THREE TYPES OF IRONY

IN THE

NOVELS OF JOSEPH CONRAD

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ABSTRACT

Although the notion of irony occurs frequently in the criticism of Joseph Conrad's works, little effort has been made to discuss the various possibilities for different types of irony and their manifestations in the literature. This thesis is a textual examination of the different types of irony in the major fiction of Conrad. In the critical accounts of Conrad's irony, the notion of irony is usually synonymous with a straightforward form like satire with an accompanying contention of narratorial moral presupposition. However, in this thesis, three types of irony are explored: specific, general, Romantic (D.C. Muecke's terms).

The irony issues from the sustained organising structures of the works--character interrelationships, dramatic irony, retrospective narratives, inconsistent narrators--and the verbal irony of the narrators in their act of narrating. The essential element of irony is a juxtaposition of incongruous elements--in either its structural or verbal form--which indicates that the ostensible meaning of a particular context is in need of dismantling and reconstruction. Accordingly, detecting irony constitutes a search for incongruity, paradox, contradiction, or ambivalence, and then determining to what extent the narrator has control over the linguistic duality. The three types of irony mentioned above have distinct functions: specific ironists admonish, general ironists
acknowledge that a given character is in a predicament that deserves some sympathy, and Romantic ironists (whose source is the aphoristic thought of the German Romantic, Friedrich Schlegel) see all existence as illusory and seek a multiplicity of intellectual perspectives, eventually establishing the irony as dialectical.

It becomes clear that the narrators, the architects of the irony, consistently explore the viability of an idealised identity in a harsh and uncompromising reality, external to the transmutations of an idealising imagination. Further scrutiny shows that the best way of exploring idealism in Conrad is through acknowledging the presence of a form of quixotism, by which several of Conrad's characters seek aggrandisement through a powerfully idealised notion of their identity, which fuels their sense of adventure even to the point of bizarre severance from their surrounding physical or social environment. Quixotism in Conrad's fiction does not deal only with a parodied chivalry; the notion is extended to apply more generally to the obsessive psychological commitment to an ideal. Although the notion of quixotism has been noted before in Conrad's fiction, it has usually carried with it pejorative connotations. Examination of the fiction indicates that while parody, as a form of specific irony, is linked with quixotism, the irony of quixotism at its most complex level becomes a sophisticated narratorial scrutiny of the various illusions by which characters fashion their identities. This type of irony generates in Marlow's two early narratives, *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, an incorrigible self-reflectiveness, which extends even to Marlow's self-consciousness in his role of narrator and
instigates the scrutiny of the efficacy of language to convey effectively the complexity of experience.

The early fiction is examined briefly, and it is shown that the essential ingredients of Marlow's irony are already present in the fiction, but several factors mitigate against the construction of elaborate ironic mechanisms. The rest of the fiction discussed is seen in contrast to the irony of Marlow's two early narratives, and it is shown that the fiction after these two novels, with the exception of *The Secret Agent*, does not sustain the same complex ironic structures.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations of the titles of Conrad's novels have been used within the text of the thesis:

AF : Almayer's Folly
K : "Karain"
OP : "An Outpost of Progress"
R : "The Return"
NN : The Nigger of the "Narcissus"
T : Typhoon
LJ : Lord Jim
Y : Youth
HD : Heart of Darkness
N : Nostromo
SA : The Secret Agent
UWE : Under Western Eyes
PR : A Personal Record
SS : "The Secret Sharer"
C : Chance
V : Victory
WT : Within the Tides

* * * * *
INTRODUCTION

The word irony is protean in its definition and critical usage. Finding the notion of irony in disarray to the point where it had lost much of its critical usefulness, D.C. Muecke attempts to look at a wide variety of examples and deduce the common elements of an ironic context. As he points out, various names have been given to the different kinds of irony, for example: tragic irony, comic irony, irony of Fate, dramatic irony. He argues:

Clearly, there could be several mutually independent (and separately inadequate) classifications of the 'kinds' of irony, each based upon a different point of view; but merely to go on inventing and using as occasion requires such a scatter of terms as I have listed will ensure that one never sees any ordered relationship between the kinds and consequently never gets a clear picture of the whole range or compass of irony.

