steward, "that poor devil of a mulatto" (Y, 14). Marlow longs to get to Bangkok, "Magic name, blessed name" (Y, 15), and later applies these sentiments to Java, when he
takes charge of his "first command" (a ship's longboat) once the Judea has sunk (Y, 36).

The use of the word "blessed" for Bangkok and Java indicates the extent of Marlow's reverence for names, and this continues into port where he feels "the first sigh of the East on my face. . . . impalpable and enslaving, like a charm, like a whispered promise of mysterious delight" (Y, 37). Soon afterwards, however, he is sworn at and cursed so that he feels he must have "sinned against the harmony of the universe" (Y, 39), and this barrage of abuse comes from a steamer called the Celestial; a name that, in addition to its obvious religious meaning, was also used as a slang term for a Chinaman in Conrad's time (T, 7, 79). This, then, marks Marlow's introduction to the "blessed name" of Java and the mysterious East, and, if one can admit both meanings of "Celestial," he can be said to have been abused from the heavenly realm (the "blessed" and "mysterious") and from a Chinaman (the "East"). Certainly the incident acts as another example of the irrelevant nature of names, and insults from the Celestial make the point more clearly than they would coming from the Sissie. The religious terms in "Youth," therefore, reflect not so much an obsession as an attitude; a state of mind that, since it continues to ignore the unromantic realities it encounters, is particularly vulnerable to illusions—a fertile breeding ground for the acceptance of any powerful social obsession to flourish.

These obsessions, particularly those of progress and science, receive attention from Conrad in his essays
and letters, together with ironical religious accretions. Such connections were not new, however. Matthew Arnold, in the 1860s, had written that "The scientific intellect" could "willingly let the religious instincts and the language of religion gather around it," and J. R. Seeley, writing in the same decade, proved him correct, deciding that "we live under the blessed light of science, a light yet far from its meridian and dispersing every day some noxious superstition, some cowardice of the human spirit." John Ruskin applied the terms ironically to progress, naming the presiding deity of a Bradford Stock Exchange the "Goddess of Getting-on." One could say, therefore, that Conrad's tone is close to that of Ruskin and the attitude he criticises is that of Seeley, since it is the esteem in which science appears to be held rather than simply science itself that evokes his antipathy. His religious irony at science's expense is at its most scathing when applied to his old vocation, the sea; especially when considering the ill-fated Titanic and the pretensions of technicians:

It is amusing, if anything connected with this stupid catastrophe can be amusing, to see the secretly crestfallen attitude of technicians. They are the high priests of the modern cult of perfected material and of mechanical appliances, and would fain forbid the profane from inquiring into its mysteries. We are the masters of progress, they say, and you should remain respectfully silent. (NLL, 230)


37 Ecce Homo (1865; Boston, 1896), p. 3; quoted in Buckley, p. 47

38 Quoted in Buckley, p. 81.
The people responsible for her, though disconcerted in their hearts by the exposure of that disaster, are giving themselves airs of superiority—priests of an Oracle which has failed, but still must remain the Oracle. The assumption is that they are ministers of progress. (NLL, 234)

To Conrad, a "triumph of marine architecture" has become a "consecrated phrase" in an essay dealing with the loss of another liner (NLL, 250), and he continues by once more berating modern man's pride:

We have been accustoming ourselves to put our trust in material, technical skill, invention, and scientific contrivances to such an extent that we have come at last to believe that with these things we can overcome the immortal gods themselves. (NLL, 250-51)

Though stressing (in the case of the Titanic again) that he had "neither the competence nor the wish to take a theological view of this great misfortune, sending so many souls to their last account," he also comments that "if ever a loss at sea fell under the definition ... of Act of God, this one does, in its magnitude, suddenness and severity; and in the chastening influence it should have on the self-confidence of mankind" (NLL, 213).

Conrad was thus severely critical of the arrogance with which mankind seemed to be treating his scientific discoveries and we have already noted how indignant the author became at the suggestion that poetry should be enlisted to extol science, in "The Ascending Effort." The emphasis on material progress also attracted his ire and is criticised ironically in the essay "The Happy Wanderer."

This essay is not free from criticisms of the
clergy since it is one of their number who, together with the barber, is responsible for the shutting up in a cage of Conrad's literary hero, Don Quixote. The priest appears as a representative of conformity, but it is his more secular counterparts who are Conrad's real targets in the essay; those who see material progress and effort as the only valid objects of man's devotion. The author of the book Conrad is reviewing is a "convert from the creed of strenuous life," after grinding "virtuously at the sacred handle" (NLL, 62). According to Conrad, Mr. Roosevelt "would promptly excommunicate him with a big stick" (NLL, 62) because "The convert, the man capable of grace (I am speaking here in a secular sense) is not discreet" (NLL, 61). Thus he becomes related to Don Quixote, "the secular patron-saint of all mortals converted to noble visions" (NLL, 62). In this instance, Conrad's feelings are obviously with his subject:

He confesses to loving Spain on the ground that she is "the land of to-morrow, and holds the gospel of never mind." The universal striving to push ahead he considers mere vulgar folly. Didn't I tell you he was a fit subject for the cage? (NLL, 63)

Conrad comments of the author that "He is in sympathy with suffering mankind, and has a grasp on real human affairs. I mean the great and pitiful affairs concerned with bread, love, and the obscure, unexpressed needs which drive great crowds to prayer in the holy places of the earth" (NLL, 64). He concludes by wishing this wayfarer well:
Let the rich and powerful of this globe preach their sound gospel of palpable progress. The part of the ideal you embrace is the better one, if only in its illusions. No great passion can be barren. May a world of gracious and poignant images attend the lofty solitude of your renunciation. (NLL, 64-65)

There is a difference of mood in this last essay—a playful chaffing rather than a critical censure—but the sentiment is similar. The exponents of progress might maintain that their cause was going ahead on two fronts (the spiritual as well as the material), but, by ironically applying the language of the spiritual to the material, Conrad exposes which of the concerns is clearly uppermost, and this application carries through (not always so playfully) into his fiction.

In many ways, Conrad's ironic use of religious terms brings him very close to being a satirist, though one of a particularly bitter kind. In "Heart of Darkness," for example, Marlow sardonically condemns the cause of progress in which he is engaged simply by adopting the very language that idealists in Europe have applied to it. One such person is Marlow's aunt:

It appeared, however, I was also one of the Workers, with a capital—you know. Something like an emissary of light, something like a lower apostle. There had been a lot of such rot let loose in print and talk just about that time, and the excellent woman, living right in the rush of all that humbug, got carried off her feet. She talked about 'weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways,' till, upon my word, she made me quite uncomfortable. I ventured to hint that the Company was run for profit.

"'You forget, dear Charlie, that the labourer is worthy of his hire,' she said, brightly. (Y, 59)
Such fervour, with its obvious employment of biblical allusions, has already been undercut by Marlow's reference to the city in which she lives as reminding him of a "whited sepulchre" (Y, 55)—a biblical simile for hypocrisy—and side by side with the aunt's enthusiasm come such words as "rot" and "humbug," which may come from Marlow's hindsight since, at the time, he admits to being charmed by a snake. Amidst these religious allusions, such an attraction seems unpropitious.

Faced with the realities of Africa, Marlow deliberately continues such religious language in circumstances where it is grossly inappropriate, to expose the insubstantiality of his aunt's ideas. Thus, the accountant, who, amongst death and suffering, is concerned only with the impeccable state of his appearance and his figures, is described as a "miracle" (Y, 67), whilst, at the Central Station, the white men are noted as wandering aimlessly "with their absurd long staves in their hands, like a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotten fence. The word 'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it" (Y, 76). Thereafter, the agents are unfailingly referred to as "pilgrims" (on no less than twenty-nine occasions in fact), to ensure that those early religious sentiments should never be forgotten. As was noted earlier, the same ironic tone is used for the brickmaker, short of "straw maybe" and awaiting "An act of special creation perhaps" (Y, 77)—like an Israelite brickmaker suffering tyranny in Egypt—and for the Eldorado expedition which enters
with echoes of Christ's entry into Jerusalem but is likened to the plagues of Egypt. The irony becomes still more manifest when, after his meeting with Kurtz, Marlow sees the Intended (back in Europe), experiences her "unextinguishable light of belief and love" (Y, 158), bows his head "before the faith that was in her" (Y, 159) and hears her use the word "sacrificed" to describe Kurtz's death (Y, 160); all to a background that resembles a mausoleum (Y, 156).

Marlow is not ridiculing the Intended, of course (as he has the pilgrims); it is her fervent belief, in the context of his horrific memories, that causes the contrast. The overall effect, therefore, is that of an ironical religious framework for the tale, to which can be added the allusions to Buddha, the extensive use of demonic imagery and the references to the soul—all of which were considered earlier. It may have been to maintain this tone (even the harlequin is regarded as Kurtz's "disciple" [Y, 132]), that Conrad deliberately omitted the two religious influences that were present in the Congo when he made his voyage—the Christianity of the missionaries and the Islam of the Arabs. Clearly, in Conrad's eyes, these were irrelevant to what was really going on there.