Critics of Conrad's works have indeed tended to use a "scatter of terms" to describe his ironic strategies. The lack of a systematisation of the term has led many critics to make contradictory or erroneous claims for the irony. On the strength of a literary reviewer's remarks, Brown places Conrad within Greek traditions of irony, singling out the Socratic and Sophoclean modes. However, although these descriptions of the irony could conceivably contain some usefulness, she also claims that Conrad's irony was not a "deliberate" formulation but "intuitive." Karl also makes contradictory claims. At one
point he writes: "My aim has been to fit Conrad into Henry James's ironic, mocking, witty sense of human experience. . . ."5 Although he focuses there on social satire, at another point he writes: "... Conrad intertwined his politics with matters of tone, texture, irony, all of them indescribable matters."6 Hewitt, in discussing Marlow's narration of *Lord Jim*, dismisses the narratorial ambivalence (which I see as a key component of the irony) as aesthetically invalid; he calls Marlow inexcusably "muddled."7

Brown's refusal to see Conrad's irony as anything more than intuitive eventually leads her analysis into further contradiction. In discussing *Heart of Darkness*, she concentrates on what she calls "pure verbal irony" as the predominant ironic mode through which Marlow criticises the fatuity of European imperialism.8 Verbal irony by its very nature is a well wrought art, a deliberate and conscious manipulation of language for rhetorical effect. Hewitt's dismissal of Marlow's uncertainty as indicative of the fact that Marlow and Conrad could not make up their minds ignores the possibility that uncertainty and ambivalence could be the axis of Conrad's aesthetics of irony. Karl's second statement about irony points to a problem not only in Conrad criticism but also, as Muecke points out, in literary analysis in general. The lack of systematisation of the term irony leads critics to indicate tentative allegiances (Brown shows unexamined links with the Greeks, and Karl suggests links with James), without providing a thorough scrutiny of the various ironic contexts, their constituent elements, types, and modes.

Various theoreticians set up critical grids by which irony can be made a useful analytical tool and also indicate the
various types and modes. Booth sees irony as falling into two
distinct types—stable and unstable irony. With stable irony,
we can be sure of the ground by which a victim or object of the
irony is being undermined. In an unstable irony, the base from
which the undermining proceeds contains no such unequivocal
certainty. Muecke's book is based on a similar principle. He
uses the term "Specific Irony" (which corresponds to Booth's
notion of "stable irony") and "General Irony" (corresponding to
Booth's "unstable irony"). 9 Knox differentiates these two types
as "rhetorical irony" and "irony of manner," originating from
Socratic dialectic. 10 In setting up a critical grid by which
the major novels of Conrad can be examined, I will use
predominately Muecke's phraseology, as his book contains the
clearest elucidation of the distinctive types. Having examined
his notions of the various types of irony, I will illustrate
how the critical approaches of Gekoski, Watt, and Guérard
provide a useful starting point for analysis.

Firstly, for Muecke irony is a "double-layered or two-
storey phenomenon. At the lower level is the situation either
as it appears to the victim of irony . . . or as it is
decievously presented by the ironist." Secondly, "there is
always some kind of opposition between the two levels, an
opposition that may take the form of contradiction, incongruity,
or incompatibility." Thirdly, "there is in irony an element of
'innocence'; either a victim is confidently unaware of the very
possibility of there being an upper level or point of view that
invalidates his own, or an ironist pretends not to be aware of
it." 11 As Muecke explains, sarcasm represents one exception to
this feature of irony. Muecke calls ironies that work in the
straightforward manner prescribed above examples of "Simple
Irony" or "Specific Irony."

Booth, focusing on the reader's response to an ironic text, contends that four steps are necessary for a correct interpretation of the irony: (1) reject the literal meaning as untenable, (2) consider a series of alternative meanings including the possibility that the speaker is stupid or ill-informed, (3) make inferences about the speaker's probable knowledge and attitudes, and (4) decide on the basis of these putative attitudes which of the various possibilities in step two has most credence. 12

When irony works in this normal fashion, it is largely censorious. However, it becomes more complicated when the term at the bottom level is not completely invalidated. Then we are near a "Double Irony" sequence, where the ironist feels himself attached in some way to the elements of the lower rung. Muecke elucidates the notion of double irony with an example which I quote in full, because it has a specific usefulness to this thesis:

A common view of Don Quixote sees Cervantes as using Sancho Panza's realism to ironize Don Quixote's idealism and at the same time using Don Quixote's idealism to ironize Sancho Panza's realism. Idealistic and realistic behaviour are both right and both wrong. Without Don Quixote Sancho Panza would appear neither so gross nor so sensible; without Sancho Panza Don Quixote would appear neither so noble nor so foolish.

Muecke's analysis of the difference between normal and double irony is succinct and important:

Ironies of this kind do not function as simple correctives. It is not these ironies that we find in satire or comedy or wherever else it is desired simply to correct absurdities of opinion or behaviour. Simple
corrective irony is effective at the point at which we pass from an apprehension of the ironic incongruity to a more or less immediate recognition of the invalidity of the ironist's pretended or the victim's confidently held view. Psychic tension is generated but rapidly released. In this other kind, however, the psychic tension generated by the ironic contradiction is not released or not entirely released by any element of resolution since the ironist or the ironical observer remains, to some extent, involved in the irony.13

The first kind of irony discussed above falls into the category of Muecke's notion of specific irony, which he says is characteristic of a society with a more or less "closed ideology," a society whose values are more or less established and unquestioned, and whose members as a body are "'assured of certain certainties.'" However, the safe vantage point from which the specific ironist works can itself come under threat. Muecke suggests that from the sixteenth century onwards men became more and more aware of fundamental contradictions in life. When this awareness dawns, the new hero is Progress and "the new villains are the obstacles to free growth and development: customs, laws, institutions, and to some extent, even civilisation, systematic thinking, and art." Muecke sees this ideology as of central importance in the history of irony and the source of a phenomenon which he calls "General Irony."14

General irony has two parts, "objective" and "subjective":

'Objectively', General Irony lies in those contradictions, apparently fundamental and irremediable, that confront men when they speculate upon such topics as the origin and purpose of the universe, free will and determinism, reason and instinct, the scientific and the imaginative, ends and means, society and the individual, art and life, knowing and being, self-consciousness (what is conscious of what?), the meaning of meaning, and the value of value. Most of
these, it may be said, are reducible to one great incongruity, the appearance of free and self-valued but temporally finite egos in a universe that seems to be utterly alien, utterly purposeless, completely deterministic, and incomprehensibly vast.

Muecke is quick to point out that the ironist's concern is "with the world as men see or have seen it and not with the world as it is or may be." Consequently, the objective element of general irony soon slides into the subjective:

Subjectively, General Irony lies in our response to what we see, truly or falsely, as fundamental contradictions and paradoxes in life, contradictions that strike us not simply as puzzles—this would result only in trivial ironies—but as predicaments many of which have forced men into a realization of their essential and terrifying loneliness in relation to others or to the universe at large. . . . The ironic attitude of a 'General Ironist' is complicated by his own equivocal position. On the one hand his sense of irony implies detachment, and since the irony he perceives is General Irony, as I have defined it, he will be detached from life itself or at least from that general aspect of life in which he perceives a fundamental contradiction. On the other hand, the picture he sees of an ironic world must show himself as a victim. So he is at the same time involved and detached, both within and without the ironic situation . . . and his response will not be a simple one. 15

The simultaneous involvement and detachment of the ironist makes for the duality of the irony as he confronts the predicament of another character. It is this dual response which characterises several of Conrad's narrators. Muecke's theory provides early rebuttal to Hewitt's contentions about Marlow's "muddlement." As I will illustrate later, Marlow has a sustained predilection for double irony as the only method of adequately dealing with the general predicaments of characters like Jim and Kurtz.

Conrad himself says little on the subject of irony.
However, he did write reviews of the works of various authors in which he uses the word irony. In particular, his use of "irony" in discussing Galsworthy's work is useful. In an essay on Galsworthy (1906) he wrote:

The foundation of this talent, it seems to me, lies in a remarkable power of ironic insight combined with an extremely keen and faithful eye for all the phenomena on the surface of the life he observes.16

But, earlier in a letter to Galsworthy (1901), he had written:

The fact is you want more scepticism at the very foundation of your work. Scepticism, the tonic of minds, the tonic of life, the agent of truth,—the way of art and salvation. . . . Your attitude to them [characters] should be purely intellectual, more independent, freer, less rigorous than it is. You seem, for their sake, to hug your conceptions of right and wrong too closely. There is exquisite atmosphere in your tales. What they want now is more air.17

It can be construed that in the essay Conrad praises Galsworthy for his handling of what Muecke calls specific ironies. In the letter, however, he laments that Galsworthy is not what Muecke would call a general ironist, that Galsworthy is morally presumptive rather than morally evaluative. Here I contend that Conrad exposes his own perspective as much as he elucidates Galsworthy's.