A similar picture is painted in "An Outpost of Progress," where the cross—symbol of Christianity and here (significantly) "much out of the perpendicular" (TU, 87)—serves only to mark the grave of the previous white man at the post and to act as a place for Kayerts to hang himself from after his fatal col-
lision with Carlier. Here, too, the new agents are introduced to the religious sentiments connected with progress by an European newspaper, exhibiting some of the "rot let loose in print" that Marlow has mentioned:

It spoke much of the rights and duties of civilization, of the sacredness of the civilizing work, and extolled the merits of those who went about bringing light, and faith and commerce to the dark places of the earth. (TU, 94)

 Appropriately enough, the storehouse of the station is called the "fetish, perhaps because of the spirit of civilization it contained" (TU, 93).

In this earlier tale, the Europeans are skilfully manipulated by Makola (also known as Henry Price) who "cherished in his innermost heart the worship of evil spirits" (TU, 86), and, during the inter-regnum between Europeans at the station, "dwelt alone with his family, his account books and the Evil Spirit that rules the lands under the equator. He got on very well with his god. Perhaps he had propitiated him by a promise of more white men to play with by and by" (TU, 87). The juxtaposition of "account books" with "Evil Spirit," which emphasises Makola's Afro-European connections, is ominous; so, too, is the diminishing of Europeans to mere playthings, suggesting that their civilizing hopes are futile.

Thus there are two religious elements present in the story--the extolling of the civilizing work to the position of a religious duty and the suggestion of devil worship of some kind by the European's right-hand man--and the second of these is shown to be the
reality of the other. For, as the story progresses, the unfortunate station men, who are unhappy, regretting "the festive incantations, the sorceries, the human sacrifices of their own land" (TU, 100), are sold off to slave traders by Makola in exchange for ivory. Carlier and Kayerts, who also regret their old lives (TU, 92) and may thus be equated with their luckless servants, are concerned but eventually accept the fait accompli, for, as the narrator explains, "Nobody knows what suffering or sacrifice mean—except, perhaps, the victims of the mysterious purpose of these illusions" (TU, 105-06). As a result, the previously friendly village chief, Gobila, offers "extra human sacrifices to all the Evil Spirits that had taken possession of his white friends" (TU, 107). This emphasis on human sacrifice is appropriate since the cause of progress, in accepting ivory for human beings, is also indulging in the practice. Trade, a euphemism for the ruthless acquisition of ivory, can thus be seen as the Evil Spirit that hangs over the land and Kayerts and Carlier are as much its victims as the natives.

In both stories, therefore, the concern with the ideal of progress (by some) and with its sordid reality (by others) is described in religious terms, which indicate (ironically in "Heart of Darkness," more directly in "An Outpost of Progress") the extent to which these preoccupations have been taken and the false premises from which their followers begin. Marlow quickly recognises the naivety of idealists such as his aunt but he also feels a sense of unreality among
the materialistic ivory-hunters. Paradoxically, the reality of progress is itself unreal and it is as well to remember that the "pilgrims" are initially introduced as "faithless" (Y, 76). Little wonder that the imagery used to accompany this state of affairs should be demonic (theologically, the end of all false beliefs), and that its final effects on Kurtz should be described in terms of his soul.

As characters, the pilgrims are generally seen as an amorphous group, spellbound together, rarely exhibiting any flashes of individuality. Conrad affirmed solidarity—especially on board ship—but, whilst this involved each individual committing himself to his duty, it did not mean de-personalisation. Indeed, the crew of the Narcissus lose their individuality to become "a dark mass" when they are on the point of mutiny (NN, 122). The dangers inherent in people not being able to think for themselves are clearly perceived by Conrad and his advice to Edward Noble—"Everyone must walk in the light of his own heart's gospel"—will be readily recalled. Neither superstitious religious beliefs nor materialistic concerns could contain the spiritual values Conrad thought important and in "The Return," he illustrated this by treating the desire for conformity itself as a kind of false faith that a single incident could undermine. To Garnett, he described the story thus:

as to the story I think it is as false as a sermon by an Archbishop. Exactly. Another man goes out than the man who came in. T'other fellow is dead. You have missed the symbolism of the new gospel (that's what the Return is) altogether.

There is an underlying seriousness to this apparent flippancy as will be seen shortly.

Alvan Hervey is the epitome of social conformity; a circumstance which is perpetually parodied by the mirrors in his room which make it appear that each of his actions is being performed by several other men at the same time (TU, 124). When this comfortable but soulless existence (accentuated by the deadly drone of his name) is threatened by his wife's desertion for another man and by her subsequent change of heart which causes her to return, Hervey elevates this social conformity to the heights of religious devotion:

And more than ever the walls of his house seemed to enclose the sacredness of ideals to which he was about to offer a magnificent sacrifice. He was the high priest of that temple, the severe guardian of formulas, of rites, of the pure ceremonial concealing the black doubts of life. And he was not alone. Other men, too--the best of them kept watch and ward by the hearthstones that were the altars of that profitable persuasion. He understood confusedly that he was part of an immense and beneficent power, which had a reward ready for every discretion. He dwelt within the invincible wisdom of silence; he was protected by an indestructible faith that would last forever, that would withstand unshaken all the assaults--the loud exorations of apostates, and the secret weariness of its confessors! (TU, 156)

Hervey's voice rises and falls "pompously in a strange chant" and he is "lifted ... into a stealthy

40 24 Jan. 1898, Letters from Conrad, p. 120.
frenzy of belief." His wife, having acted outside the accepted social conventions, becomes "that sinner" to whom he speaks down "from a height" in his extolling of "the received beliefs" as "the best, the noblest, the only possible" (TU, 157). But her very appearance is regarded by him as being "dangerous to one as would be a hint of unbelief whispered by a priest in the august decorum of a temple" (TU, 141), and the initial shattering of his illusions has already been likened to the expulsion from Eden:

He stood alone, naked and afraid, like the first man on the first day of evil. There are in life events, contacts, glimpses, that seem brutally to bring all the past to a close. There is a shock and a crash, as of a gate flung to behind one by the perfidious hand of fate. Go and seek another paradise, fool or sage. There is a moment of dumb dismay, and the wanderings must begin again; the painful explaining away of facts, the feverish raking up of illusions, the cultivation of a fresh crop of lies in the sweat of one's brow, to sustain life, to make it supportable, to make it fair, so as to hand intact to another generation of blind wanderers the charming legend of a heartless country, of a promised land, all flowers and blessings. (TU, 134)

This is the kind of allusion that has prompted critics to talk of Fall patterns, but such comments would be misleading here, for the comparison not only emphasises the totality of the effect of the experience on Hervey but also indicates the importance with which he has regarded his way of life up to this point. Hervey's loss of paradise is his isolation; he is forced to regard himself as an individual for the first time, no longer uniform in life-style with his look-alike peers. The illusion of social conformity as a
viable belief has broken down, making him think of "the towns and fields of the earth, its sacred places, its temples and its houses, peopled by monsters" (TU, 135). But Hervey's belief, part of which looks on any excess of feeling as "unhealthy--morally unprofitable; a taint on practical manhood" (TU, 172) has left no room for spirituality and is seen by his wife as "abominable materialism" (TU, 176).

Unable to know the truth about his wife--a circumstance that suitably evokes thoughts of the Day of Judgment in his mind (TU, 174), since the end of his present faith and way of life is certainly nigh--Hervey becomes converted to a belief in the enigma of faith and love (presumably the "new gospel" Conrad spoke of). He cannot find the formula, however, for "The enigma is only made by sacrifice, and the gift of heaven is in the hands of every man. But they had lived in a world that abhors enigmas, and cares for no gifts but such as can be obtained in the street" (TU, 176). He needs "faith in a human heart, love of a human being! That touch of grace, whose help once in life is the privilege of the most undeserving, flung open for him the portals of beyond" (TU, 177). He speaks to his wife "with the naive austerity of a convert awed by the touch of a new creed" (TU, 177-78); the stillness around him seems like "the lying solemnity of a temple devoted to the rites of a debasing persuasion" (TU, 184), and he is forced to decide whether he will follow his new faith, since it involves "an awful sacrifice to cast all one's life into the flame of a new
belief." He needs help "against himself, against the cruel decree of salvation" (TU, 184). Thus Hervey, who had earlier harboured feelings of being one of the "elect" (TU, 171), abandons his life of social conformity and leaves.

One obvious feature of the religious imagery in "The Return" is that it is more explicit and more sustained than usual, revealing not only the grotesque extent to which regard for the mores of society may be taken but also the importance of Hervey's final decision which defies them. Once his wife's actions have planted the fateful questions within his hitherto uninspiring mind and forced him to recognise his individuality, Hervey is able to reject the materialistic base from which his life has been led. Conrad describes his former state as exemplifying "the gospel of the beastly bourgeois," and this is so much in accord with the author's attitude to material progress shown in his essays, letters and other fiction, that it is strange to see some critics regarding the story as being inconsistent with his other writings. R. A. Gekoski comments that "it is the story of a religious conversion of an unmistakeably Christian kind" and feels that "The affirmation of love and faith with which the story ends rings utterly false." But he is judging this message against the touchstone of the


letters to Cunninghame Graham later in the year and, as we saw earlier, those letters reflect a mood rather than a philosophy. The affirmation is, in fact, entirely consistent with Conrad's outlook; it fits well with the "few simple ideas" (such as "fidelity") that he extols elsewhere (PR, xix). Such ideas might not be readily attainable (as, indeed, Hervey discovers) but that does not diminish their worth.

Materialism is the base for Hervey's conformity and is a constant target for Conrad, particularly in Nostromo where the corrosive power of material interests is symbolised by the San Tome silver mine. Silver is an appropriate symbol for materialism, for, although Nostromo regards it as an "incorruptible metal" (N, 300), Conrad seems to use it frequently as a symbol of betrayal (for which there is the biblical precedent of Judas' payment for betraying Christ).

The fates of Nostromo and Charles Gould as victims of the silver have been noted earlier, as have the shortcomings of institutionalised religion in Costaguana. Nostromo, in fact, is as explicit as any of Conrad's novels in describing the modern spiritual dilemma as he saw it. With religion either easily maleable to the whims of tyrants such as Guzman Bento or subtly manipulated by material interests, whilst, in its turn, seeking to re-establish its own power base under less rigorous regimes, it is little wonder that the chief engineer should decide that "things seem to be worth nothing by what they are in themselves" and
believe "that the only solid thing about them is the spiritual value which everyone discovers in his own form of activity" (N, 318). Here, then, is one alternative spiritual outlet but its validity is quickly questioned by Doctor Monygham with the words "Self-flattery. Food for that vanity which makes the world go round" (N, 318).

They are talking specifically about Holroyd here. To the engineer-in-chief, "The introduction of a pure form of Christianity into this continent is a dream for a youthful enthusiast" and although "Holroyd is not a missionary . . . . the San Tome mine holds just that for him" (N, 317). To Emilia Gould, however, "it seemed . . . . that he looked upon his own God as a sort of influencial partner, who gets his share of profits in the endowment of churches. That's a sort of idolatry." She thus discerns that Holroyd's real belief is "The religion of silver and iron" (N, 71); the forerunner of "the most awful materialism" (N, 83).

This proves to be true of others, too; material interests claim the obeisance of almost everyone in the book at one time or another. Sir John, it will be recalled, promised Emilia a greater future than that of the ecclesiastical past, indicating, perhaps, the succession of beliefs. General Barrios, about to leave to fight Montero, announces that, once victorious, "we shall convert our swords into ploughshares and grow rich" (N, 148). The biblical peace, scheduled to arrive at the time of the end, is thus totally connected with materialism by the general, who is described as
"our saviour Barrios" by the sceptical Decoud (N, 188). Gould's visitors are discussing future profits and the coming of a railway when Decoud claims that they "talk about their gods" (N, 199), whilst the silver, of which Nostromo is to take charge, is described as being for "the very salvation of the San Tomé mine" (N, 219).

Charles Gould, who, in the early stages of the book, has the look of "a sort of heretic pilgrim" (N, 47), proclaims that "I pin my faith to material interests" (N, 84), and his later determination to destroy the mine rather than lose it reveals how this faith has replaced his belief in a deity; a fact that is made clear by his comments on Holroyd's response to this move:

"... he said something about holding on like grim death and putting our trust in God. I should imagine he must have been rather startled. But then"—pursued the Administrador of the San Tomé mine—"but then, he is very far away, you know, and, as they say in this country, God is very high above.

The engineer's appreciative laugh died away down the stairs, where the Madonna with the Child on her arm seemed to look after his shaking broad back from her shallow niche. (N, 206)

Gould's remark recalls the stories of the Golfo Placido—too dark for either God or devil—but the immediate view of the Madonna and Child gives a further perspective (especially since it follows the use of his official title), for it reveals the extent to which he has become obsessed with the mine as well as indicating that this faith is misplaced.

Material interests, however, have their limitations. Though their power can 'awaken also in human
hearts an unbounded devotion to the task" and the force "would be almost as strong as a faith" (N, 41), the engineer admits that "We can't move mountains" (N, 41)—a feat that faith is commonly reputed to perform. Gould, indeed, should heed the view of Antonia Avellanos that, in reality, his "inexhaustible treasure" lies in his character, not in his wealth (N, 361). As he becomes more and more obsessed with the mine, his wife is left lonely and forsaken. The Madonna on the stairs is an ironic comment on Emilia's lot—a virgin and yet a mother to gaze on a married woman who will never be a mother.

Nostromo's more overt enslavement by the treasure has already been seen, but not everyone is a devotee of the material interests, although no-one can remain unaffected by them. Giorgio dislikes priests but still believes in God (N, 29), though his divinity appears to be Liberty and its prophet is Garibaldi; a belief whose religious connections are made explicit by the way he is known as the "Garibaldino" (as Mohammedans are called after their prophet)" (N, 16). Events, however, have "instilled into him a gloomy doubt of ever being able to understand the ways of Divine justice" (N, 29). His despising of materialism (or money, at least), is referred to as "a puritanism of conduct, born of stern enthusiasm like the puritanism of religion," but the gloom persists "because the cause seemed lost" (N, 31).

If Giorgio holds a stubborn and apparently fruitless belief, one which materialism will do nothing to

further, Martin Decoud can believe in very little. Decoud has faith only in his own sensations and engages in an interesting exchange with Father Corbelan as the crisis approaches. He agrees with the priest that "I certainly do not believe in miracles" and hears himself analysed as a "sort of Frenchman--godless--a materialist" and as a "victim of this faithless age" (N, 198).

Whatever his own obsessions, Corbelan's comments here are perceptive and, in the event, prophetic. Decoud's attitude stands him in poor stead when he is faced with the loneliness of life on the Great Isabel, where a belief in miracles would, in fact, be more practical than the despair to which he becomes a victim. For, although he claims that "I'm not so much of an unbeliever as not to have faith in my own ideas, in my own remedies, in my own desires" (N, 213), all these seem to dissolve in the darkness of the Golfo Placido where, in a "foretaste of eternal peace," only his thoughts seem to survive (N, 262). Alone on the Great Isabel, he dies "from solitude and want of faith in himself and others" (N, 496). His solitude has become "a state of soul in which the affectations of irony and scepticism have no place" (N, 497). Thus, to lose all belief is the worst fate of all.

Perhaps the one redeeming feature of life in Sulaco is Emilia Gould. With the emphasis that Catholicism gives to the Virgin, it is significant that the statue of the Madonna and Child should stand in her hallway in constant association with her. She it is whose character attracts the devotion and causes the
redemption of Dr. Monygham; she it is, "cloaked and monastically hooded" (N, 558), to whom Nostromo feels compelled to make the final confession of his guilt and the existence of the treasure—a confidence that she is not willing to receive. She it is who is likened to a "good fairy" (N, 520) and an "angel" (N, 399) during the course of the book. Emilia may not have found happiness in Sulaco but she has proved an inspiration to those around her.

To a background of religious terms, the social obsession of material interests exercises its baleful influence over all those who come within its grasp. The corruptness of the religious systems are clearly shown, but the inadequacy of non-religious materialism is just as evident. In the face of this overpowering pre-occupation, it is difficult to determine a satisfactory attitude to take. Giorgio's beliefs in Liberty prove unrealistic; Decoud's sceptical materialism, pessimistic and suicidal. Only, it seems, the actions of such as Emilia can offer any hope. In a way, the doctor's soul is saved by her example, but unspiritual materialism, which attracts, in its various facets, the spiritual values of its functionaries, is capable of no such benefits, only an insidious and unrelenting process of enslavement.

In The Secret Agent, Mr. Vladimir decides that an outrage must be committed against "the fetish of the hour" which is "neither royalty nor religion. Therefore the palace and the church should be left
alone" (SA, 30-31). Vladimir has decided that "The sacrosanct fetish of to-day is science" (SA, 31); an expression that he repeats, furthering the religious connotations by his comment, "The attack must have all the shocking senselessness of gratuitous blasphemy" (SA, 33).

Thus science, whose discoveries had caused many Victorians to lose their beliefs, has become the successor to religion in Vladimir's eyes; the one target to shock the majority of the people. But as a replacement for religion, science does little of actual benefit in the novel. It is a manifestation of science—the bomb—which causes the disintegration of the harmless Stevie and, less directly, of the Verloc household.