Three critics, Gekoski, Guérard and Watt develop more detailed arguments about Conrad's scepticism. In *Conrad: the Moral World of the Novelist*, Gekoski defines the word "temperament" as "the 'angle of vision' that a man takes upon himself and upon his world," and comes to the conclusion, largely from Conrad's non-fictional writings (letters, prefaces,
and autobiographical works) that Conrad asserts "two very different value systems, which have been variously referred to as public and private, social and individual, or committed and alienated." On the one hand, Gekoski asserts, Conrad stresses the private and individual nature of man's existence (he calls this Conrad's "'vision of personal autonomy'"), while on the other hand he also affirms the public and moral obligations of human existence (he calls this Conrad's "'vision of social responsibility'").

Gekoski argues that the best of Conrad's fiction holds the balance between an individual's autonomy and his social responsibilities and keeps them in the greatest tension:

> He is interested in the riskiness of values. In those situations which call on a man to act both towards his own self-interest (which, from one point of view, is the only genuine interest that he can have) and towards the interests of some given order (which, from another, is equally imperative), lies the ground of the characteristically Conradian moral issue. . . . Conrad's 'vulnerable heroes' (to use Moser's term), make decisions that are only marginally errors; Jim's jump or Razumov's betrayal of Haldin are important as acts which respond to the ambiguous or contradictory demands on the average man.

Obviously, this ambiguity or contradiction is caused by the "tension" between the two value systems, and Gekoski makes a far more useful statement about the scrutiny of irony in Conrad than Karl provides, for he says that this tension becomes the "logical ground for irony."

Two other critics corroborate this argument of Gekoski's. Guérard constructs a list of dualities in Conrad's work. I will cite a few of them:
A declared fear of the corrosive and faith-destroying intellect—doubled by a profound and ironic scepticism;
A declared belief that ethical matters are simple—doubled by an extraordinary sense of ethical complexities . . .
A declared commitment to authoritarian sea tradition—doubled by a pronounced individualism . . .

The list of dualities continues, but the point is made. Guérard declares that we find in this conflict the "psycho-moral foundations of the Conrad "world.""\textsuperscript{22} Gekoski and Guérard draw their conclusions from the writings, both fictional and non-fictional. Watt, in \textit{Conrad in the Nineteenth Century}, draws on biographical material. Conrad, according to Watt, was a man who in appearance and build resembled his father, whom Conrad himself describes in a letter to E. Garnett in 1900: "A man of great sensibilities; of exalted and dreamy temperament; with a terrible gift of irony and of gloomy disposition. . . ."\textsuperscript{23} But, as the ward of his maternal uncle, Conrad was to come under the influence of a thoroughly different temperament, a man who would argue:

\begin{center}
If both Individuals and Nations were to make 'duty' their aim, instead of the ideal of greatness, the world would certainly be a better place than it is! . . . The devotion to duty interpreted more widely or narrowly, according to circumstances and time—this constitutes my practical creed [which] may be of some use to you.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{center}

Watt argues that Bobrowski's values became "indispensable as ballast to keep Conrad on an even keel," but that they "were hardly likely to provide much creative momentum." For this latter element, Watt contends, his father's inheritance was essential, and as Bobrowski saw, these paternal attributes were in conflict with Conrad's life as a seaman: "Both in you as an
individual and in what you have inherited from your parents I
detect the dreamer—in spite of your very practical profession
—or perhaps because of it?" Then Watt virtually re-states
Gekoski's notion of tension and Guérard's of duality by saying
that "The tension in Conrad between the practical ethic on the
one hand, and the disillusioned pessimism of the Romantic
visionary on the other, pervades the whole of his creative
world." 25