The allies of science in the book and its most devoted admirers come from the ranks of the anarchists. One of them, Ossipon, appears as a fervent apostle of the fetish; his "Apollo-like" hair adding an ironic classical touch to his standing in the scientific ranks (SA, 309). His saint is Lombroso and, on being told that "Lombroso is an ass," it is reported that "Comrade Ossipon met the shock of this blasphemy by an awful, vacant stare" (SA, 47). Thus introduced, his scientific devotions are not to re-appear until the final chapters when Winnie Verloc runs into him on her way to throwing herself in the Thames after killing her husband. To Winnie, Ossipon is "like a radiant messenger of life" (SA, 274) and she proceeds to cast him in the role of saviour (SA, 292). Ossipon, however, becomes terrified on discovering Verloc's body
and abandons his plans to seduce her. The consciously scientific nature of his thought processes are given a religious aspect as he is said to invoke Lombroso "as an Italian peasant recommends himself to his favourite saint" and to gaze "scientifically" (SA, 297). But this conduct only results in his desertion of her (having first obtained her money), and Winnie is left to drown herself in the Channel. The scientific saviour thus returns her to the death from which he had unwittingly saved her.

Winnie has placed her trust misguidedly, therefore, and the religious references emphasise this. Earlier, they have been used with similar effect when denoting the relationship between Stevie and the morose Verloc, once Winnie's mother has "sacrificed" Winnie for Stevie's welfare (SA, 161). The old lady consigns herself to the almshouse and it is appropriate that the cab which conveys her thither should be drawn by "the steed of apocalyptic misery" (SA, 165), since this act is, unwittingly, to lead to the destruction of the Verloc household. Both women have instilled into Stevie the lesson of Mr. Verloc's goodness upon which his security depends, not knowing that the place of Mr. Verloc's "pilgrimage" is the embassy (SA, 37), which regards his marriage as apostasy (SA, 36). Winnie knows of but ignores her husband's anarchist connections, even though she complains that their talk causes Stevie to go "out of his mind with something he overheard about eating people's flesh and drinking blood" (SA, 59), which sounds like a parody of the Christian sacra-
ment and suggests that anarchism, too, is a perverted successor to religion.

Thus, Verloc's goodness becomes "established, erected, consecrated" (SA, 175), so that, when he returns from the Continent, Stevie gapes at him "with reverence and awe" and bears off his bag "with triumphant devotion" (SA, 182). When Verloc puts down his hat, this, too, is taken off "reverently into the kitchen" (SA, 184) and Verloc is informed that the boy "just worships you" (SA, 186). Winnie has persuaded Stevie to become Verloc's "admiring disciple" so that her husband can become aware of his "submission and worship" (SA, 235). Thus "the doctrine of his supreme wisdom and goodness, inculcated by two anxious women" (SA, 235) leads to Stevie's death--another example of wrongly applied religious devotion ending in disaster.

There have, therefore, been two cases of trust in individuals leading to destruction--Stevie's worship of Verloc and Winnie's acceptance of Ossipon as a saviour--and science has proved to be ruthless, not only destroying one who would attack it but also deserting one who would have faith in its apostles. It has, as one of its chief practitioners, the ultimate anarchist, the Professor, whose quest in life is to perfect a detonator to make his bombs instantly lethal.

The Professor is an example of fanaticism leading to destruction and the fact that his father has been "an itinerant and rousing preacher of some obscure but rigid Christian sect--a man supremely confident in the privileges of his righteousness" (SA, 80) suggests
that, in Conrad's eyes, all fanaticism is potentially destructive. Much of the father's personality appears to have become vested in his son, whose whole outlook is expressed in religious terms as if to justify Vladimir's earlier assertion:

In the son, individualist by temperament, once the science of colleges had replaced thoroughly the faith of conventicles, this moral attitude translated itself into a frenzied puritanism of ambition. He nursed it as something secularly holy. To see it thwarted opened his eyes to the true nature of the world, whose morality was artificial, corrupt and blasphemous. (SA, 80-81)

To add to this image of a scientific puritan of a rigid anarchistic sect, the Professor's home is termed "the hermitage of the perfect anarchist" (SA, 82). The Professor has thus inherited certain faults of religionists—bigotry and fanaticism—and applied them to revolution and science, though, as was shown with Podmore, the root of such an inheritance is excessive egoism. Thus, "personal impulses" become "disguised into creeds" and, in the Professor's eyes, his indignation alone is sufficient to provide "a final cause that absolved him from the sin of turning to destruction as the agent of his ambition" (SA, 81). Ironically, he uses religious terminology to describe his enemies, since his aim is to "break up the superstition and worship of legality" and he welcomes the thought of being shot down by police since then "the disintegration would have set in its very temple" (SA, 73). Damnation he regards as "the hope of the weak, whose theology has invented hell for the strong" (SA, 305), and his device is "No God! No
master" (SA, 306). Science has succeeded in producing no saviours, only destroyers, and the ironical sense of religion present in the Professor's character seems to emphasise the grotesque extent of his perversity and (by implication) that of the rigidly scientific world he represents.

The Professor, in the final chapter, has just come from a visit to Michaelis, who has plans for the strong nursing the weak. Michaelis, the "ticket-of-leave apostle" (SA, 107), is presented throughout in religious terms. Being forced to leave Marienbad is "a martyrdom" (SA, 42), whilst the idea he pursues grows "like a faith revealed in visions" (SA, 44) and is to be "like a book of Revelation in the history of mankind" (SA, 107). When he speaks of this idea, he makes "the confession of his faith, mastering him irresistibly and complete like an act of grace" (SA, 45). He is described as "angelic" (SA, 303), as a "mere believer" with "the temperament of a saint" (SA, 109), and as possessing "the character of seraphic trustfulness" (SA, 49). The "invincible and humanitarian creed, which he confessed rather than preached" (SA, 107) is expounded by the Professor at the end:

He has divided his biography into three parts, entitled--'Faith, Hope, Charity.' He is elaborating now the idea of a world planned out like an immense and nice hospital, with gardens and flowers, in which the strong are to devote themselves to the nursing of the weak. (SA, 303)

This sounds like a simplistic view of Christianity, and the simplicity of Michaelis, which, in some
ways, aligns him with the half-witted Stevie and which allows him only to proclaim his view and not to argue it, is perhaps a further ironic comment by Conrad on the state of religion in his day. Yet there is no doubt that Michaelis' ideas are healthier than those of his chief critic, the Professor. The world of The Secret Agent has frequently been likened to a kind of hell and it may be no coincidence that the man most anxious to have Michaelis back behind bars should be Chief-Inspector Heat, a man who is "conscious of having an authorized mission on this earth and the moral support of his kind" (SA, 96), one "whose reputation was established as if on a rock" (SA, 133), and who is thus compared to the church.

The use of religious terminology, therefore, once more denotes false and disastrous beliefs. It indicates the depth of Winnie's faith in Verloc, unaware that the devotion she inculcates within Stevie will be utilised for the attack on the "sacrosanct fetish" of the day, the latest social obsession--science; it shows the extent of Ossipon's attachment to this obsession and, by making him, in Winnie's eyes, a "saviour" figure, reveals the impotence of this creed to deal with human problems; it causes the Professor to be seen in the light of a priest of anarchy by comparing him with his preaching father and also causes science to be regarded as the successor to religion in his life; lastly, it insinuates, through the "ticket-of-leave apostle," Michaelis, that a simple Christian-like outlook is out of joint in a world in which science is dominant and
an "infernal Heat" (SA, 113) with an "authorized mission" can stand in opposition. Science proves destructive (through the Professor) and treacherous (through Ossipon); as the social obsession of the day, it has few redeeming features.

Mixed in with the social obsessions of materialism and science in Nostromo and The Secret Agent are the political considerations of various Costaguanaan governments and of the anarchists. In Under Western Eyes, the religious references denote social obsessions that are almost entirely political. Both autocracy and revolution surround themselves with religious terminology, or (in the words of the professor of languages), "strange pretensions of sanctity" (UWE, 67). These "pretensions" were summarised during the discussion of the demonic and only a few more comments need to be added here.

Basically, as one might expect, the religious terms connected to autocracy and revolution tend to be very similar. Autocracy (in the persons of Mr. de P--- and the chaplain) decrees acts against it as "sin" (UWE, 8, 93), for which it exhorts the traditional theological remedies of repentance, atonement and confession (UWE, 93). But it is in "a spirit of repentance" that Peter Ivanovitch begins to conspire against the state (UWE, 120), whilst Razumov is tempted to confess, not only to the autocratic Mikulin (UWE, 297), but also to the revolutionary Haldin (UWE, 40). Just as Razumov feels the "touch of grace upon his forehead" as he turns towards autocracy (UWE, 34), so Sophia Antonovna thinks
that the conclusive stage of becoming a revolutionary is "the final appeasement of the convert in the perfect fierceness of conviction" (UWE, 269). The venerable chaplain of the fortress equates "the Divine laws" with "the sacred Majesty of the Ruler" during his ministrations to Haldin (UWE, 93), but Kostia affirms "the sacred will of the people" (UWE, 314), Sophia Antonovna speaks of the "sacred task of crushing the Infamy" (UWE, 270), and Peter Ivanovitch's "sacred trust" is the gospel of feminism which he claims to uphold (UWE, 121). Autocracy, naturally, claims exclusive belief so that General T--- can regard rebels as "people that deny God Himself--perfect unbelievers" (UWE, 51) and, on hearing that Haldin "believed in God," Councillor Mikulin can remark "with a shade of scorn that blasphemers also had that sort of belief" (UWE, 91). To the revolutionaries, on the other hand (as was noted earlier), autocracy is demonic, being regarded (by Peter Ivanovitch) as "the devil" who "is not combated by prayers and fasting" (UWE, 127). Little wonder that Razumov should decide that the lot of one who is unable to be converted to one of these rival creeds is "perdition" (UWE, 367). Little wonder, too, that Razumov's deafness (the reward for his confession) should be at the hands of Nikita, the "fiend" who "killed . . . in both camps" (UWE, 381).

Both sides, then use the terminology of religion in similar ways but neither shows much inclination to follow religious teaching. Peter Ivanovitch (whilst dismissing prayer and fasting as a valid course of
action) comments that "Sin is different in our day, and the way of salvation for pure souls is different too. It is no longer to be found in monasteries but in the world" (UWE, 128), to which Natalia responds, "I don't mean to retire into a monastery. Who would look for salvation there" (UWE, 128)? They may both claim to be speaking "figuratively," but the exchange is ironic in two separate ways. Firstly, its rejection of the traditional raison d'être of certain religious orders implies, once more, the inadequacy of institutionalised religion and its irrelevance to the world; secondly, its assertion that salvation is to be found in the world is belied by the events of the novel, especially as far as Razumov is concerned. Peter Ivanovitch has, through his autobiography, set out the passage of his conversion to feminism "the conviction of woman's spiritual superiority--his new faith confessed since in several volumes" (UWE, 121), and the narrator comments ironically on the way aspects of his journey (an escape from the mines in which he had been sentenced to labour) lend themselves "to mystic treatment and symbolic interpretation" (UWE, 125). Much of this kind of view is obviously deliberately engendered by Peter Ivanovitch himself, who seems to revel in his apparent role as "the noble arch-priest of Revolution" (UWE, 210), and it is in this role that he can pontificate on salvation to Natalia. The religious aspects utilised by revolution become deliberately selective, therefore; salvation remains but prayer and fasting

44 See Appendix B.
are dropped. Like autocracy, revolution makes use only of those religious aspects that seem convenient, and Ivanovitch is especially selective; the shortcomings of both his creeds being exposed by the devoted Tekla. Her treatment at his hands shows that his pursuance of "the cult of the woman" is a very restricted one, whilst a comment by Natalia towards the end of the book—"She is a good Samaritan by an irresistible vocation. The revolutionists didn't understand her" (UWE, 374)—is a damning indictment of the attitudes of revolutionaries, revealing, not just lack of "perspicacity" (as the teacher of languages feels [UWE, 374]), but also lack of humanity.

To pour one's religious ardour into the political polarities that exist in Under Western Eyes, whose roots lie in the deification of the state and the myth of Holy Russia (attacked by Conrad in his essay "Autocracy and War"), proves as futile and destructive as to apply it to materialism, science or progress. These social obsessions, the fate of those who adhere to them and even (in Razumov's case) the fate of those who cannot adhere to them, proclaim society's spiritual crisis and the ill-directed nature of its apparent solutions. Madame De S— wished to "spiritualize the discontent" (UWE, 221), but the spirituality produced by each of these social concerns is vitiating, not uplifting.

v. Self-conceptual Obsessions

All obsessions affect one's attitude but, in some of Conrad's novels, it is an attitude, stemming from
a character's conception of himself, that becomes the obsession. The pre-occupation, in other words, is not an external one (such as science or wealth or a woman) but internal. Jim's view of himself as thwarted hero is an early example of this. The "course of light holiday reading" that prompts his decision to go to sea (LJ, 5) becomes a controlling factor in his outlook on life. His dreams "were the best parts of life, its secret truth, its hidden reality. They had a gorgeous virility, the charm of vagueness, they passed before him with a heroic tread; they carried his soul away with them and made it drunk with the divine philtre of an unbounded confidence in itself" (LJ, 20).

After the Patna incident has caused "some mysterious, inexplicable, impalpable striving of his wounded spirit" (LJ, 182), Jim's acute consciousness of lost honour dominates his existence. Such an attitude even seems to have its own kind of priest—the French Lieutenant who stayed thirty hours on the Patna to see her safely into port. He appears to be an expert on the subject of honour but Marlow's equating of him with a religious figure is quite explicit:

... he reminded you of one of those snuffy, quiet village priests, into whose ears are poured the sins, the sufferings, the remorse of peasant generations, on whose faces the placid and simple expression is like a veil thrown over the mystery of pain and distress. He ought to have had a threadbare black sou-tane buttoned smoothly up to his amply chin, instead of a frock-coat with shoulder-straps and brass buttons. (LJ, 139)

As he listens to Marlow's tale, the lieutenant seems
"more priestlike than ever" with "the appearance of devout concentration" (LJ, 145). But, just as the creed of the sea (which Jim has betrayed) has been seen to offer no absolution, so the creed of honour (to which Jim has been unfaithful) is similarly unhelpful. Jim's later status as a saviour figure in Patusan is an outward manifestation of the exalted conception he holds of himself; a conception to which he finally proves a martyr.

Similarly, it is a conception of self that dictates the actions of Anthony and Flora in Chance. Anthony's excessive magnanimity has been seen before; what makes it so life-negating is Flora's own attitude—the feeling that she is unlovable. Marlow, in fact, describes the whole development of this attitude in religious terms. When the news of de Barral's bankruptcy is about to burst on the world, he announces that "her unconscious was to be broken into with profane violence, with desecrating circumstances like a temple violated by a mad, vengeful impiety" (C, 99), and he repeats the image in more detail later:

A young girl, you know, is something like a temple. You pass by and wonder what mysterious rites are going on in there, what prayers, what visions? The privileged man, the lover, the husband, who are given the key of the sanctuary do not always know how to use it. For myself, without claim, without merit, simply by chance I had been allowed to look through the half-opened door and I had seen the saddest possible desecration, the withered brightness of youth, a spirit neither made cringing nor yet dulled but as if bewildered in quivering hopelessness by gratuitous cruelty. (C, 311-12)
This cruelty (by the governes's) remains with the girl "like a mark on her soul, a sort of mystic wound, to be contemplated, to be meditated over" (C, 118-19), and this effect is augmented by the attitude of Flora's relatives who seem intent on instilling a sense of unworthiness within her. In Marlow's words, she has had "an ugly pilgrimage" (C, 210); one that continues on board the Ferndale, once the strange tri-partite arrangement between Flora, Anthony and de Barral has been engaged:

It was as if the forehead of Flora de Barral were marked. Was the girl born to be a victim; to be always disliked and crushed as if she were too fine for this world? Or too luckless—since that also is often counted as sin. (C, 309)

In Flora, too, therefore, there is an inadequate self-conception—albeit one that has been inculcated in the first instance and nurtured by mis-chance thereafter. Her struggle takes place to a backcloth of immensity and indifference. When she goes missing from the Fynes, Marlow describes the sensation he has as he steps outside:

It was one of those dewy, clear, starry nights, oppressing our spirit, crushing our pride, by the brilliant evidence of the awful loneliness, of the hopeless obscure insignificance of our globe lost in the splendid revelation of a glittering, soulless universe. (C, 50)

This impression he echoes later when he speaks of the "bespangled, cruel revelation of the Immensity of the Universe" (C, 61) and of "a delicious day, with the
horror of the Infinite veiled by the splendid tent of blue" (C, 64). Previously, the external narrator has undercut the traditional Christian view of the age of the universe and the poet's attempt to reconcile it with ideas of evolution:

The late Carleon Anthony, the poet, sang in his time, of the domestic and social amenities of our age with a most felicitous versification, his object being, in his own words, "to glorify the result of six thousand years' evolution towards the refinement of thought, manners, and feelings." Why he fixed the term at six thousand years I don't know. (C, 38)

Flora herself, when being conducted through the docks by Anthony, thinks "that it was not good to be bothered with what all these things meant in the scheme of creation (if indeed anything had a meaning)" (C, 337).

This sense of the infinite may well serve the role of indicating still further the futility of an obsessive attitude, be it the consciousness of possessing a virtue (Anthony) or of being a victim (Flora). It also re-emphasises the fact that Flora is to receive little help from religion. While these obsessions remain, Anthony's panacea of life at sea is likely to be no more successful than the attractions of Mrs. Fyne's feminism, which, while attracting its "disciples" (C, 42, 49), holds nothing for Flora.

Flora is saved by chance; chance, however, that is introduced by an image from the Bible (Matt. 13:11-16), as Powell comments, "He who has eyes, you know, nothing can stop him from seeing things as long as there are things to see in front of him" (C, 412). The biblical
sense of "see" is that of understanding and it is a general understanding amongst the major characters, brought about by the revelation of what Powell sees, that his comment heralds.