Although this tension has often been discussed, its
implications for Conrad's irony have not been fully explored.
Indeed, as I have already stated, Hewitt does not see the
tension in Marlow's narrative as aesthetically valid.
Conversely, however, Wilde argues that oppositions can remain
in genuine antithesis. Modernist fiction, he argues, is
characterised by what he calls "absolute irony: the conception
of equal and opposed possibilities held in a state of total
poise, or, more briefly still, the shape of an indestructible,
unresolvable paradox." 26 It is interesting to note that Gekoski
examines Conrad's fiction in Wilde's terms, replacing the word
poise with the words "complementarity" and "synthesis":

I have briefly demarcated what are ostensibly
two sides of a paradox, a matrix of apparent
conflict out of which emerged the novels and
tales of Joseph Conrad. It seems impossible to
reconcile these two visions, the one asserting
the absolute loneliness and tragedy of the
individual in a world without values, the other
stressing human solidarity, and demanding self-
sacrifice, loyalty to the group, and an
unreflective stoicism. The judgement that
Conrad is obscure surely arises here. But what
must be recognized—this is crucial to an
understanding of Conrad—is not only that the
two aspects of Conrad's thought are not
irreconcilable, but that they are complementary. 27

Later Gekoski writes:
The artist, then, does not attempt to synthesize the poles of the dialectic of which I have been speaking, but instead to effect a creative release of the sympathies engaged by the 'spectacle' of man's fate. 28

If, as Gekoski claims, the poles of the dialectic are not synthesised (by which he means reconciled), we need to examine the relative status of each term of the paradox, for there are two possible outcomes for paradoxical formulations. We need to consider not only whether the terms remain in genuine antithesis but also the contention of Derrida that all oppositions are implicitly hierarchical. 29 If this is so, one of the terms is always more valued. Such a claim is interesting in terms of Conrad criticism. In relation to Conrad's work, this would mean that the paramount impulse is either "personal autonomy," as Glassman suggests, or "social responsibility" as Najder suggests. 30 Najder sees Conrad within a Polish tradition: "... his moral awareness is stated in social, not individual terms; in terms of duties and obligations, not in terms of conscience and self-perfection." 31

Watt and Kirschner, however, disagree. By locating Lord Jim in a tradition of German Romanticism, they implicitly highlight the impulse of personal autonomy. Watt writes:

"Today, Romantic idealism may seem somewhat simplminded; but it was the dominant cultural and literary force when Conrad grew up. He no doubt learned something about the two German authors he cites in Lord Jim—Novalis and Goethe—from the German element in his Cracow schooling; and in any case, one can hardly do justice to Lord Jim without coming to terms with the Romantic outlook." 32

Watt goes on to say that "One of the main residual legacies of the Romantic movement was a disheartened awareness of the
discrepancy which the individual imagination is continually
discovering between the self as it is and the self as it would
like to be."\(^{33}\) Kirschner in *Ariel* agrees with such an assess-
ment. He sees Stein as the real tragic hero of *Lord Jim*,
because he acknowledges "an eminently Goethean and a traditional
German theme: the tempting abyss between the gift of imagination
and the ordinary demands and consolations of life."\(^{34}\) Thorburn
suggests that the discrepancy originates from the "incompleteness"
of narratorial language: "The drama of Marlow's rhetoric is a
drama of Romantic aspiration and failure, a drama in which
vividly precise scenic details are juxtaposed against an abstract
commentary which continually calls that scenic vividness into
question or which insists on its radical incompleteness."\(^{35}\)

The difference in critical opinion regarding the status
of paradox and the relative status of each of the terms
necessitates a study of the narrators of Conrad's texts.
Clearly, we must consider the narrators as ironists. On
examining their perspectives on the particular paradoxes, we
will be able to determine what happens to the tension
established textually. The focus of this thesis is on the
narrators who establish the characters and sometimes themselves
as being caught in the tension between the two systems outlined
above. Inevitably, in nominating the narrators as ironists, it
is crucial to discover the element in the narratorial mechanism
which demarcates the speaker as superior in perceptiveness to
the character he is analysing and which thereby establishes the
narrator as a resident of the top storey of the two-storey
ironic mechanism. Indeed, there are several times when the
narrator's surety of perspective is undermined. Mitchell in
*Nostrono*, for example, is not a reliable narrator.
Many other narrators do establish that their characters are caught in the predicaments worthy of general irony. But there are important distinctions to be made about the functions of these narrators. In the early novel, *Almayer's Folly*, and in the early short story, "An Outpost of Progress," the narrators are aloof in a manner that Watt likens to the hauteur of Maupassant and Flaubert. However, in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, "Karain," *Heart of Darkness*, and *Lord Jim*, the narrators are both involved and detached, and consequently in these later texts there is a discernible duality in the irony, which is not present in the former texts. The merely aloof narrators are able to generate the tensions implicit in a general irony situation, but they concentrate on what Muecke calls the objective element of that ironic mechanism. Recalling Muecke's contention that the objective element of general irony is usually "reducible to one great incongruity, the appearance of free and self-valued but temporally finite egos in a universe that seems to be utterly alien," we can see that the aloof narrators succeed in dramatising that incongruity. Almayer's dreams of petty bourgeois success are shattered; Kayerts, adrift from his cherished securities, becomes terrifyingly alone on the island; and Hervey is forced to see the sham of his previous social allegiances. Nevertheless, missing from the textual dramatisation of the dilemmas of these characters is the self-reflectiveness on the part of the narrators. However, the narrators who are both involved and detached introduce that extra ingredient into the ironic mechanism. Their narratives are retrospective accounts of contacts with adventurers, who are often antisocial. The characters of these texts have a greater symbolic status and figure as aspects of the narrators'
memory, as they try to make sense of their contact with outlaws. In these narrations, we must concentrate not only on the objective aspects of the irony but also on the subjective elements of the narrators' personal anxiety. The most important of this type of narrator is Marlow, and the irony of his early narratives, *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, demands much closer scrutiny than hitherto has been shown.

Through his contact with Kurtz and Jim, Marlow has his own value system drastically altered. At the point of beginning his narratives, he indicates that he cannot simply evaluate his contact with the adventurers with the cast-iron surety of perspective provided by *maritime* traditions. Hence, Marlow's narratives show persistent evidence of ambivalence, contradiction, and paradox as he tries to come to terms with the conflicting claims of the Conway code and the anarchy of the outlaws. The distinguishing factor between the aloof narrators and Marlow is that the latter signals textually that the adventurers have made sufficient impact on him to initiate an internal paradox. Marlow appreciates the duality in his own perspective, and consequently Muecke's description of the psychic tension generated by double irony is most useful. In Marlow's narratives, the tension generated by paradox is not entirely released, because the narrator remains involved in the irony.

The irony which issues from Marlow's dramatisation of his anxiety at confronting threats to his previous allegiances needs more attention than either of the concepts of double irony and general irony will provide. It is my contention that the general irony achieved in *Almayer's Folly* becomes Romantic irony in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. I
will now elucidate what I mean by this latter term and after that discussion indicate what happens to the irony of the narrators of the novels *Nostromo, The Secret Agent, Under Western Eyes, Chance,* and *Victory.*

In order to elucidate the term Romantic irony, I will look more closely at Marlow's narratives, because he is the most dynamic and important of the retrospective narrators, and his narrations instigate considerable critical controversy. The tension between the two systems of personal autonomy and social responsibility is evident in Marlow's narration at the beginning of *Heart of Darkness* (where he is speaking of the Roman colonists):

"... They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind—as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. ..."  

He uses a moral reprimand ("It was just robbery with violence ...") and then reverses it with the word "proper," which signals that he has an understanding of and initial endorsement of flagrant anarchy. Such a reaction concurs with Muecke's notion of double irony and reveals Marlow's capacity for a poised stance between oppositions.

It is my contention that this poise results from a paradox whose terms Marlow allows to remain in genuine antithesis. As I will show in detail later, Marlow oscillates between the oppositions of personal autonomy and social responsibility, enthusiastically showing allegiance to each of the respective poles and then sceptically denouncing any whole-hearted, uncritical endorsement. It is this oscillation which Hewitt
sees as "muddlement," whereas I argue that it is the axis of the ironic mechanism.

Muecke and Wilde state that the kind of irony which creates indestructible ironic formulations has its origins in German Romantic irony; they both contend that the modern, post-satiric irony has its roots in German Romantic theory and that the leading theoretician of that period was Friedrich Schlegel. Indeed it is generally agreed that Friedrich Schlegel introduced the notion of Romantic irony to literary discussion.