Flora's final happiness is to be in the hands of Powell, whose enthusiasm for her—an "almost sacrilegious hint" by Marlow—"allowed a gleam to light up his eyes like the reflection of some inward fire tended in the sanctuary of his heart by a devotion as pure as that of any vestal" (C, 441). The religious terms here describe a natural emotion and recall the earlier images of a desecrated temple. It seems that rededication is about to take place.

At first sight, a withdrawal from the world of action—the path taken by Axel Heyst—might suggest an attitude of detachment combined with a healthy layer of the scepticism that Conrad had recommended to Galsworthy. But, in fact, such a withdrawal indicates, paradoxically, that one has become attached to detachment. Scepticism must be balanced, therefore; too much produces a Decoud, too little, a Jim.

Much has been made of Heyst's surname (as seen earlier), but far less attention has been paid to the name "Axel," which probably derives from the play of that name by Philippe Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. In that play, Axel makes the ultimate withdrawal from life (into death) with the comment, "Live? Our servants will do that for us."45 Heyst has one servant, Wang.

who, by settling down with a native wife, can be said to be fulfilling the role of living, whilst Heyst is restrained by his scepticism and also ends by killing himself. But, as an article comparing the two works suggests, whilst the author of *Axel* seems to condone the attitude of his protagonist, Conrad condemns it. 46

Heyst is introduced as a man around whom epithets naturally gather, attracting such names as "enchanted" (V, 6-7) and "Hard Facts"; the latter after his comment that "There's nothing worth knowing but facts. Hard Facts! Facts alone" (V, 7). This remark, ironically, makes him sound like the Commander in *Axel* (Axel's adversary), when he says "Grab hold of life, just as it is, with no illusions and no weaknesses." 47

The names contradict each other since Heyst is also termed an "utopist" (V, 8), and his physical resemblance to Charles XII is noted as being misleading (V, 9); these are factors which should counsel caution when attempting to equate him with Christ because he rescues a Magdalen or with Adam in an Edenic Samburan. Put together, however, these nomenclatures do form a pattern. Heyst is indeed under a spell—the spell of his father's admonition to observe but not participate in the affairs of mankind. He has no faith (hence the insistence on facts), yet inherits his father's sense of idealism to which mankind can never attain. He is also called the "Enemy" (V, 25), and proves to be this,


47 Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, p. 86.
both to himself and to life and love.

The religious imagery of Victory is usually direct and frequently biblical, emphasizing the essential negativity of Heyst's stance. The final advice he receives from his father, for example, is accompanied by images of apocalypse and futility. The instruction to "Look on--make no sound," is given by a man "who had spent his life in blowing blasts upon a terrible trumpet which had filled heaven and earth with ruins, while mankind went on its way unheeding" (V, 175). The effects of this valediction on Heyst are described in spiritual terms when Davidson, the friendly sea captain, takes an interest:

Davidson's concern was, if one may express it so, the danger of spiritual starvation; but this was a spirit which had renounced all outside nourishment, and was sustaining itself proudly on its contempt of the usual coarse aliments which life offers to the common appetites of men. (V, 177)

Heyst's conviction that to participate in mankind's affairs is a mistake causes him to ridicule or ignore the positive religious utterances that accompany his two acts of rescue. The over-charitable Morrison, having admitted to praying for help on the very morning Heyst meets him (V, 14), regards his helper as an agent of Providence, "sent by God in answer to my prayer" (V, 17). Similarly, when Heyst rescues Lena, there is another very positive religious reference present, for Lena reveals that "They call me Alma. I don't know why. Silly name! Magdalen too. It doesn't matter" (V, 88). Andreacb claims that "Alma" means life or
soul;\textsuperscript{48} it certainly yields such positive connotations as bountifulness or nourishment, appropriate to one in danger "of spiritual starvation." The biblical connotations of Magdalen are obvious, giving a very clear sign to Heyst that he has done the right thing. Lena, indeed, does begin to have faith "in the man of her destiny, and perhaps in the Heaven which had sent him so wonderfully to cross her path" (\textit{V}, 292). Even Ricardo echoes such feelings when he says, "I would just as soon expected to meet an angel from heaven" after Heyst has saved the trio in the boat from dying of thirst (\textit{V}, 238).

But the religious imagery that Heyst evokes from these two acts is entirely negative. Whilst musing on Samburan after Morrison's death and the failure of the Tropical Belt Coal Company, he decides that "There must be a lot of the original Adam in me, after all" (\textit{V}, 173); an assertion that is to be ominously underlined:

There was in the son a lot of that first ancestor who, as soon as he could uplift his muddy frame from the celestial mould, started inspecting and naming the animals of that paradise which he was so soon to lose.

(\textit{V}, 173-74)

This reference also emphasises the fact that Heyst cannot set himself apart from mankind as he thinks; he is inextricably part of the human race.

The sense of having rebelled against a creed is made evident when Heyst's father's furniture arrives:

\textsuperscript{48} Andreach, p. 96.
The manager of the Tropical Belt Coal Company . . . must have felt like a remorseful apostate before these relics. He handled them tenderly; and it was perhaps their presence there which attached him to the island when he woke up to the failure of his apostasy. (V, 177)

Heyst's negative doctrine of non-involvement, therefore, causes him to mis-read the signs, for, whilst these have equated his actions with those of an agent of God and even with those of Christ, he sees them as indicating his state as fallen Adam and as evidence of apostasy from his father's creed. His musings at the beginning of part III seem (chronologically) to precede his rescue of Lena but, since the reader is aware of the second action at the time, it seems reasonable to apply them as his general principle. The ill-fated Morrison, he regards as "so representative of all the past victims of the Great Joke" (V, 198), and Morrison's view of Heyst's role as an agent of God he sees as comical:

What captivated my fancy was that I, Axel Heyst, the most detached of creatures in this earthly captivity, the veriest tramp on this earth, an indifferent stroller going through the world's bustle—that I should have been there to step into the situation of an agent of Providence. I, a man of universal scorn and unbelief. (V, 198-99)

This confession gives some point to Morrison's cautionary thought at the time—"What if it's the Devil who has sent him" (V, 17)—since (as seen in chapter eight), the demonic is closely connected with the negation of life that is the logical end of Heyst's philosophy.
It was noted earlier that Heyst's prevailing mood is akin to that of Conrad whilst he was writing his excessively morbid letters to Cunninghame Graham in the late 1890s and that Victory represents a fictional refutation of that mood. It was noted also how the demonic is used to reflect the logical culmination of such an outlook in the person of the misogynic killer, Mr. Jones; another very obvious example of negation attracting negative religious imagery. Once Jones is in sight of the island, ominous echoes of the Apocalypse begin to pervade, though this again is a persistent reminder of Heyst's own negation. To Lena, the view of the sea is "the abomination of desolation" (V, 190), on viewing which, the Bible advises one to stand in the holy spot because the end is nigh (Matt. 24:15). Heyst is reminded of "the story of the deluge . . . The vision of a world destroyed" (V, 191). Lena seems aware of Heyst's dual potential as she feels herself "swinging between the abysses of earth and heaven in the hollow of his arm" (V, 209), but Heyst can only think negatively. His continued obsession with detachment (and its negative connotations) is continued when he decides "As if it could matter to me what anybody had ever said or believed from the beginning of the world till the crack of doom" (V, 210). Having earlier equated himself with the first Adam, he is soon to refer to himself as a "man of the last hour" (V, 359).

Nevertheless, it is Lena who is moved to interpret the "ill-omened chaos of the sky" (V, 355), because she is also possessed by a negative outlook at this stage—
the sense of sin—causing her to regard the advent of Jones and the others as "retribution from an angry Heaven" and herself as "the tempter" (V, 354). Her love for Heyst enables her to overcome this attitude but it is appropriate that she should consider her success in removing Ricardo's knife in Edenic terms, since this is connected with her earlier awareness:

The very sting of death was in her hands; the venom of the viper in her paradise, extracted, safe in her possession—and the viper's head all but lying under her heel. (V, 399)

The story ends in tragedy because of Heyst's pessimistic inertness which prevents him from tackling Jones. The arrival of Davidson as Lena is dying shows that this pessimism has proved self-fulfilling (like that of Decoud on the Great Isabel), and that a more hopeful view of life would have led to a happier result. Davidson's assessment of Heyst's suicide—"fire purifies everything" (V, 411)—indicates his final release after his affirmation of life immediately before. Here is a positive interpretation of an act (a purgatorial rite) in contrast to the negative images that Heyst's scepticism has brought about earlier. The "Alma" part of Lena can be seen as the means of giving spiritual sustenance to the spiritually starving Heyst, whilst the "Magdalen" part of her indicates her participation in the world and her power to love.