Most of Friedrich Schlegel's comments on irony occur in the *Lyceum Fragments* (1797), the *Athenaeum Fragments* (1798) and *Ideas* (1800). 39 It becomes obvious that his formative mind (at this stage of speculations on irony he was en route to a conversion to Roman Catholicism) composed provocative but sometimes impenetrable fragments, never systematically or definitively expounded. Accordingly, some of his comments are open to a subjectivist interpretation, as Wellek points out. 40 Nevertheless, there is a consistency of theme in the formulations on irony, and they illustrate very clearly how the focus of irony changed its reference from satire to a more comprehensive vision of existence.

In the *Fragments*, philosophising is primarily a matter of intuitive insights, not of deductive reasoning. There is strong evidence of an exalted creative self, an apotheosis of the artistic ego, caught between the limits of the finite and the necessity for but impossibility of attaining the infinite. In Schlegel's aphoristic criticism, it is this striving after an unattainable infinite which makes Romantic poetry or art be romantic; it is always becoming, never complete. This idea is expressed in *Athenaeum* fragment 116:
The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected. It can be exhausted by no theory... It alone is infinite, just as it alone is free; and it recognises as its first commandment that the will of the poet can tolerate no law above itself. (A,116)

Schlegel has had his critics largely on the grounds that his thought was unsystematised. The lack of systematisation constitutes the ground for Kierkegaard's attack on Schlegel and led to his accusation of eccentric subjectivity, especially regarding the manifestation of Romantic irony in Lucinde. Copleston points out that "romantic feeling for the infinite was not infrequently a feeling for the indefinite." It is this wilful romantic extravaganza (tolerating no law above itself) which Babbit reviles in his attack on Romanticism and Romantic irony.

Romanticism for Friedrich Schlegel is a new artistic credo which finds the limits of classical art claustrophobic. In "Talk on Mythology" from Dialogue on Poetry, Schlegel's character, Ludovico, advocates that the moderns feel the absence of a "firm basis" or "matrix" for their activity and that the "modern poet must create all these things from within himself." Later in this text it becomes apparent that the highest order to be expressed in art is paradoxically that of "chaos" ("But the highest beauty, indeed the highest order is yet only that of chaos" [DP,82]). The best expressions of this chaos are to be found in the works of Shakespeare and Cervantes, in whom Ludovico finds a great similarity to the "marvellous wit of romantic poetry" (DP,86):

Indeed, this artfully ordered confusion, this charming symmetry of contradictions, this
The phrase "perennial alternation of enthusiasm and irony" used by Ludovico above occurs frequently in the *Fragments*, in one form or another, amidst Friedrich Schlegel's consideration of artistic self-consciousness. There he deals with the subjective element, the attitude of the artist to his own creativity. Schlegel saw art as a self-conscious dialectic between creativity and destruction. Caught between the restrictions of the finite and the necessity for striving for the unobtainable infinite, the artist is compelled to create and de-create. In *Lyceum* fragments 28, 37, and *Athenaeum* fragment 51, Schlegel sees irony as a constant alternation between "self-creation" and "self-destruction." Irony is a dialectical process, permitting the author's mood to rise "infinitely above all limitations, even above its own art, virtue, or genius" (*L*42). In *Lyceum* fragment 108, Schlegel describes the insoluble conflict between "the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and necessity of complete communication." The creative process is deciphered as containing two antagonistic powers: creative enthusiasm counter-
balanced by scepticism.

The ancient notion of irony as a dissembling device is retained—here the artist dissembles his own creation. More specifically, Romantic irony is not an irony against Romanticism: the function of irony does not reside in the destruction of creative enthusiasm, but rather, in a mediating position between enthusiasm and scepticism. In moving between creation and destruction, the artist oscillates between opposite poles. This idea of oscillation is expressed in *Athenaeum* fragment 53: "It's equally fatal for the mind to have a system and to have none. It will simply have to decide to combine the two" (A,53). The result of this hovering over the literary product is "infinite power," but in order to be obtained it must be attended by "self-restriction":

... self-restriction, which is after all, for the artist as well as the man, the first and the last, the most necessary and the highest duty. Most necessary because wherever one does not restrict oneself, one is restricted by the world; and that makes one a slave. The highest because one can only restrict oneself at those points and places where one possesses infinite power, self-creation, and self-destruction. (L,37)