The religious references in Victory, therefore, act as indicators of attitude. Heyst ignores the positive signs that accompany his two acts of rescue and
can think of himself only in terms of a fallen Adam or failed apostate; a view that becomes reflected by Lena's negative conception of herself as sinful woman, descended from Eve. It is important to note, incidentally, that the Edenic references are in the minds of the characters themselves, which reveals something about their outlooks rather than indicating a "prelapsarian Eden" with a "biblical-allegorical edifice" that "remains strained... in that it is treated neither seriously nor ironically." 49

Reyst's sterile scepticism is ultimately destructive because, lacking the vitality of life, it must end in extinction, in nothing (appropriately, the last word in the book). This attitude becomes reflected by the images of deluge and apocalypse (applied to the elements) and by the demonic references that accompany Jones and Ricardo. In a sense, Mr. Jones and his henchmen are a form of retribution, as Lena has feared, though not for sin but as a consequence of the attempt at total withdrawal, whose logical extreme Jones represents; Ricardo's "instinctive savagery" being the outward sign of destructive violence that must inevitably accompany such an extreme (V, 329).

vi. Conclusion

Essentially, therefore, the figurative religious terms expose the secular nature of man's latter-day devotions. Sometimes these images are deliberately

49 Berman, p. 173
utilised by characters such as Alvan Hervey or by the autocrats and revolutionaries of Under Western Eyes to give additional justification to a particular mode of behaviour or a cause. In instances such as that of M. George, they are evoked to show a character's awareness of his obsession, even though he may be powerless to do anything about it. Sometimes they are produced with intentional irony to reveal the obsessions of others by characters such as Marlow in "Heart of Darkness" or Decoud; both of whom are clearly aware of the process to the point where Decoud, at least, can follow Father Corbelan's denunciation of General Barrios—"Senores, the God of your General is a bottle" (N, 194) --with the comment, "But is it perhaps that you have not discovered yet what is the God of my worship" (N, 197)?

Such metaphorical use of religious terminology thus reveals the way a character is paying undue attention to one particular object; be that his ego, a woman, a personal illusion, a vocation, a social preoccupation or a certain self-conception that engulfs him. Whatever that object may be (whatever god he may worship), it dominates his vision, forcing all else to be regarded in relation to it, and, as has been see, the distortion is rarely a healthy one.
CHAPTER TEN

CONCLUSION

Conrad's use of religious language in his writings indicates the spiritual nature of society's malaise. The inadequacies of Christian belief had left a gap in man's existence which he endeavoured to fill with his own concerns. This had happened in Conrad's own life with the sense of vocation he brought to his two professions once that early Catholic faith of his childhood had faded. It had happened earlier and less positively when his father had been influenced by the mystic writings of Mickiewicz, which perceived a messianic role for Poland in the world, and had later become cultish in his memories of his dead wife. Apollo Korzeniowski, therefore, had much in common with the fictional characters of his son; his ardent protestations of faith notwithstanding, Poland and Evalina proved to be the true objects of his adoration. The importance of Polish Messianism in this context is that its expectations were secular ones. Despite all the mystical teachings that encircled it, the outcome of the Third Day was not fondly foreseen as a spiritual event but as a physical victory over the Russians which would see them expelled from Poland's sacred soil. Such material expectations were, of course,
completely disappointed.

Conrad's perceptive eyes noted, in later years, that it was not just the Poles who applied religious sentiments to areas other than those of their actual religion (Christianity). The "madness of a fixed idea," which so grips Lingard, pervades the characters of all Conrad's novels and is frequently destructive. It is "the idea" that causes Cantelucci and others to have such respect for Napoleon, for example, prompting Doctor Martel to comment, "Devil only knows what that idea is, but I suspect it's vague enough to include every illusion that ever fooled mankind" (S, 182).

It is devotion to the "idea" that brings about the downfall of many of Conrad's characters and Martel is clearly right to connect it with illusions. Almayer has faith only in his dreams; when they are shattered, so is he. But those without a belief, however ill-founded, fare no better and, indeed, loss of faith is never presented in a positive light. Rita de Lastaola seems bitter about the "clever men" who "robbed" her of God (and, in the event, of love as well), and Decoud proves to be, truly, "The victim of this faithless age." Axel Heyst regrets "that he had no Heaven to which he could recommend this fair, palpitating handful of ashes and dust [Lena]" (V, 354-55), whilst the slave girl, Taminah, who adores Dain Maroola to no avail, is forced to feed "her dumb ignorant soul on her despair" (AF, 116) because she "could find no words to pray for relief, she knew of no heaven to send her prayer to" (AF, 118-19).
The balance, presumably, lies in moderation. When Conrad tells Galsworthy in one letter that he needs "more scepticism at the very foundation of your work," and then writes in an essay, four years later, that the artist in fiction must cherish "an undying hope" (NII, 8), these statements are not necessarily contradictory. The implication is that one needs a measure of both. Scepticism is necessary (it keeps at bay superstition) but too much is destructive, as Decoud and Heyst show. Conrad's novels, in this respect, expose immoderation and his use of figurative religious language is particularly effective in revealing this. Only the vocation of the seaman is seen to merit, indeed, demand a total commitment and that, too, is shown to contain its illusions, forcing unease among its adherents when such illusions prove unreliable.

There are, in this figurative sense, several deities clamouring for worship from the individual soul in need of nourishment. But religious fervour (or absorption) carried into science and anarchy produces the destructive Professor; carried into materialism, it produces the insidious soul-sapping San Tomé mine; carried into the politics of Russia, it creates two systems, equally oppressive to non-believers--none of which offers any hope. On a personal level, it proves just as destructive when applied to the regard for an individual (Almayer for Nina, Stevie for Verloc), to the regard for oneself (Willems) or for one's capabilities (Lingard), to dreams of wealth (Almayer) or to sexual passion (Willems, M. George, Ortega and Lingard).

1 "To John Galsworthy," 11 Nov. 1901, LL, I, 301.
There is a qualification in this last instance. Heyst is condemned because his philosophy prevents him from loving Lena, and Anthony is similarly mistaken in placing his sense of excessive magnanimity before his love for Flora. In these cases, negative religious terms operate to emphasise the point. The glimpse of paradise which undoes Lingard does not have the same result for Dain Maroola and Nina and the later liaison of Arlette and Réal—"a miracle" to Réal (Ro, 216), a "terrestrial revelation" to Arlette (Ro, 160)—is also destined to be successful.

The backgrounds of these affairs differ, however. The passions of Willems and Lingard are illicit, for example (Willems and Edith being married), which would involve an act of infidelity on the part of the marriage partner. Rita cannot escape the sterilising effects of Allègre's aestheticism and thereby blights the existences of Blunt, George and Ortega. For Nina, Flora and Arlette, however, love (as opposed to sheer sexual passion) proves a form of escape. Dain's adoration of Nina enables her to be released from the oppressiveness of Almayer's dreamworld; Powell's revelations allow Flora to escape her conviction of being unlovable, firstly with Anthony (released from his magnanimity) and then with Powell himself; whilst the relationship between Arlette and Real frees both of them from the negating memories of revolution which, in common with previous social obsessions, is likened to a religion with its "republican god" (Ro, 76), its "sacred revolutionary principles" (Ro, 209), its evoking of sacri-
fice and a "sacred fire" (Ro, 81) and its comparison (by Peyrol) with "the tale of an intelligent islander on the other side of the world talking of bloody rites and amazing hopes of some religion unknown to the rest of mankind" (Ro, 94).

Here, then, is one form of solution—the same, indeed, as that sought for by Alvan Hervey in "The Return"; namely "Faith in a human heart, love of a human being" (TU, 177). This is the lesson that Heyst comes to learn when it is too late. Conrad's tone to Garnett is not a serious one when (referring to "The Return") he talks of the "new gospel," but it is still one of the few simple notions that succeeds in quieting troubled souls. In The Rover, the revolution is likened to "the terrors of a Judgment Day in which the world had been given over to the devils" (Ro, 145), whilst the prelude to Peyrol's sacrifice which will allow the two lovers to come together is an apocalyptic storm, likened to "the beginning of a destroying and universal deluge—the end of all things" (Ro, 248). But it is an end to negativity for Réal and Arlette and a beginning of life; life that triumphs over the negating advice of the Catholic abbe (literal religion) and over the destructive influence of the revolution (figurative religion). Elsewhere, though, figurative religious language usually portends only disaster, frequently made apparent by the use of demonic imagery (denoting, in most cases, an excessive egoism or life-negating philosophy) and the related destructive effects on the soul (generally standing for man's will
or power of choice), whose operations become controlled or circumscribed by whatever obsession commands the character's devotion.

It is against this secular religious background that any archetypal patterns should be considered and, in this sense, Claire Rosenfield's conclusion that such patterns reflect the sickness of modern life by implicitly contrasting it with the stability of the past, stands up well, even if some of her examples are dubious. Spirituality is lacking in the modern world and the secular use of religious terminology in the novels makes this plain. The failings of Christianity are mirrored by Islam in the early works and made grotesquely manifest in more direct ways later on, whilst Buddhism promises only annihilation—all exemplifying Conrad's mistrust of formulas. Yet the need for some form of belief is still there, as Peyrol seems to suggest:

I have heard of and seen more gods than you could ever dream of in a long night's sleep, in every corner of the earth, in the very heart of forests, which is an inconceivable thing. Figures, stones, sticks. There must be something in the idea. (Ro, 76)

Conrad tries to accommodate this need in his idea of a creation whose aim is spectacular, giving room for "every religion except for the inverted creed of impiety, the mask and cloak of arid despair; for every joy and every sorrow, for every fair dream, for every charitable hope" (PR, 93). But Conrad had no real

2 Rosenfield, p. 176.
answer and distrusted those (such as Tolstoy) who thought they had. Though frequently deceived by their illusions, most of the characters (and perhaps Conrad himself) are in a situation that can best be summed up by the words that introduce Stephen in the fragment of The Sisters:

... yet it must be said he was only a lonely and inarticulate mage, without a star and without companions. He set off on his search for a creed—and found only an infinity of formulas. No angel's voice spoke from above to him. Instead, he heard, right and left, the vociferations of idle fanatics extolling this path or that with earthly and hoarse voices that rang out, untrustworthy, in empty darkness. (Sis, 33)
APPENDIX A

A SELECTION OF PUBLICATIONS ABOUT ISLAM, MOST OF WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE TO CONRAD WHILE HE WAS WRITING HIS EARLY NOVELS

1. Translations of The Qur'an
   a) French
      1647 L'Alcoran de Mahomet. Translated from the Arabic into French by Sieur Du Ryer (Paris).
      1783 Le Coran, traduit de L'Arabe, accompagné de notes, et précédé d'un abrégé de la vie de Mahomet, par M. Savry (Paris).
      1840 Le Koran; traduction nouvelle faite sur le Texte Arabe par M. Kasimirski (Paris); reprinted 1847, 1852, 1857, 1875.
   b) English
      1649 The Alcoran of Mahomet, translated out of Arabique into French by the Sieur Du Ryer ... And newly Englished for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities. (The life and death of Mahomet, etc--A needfull Caveat or Admonition for those who desire to know what use may be made of, or if there be danger in reading the Alcoran, by A. Ross--London)
      1734 The Koran, commonly called the Alcoran
of Mohammed, translated into English immediately from the original Arabic, with explanatory notes taken from the most approved commentators. To which is prefixed a preliminary discourse. By George Sale (London); reprinted many times including 1857, 1876, 1877, 1882 (with explanatory notes by E. M. Wherry), 1887, 1892, 1893.

1861 The Koran; translated from the Arabic, the Suras arranged in chronological order, with notes and index. By J. M. Rodwell (London); second edition, 1876.


c) Polish

1858 Koran (Al-Koran) z Arabskiego przekład Polski J. Murzy Tarak Buezackiego, ... wzbogacony objaśnieniami W. Kościuszki. Poprzedzony życiorysem Mahometa z W. Irving. Pomnożony poglądem na stosunka Polski z Turcją i Tatarami, na dzieje Tatarów w Polsce osiadłych, na przywileje tu im nadane, jako też wspomnieniami o znakomitych Tatarach Polskich J. Bartoszewicza. - Z dodaniem wiadomości: o Arabach przed Mahometem, ... o stanie Judiaizmu za czasów Mahometa, o środkach przezeń użytych dla zaprowadzenia jego religii, ... o sektarzach między
wyznawcami Islamu, ... wyjątkach z dzieła ... G. Sale; ... oraz Kalendarza Arabsko-Tureckiego przez A. Kryzyżanowskiego, i zbioru modlitw codziennych i świątecznych, przełożonych z Arabskiego przez W. Kościszkę. 2 tom. (Warszawa).

2. Selections from The Qur'an

1843 Selections from the Kur-an, commonly called in England, the Koran: with an interwoven commentary translated from the Arabic ... and illustrated by notes, chiefly from Sale's edition; to which is prefixed an introduction taken from Sale's Preliminary Discourse, with corrections and additions: by E. W. Lane (London); new edition revised and enlarged with introduction by S. Lane-Poole, 1879.

1860 The Testimony Borne by the Coran to the Jewish and Christian Scriptures; a collection of passages from the Koran with an introduction, translation and commentary by Sir William Muir (Allahabad); reprinted, 1878.

1880 Extracts from the Coran in the Original with English Rendering, compiled by Sir William Muir (London).

1882 The Speeches and Table-talk of the Prophet Mohammad, chosen and translated with an introduction and notes by S. Lane-Poole (London).
3. Books about Muhammad and Islam

1697 Humphrey Prideaux (Dean of Norwich), The True Nature of Imposture Displayed in the Life of Mahomet with a Discourse Annexed for Vindicating of Christianity from the Charge (London).

1776-88 Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, 6 vols. (London). Chapter 50 deals with the rise of Muhammad.


1861 Sir William Muir, The Life of Mohammad (Edinburgh); reprinted, 1876, 1894.

1868 John P. Brown, The Darvishes or Oriental Spiritualism (London).

1874 R. Bosworth Smith, Mohammad and Mohammedanism: Lectures Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain (London); second edition, revised and enlarged, 1876; third edition, enlarged, 1889.

1875 T. P. Hughes, Notes on Mohammadanism (London).

1885 T. P. Hughes, Dictionary of Islam (London).
1893 Edward Granville Browne, A Year Amongst the Persians (London).

4. Dates of Composition of Conrad's Early Works

1889-94 Almayer's Folly.
1894-95 An Outcast of the Islands.
1896 "The Lagoon."
1897 "Karain."
1899-1900 Lord Jim.

Most of the information given in this appendix is derived from the British Museum Catalogue of Printed Books (London, 1961-66).
Peter Ivanovitch's pretensions to being a holy figure of revolution were far more explicit in the manuscript of the novel, where there is even a direct comparison between Ivanovitch and Christ. In the manuscript, Ivanovitch comments, "I have dwelt forty days in the wilderness and I know what the Prince of Darkness is like" (fol. 463). He also compares himself with the prophets of Israel (fol. 469) and speaks of the need for a new gospel (fol. 482). He is said to have spent a night with Madame de S— "in tears and on his knees seeing visions and waiting for a final feminist revelation" (fol. 500). The titles of his works are announced as "The Resurrection of Yegor," "The Pride of Darkness" and "Parables of Decay" (fol. 591), which sound both biblical and Tolstoyan. The final view, as presented by the novel, is less blatant, yet, as has been seen, it still retains this sense of a prophetic figure.

Also of interest are some of the early sections of the manuscript, where the narrator appears to be reporting on the state of Razumov's religious faith and, indirectly, on his own:

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1 Quotations from the manuscript of Under Western
All the fluctuations of his feelings, all the perplexities of his spirit in short, all the profound trouble of his existence is set down with a terrible minuten of selfexamination interspersed with long speculative passages in a declamatory style. In places he apostrophizes the Deity with considerable violence and bitterness. But this violence and bitterness are robbed of all unpleasant quality and blasphemous character by the consideration that Mr. Razumov held no religious faith or belief of any kind.

A friend of mine a few days ago said that the story of each single life and especially of an atheist's life is [2 letters after 'life' deleted] a wonderful record of God's dealings with man. To this I would add that there are lives—to such as of an obscure teacher of languages to be for instance—which seem forgotten by the God and perhaps for that very reason disdained by the devil. It is sufficiently clear that the life of Kirylo Sidorovitch Razumov was not of that kind. Whatever light was vouchsafed to it, one will be able to deny that it is touched by the gloom of the bottomless pit. (fols. 9-11)

This picture of Razumov—bitterly apostrophising a deity in which he does not believe—seems an exercise in futility, though there may be some point if it is the deities of autocracy and revolution that stir his wrath. The sense of the narrator as being "forgotten by God" and "disdained by the devil" is also less pronounced in the final version which is, therefore, less

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Eyes are taken from Emily K. Izsak, "'Under Western Eyes and the Problems of Serial Publication," Review of English Studies, 23 (1972), 439-42.

Among Tolstoy's works are Resurrection (1899) and The Power of Darkness (1886).
specific with each of the three characters that have been considered. As was noted at the beginning of chapter nine, it is Conrad's practice to make his characters avoid direct answers to the question of faith. In the published book, therefore, Razumov's lack of belief is not so bluntly stated; there are even times when he is tempted to regard himself as an agent of Providence (UWE, 301)—the mystical view that Prince K--- and Councillor Mikulin incline to. Ironically, belief here would lead to destruction; destruction, that is, of a spiritual kind (or of his peace of mind). Only by forgoing that belief can Razumov find spiritual peace or peace of mind, though at the cost of physical mutilation, which brings out, as it were, the spiritual mutilation that was present previously.
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Within the Tides


The Shadow-Line


The Arrow of Gold


The Rescue


The Rover


2. General