Schlegel is concerned to find a mediation between the opposites of "finite" and "infinite." If an artist believes he has access to the "infinite," he is deluded, for the world will eventually restrict him. Thus, if the artist does not acknowledge this limitation, he becomes the slave of external influence. That is why self-restriction is "necessary." The consequence of an artist working at his peak is "infinite power," but, as Schlegel reiterates, the artist, because of his knowledge of the impoverishment of limits and the impossibility of attaining
infinite creativity, must both create and destroy his fiction. He calls this mediation and control, self-restriction. The consequence of this aesthetic hovering and self-restriction is that the artist can control the dynamic dialectic:

An idea is a concept perfected to the point of irony, an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts. (A,121)

The above quotation reveals itself to be the source of Wilde's definition of modernist irony. I agree with Anne Mellor's gloss on the word "synthesis" in the above passage. It does not mean resolution but juxtaposition, given not only the context above but also Schlegel's other aphorisms, where he stresses that irony consists of the unresolved dynamic of juxtaposed opposites: self-creation and self-destruction, system and no system, enthusiasm and scepticism. Irony in the context above consists of the ability to hold two ideas in the mind at the same time and find one's creativity in the dialectic between oppositions.

The ability to be ironic, in the manner described in Athenaeum fragment 121, characterises what Schlegel elsewhere calls "Socratic irony":

Socratic irony is the only involuntary and yet completely deliberate dissimulation. It is equally impossible to feign it or divulge it. To a person who hasn't got it, it will remain a riddle even after it is openly confessed. It is meant to deceive no one except those who consider it a deception and who either take pleasure in the delightful roguery of making fools of the whole world or else become angry when they get an inkling they themselves might be included. In this sort of irony, everything should be playful and serious, guilelessly open and deeply hidden. It originates in the union of savoir vivre and scientific spirit, in the conjunction of a perfectly instinctive and a
perfectly conscious philosophy. It contains and arouses a feeling of indissoluble antagonism between the absolute and the relative, between the impossibility and the necessity of complete communication. It is the freest of all licences, for by its means one transcends oneself; and yet it is also the most lawful, for it is absolutely necessary. It is a very good sign when the harmonious bores are at a loss about how they should react to this continuous self-parody, when they fluctuate endlessly between belief and disbelief until they get dizzy and take what is meant as a joke seriously and what is meant seriously as a joke. (L,108)

The allusion to Socrates exalts his celebrated irony by which he is supposed to have belittled his own knowledge and attainments. From the standpoint of the absolute he professed to know nothing. But he also knew that his audience knew less than he. Schlegel seizes on the ancient philosopher and nominates him as the exemplar of dialectical thinking. In the above passage irony is described as the mediation between antitheses (as many of the other aphorisms also suggest), but we also have a new characteristic of irony, self-parody, to complement the previous notion of self-restriction.

The aesthetic equivalent of Socratic self-parody is termed "transcendental buffoonery." When we shift to this latter notion we move from the ironist's attitude to the world to his attitude towards his art. Logically, if the ironist did not adopt an ironical attitude towards his art, he would be imprisoned in its finiteness. As shown above, Ludovico seeks a new mythology to escape the confines of classical art and express the dynamism of "chaos." This aspect of irony is commented on in the fragments:

In order to write well about something, one shouldn't be interested in it any longer. (L,37)
Internally: the mood that surveys everything and rises infinitely above all limitations, even above its own art, virtue, or genius; externally, in its execution: the mimic style of an averagely gifted Italian buffo. (L, 42)

Wessell describes this aesthetic aspect of irony thus:

In other words, before spiritual becoming can be made aesthetically manifest to human consciousness, it first must be posited as determinate objects (for example, specific characters, events, plots, actions, etc.). But determination is the principle behind all form or structure. That which is determined has this essence or form and not that one. As such all determination implies order. The essence of order is, of course, the principle of klassische Kunst. However, the poet cannot rest content with the objective, "classical" content of his artistic creation without losing sight of the infinite activity underlying all finite determination. 47

Although this is a generalised account of the aesthetic aspect of Schlegel's irony, and clearly is in the spirit of the aphorisms, it steers clear of controversy, which, Wellek argues, has arisen through subjectivist interpretations. While it is clear from the aphorisms that this irony demands the author's acknowledgement of the limitation of any particular literary form, Wellek contends that there is no evidence that Schlegel found irony in the constant interference of the author in his work (the device of the parabasis, that is, a speech in the name of the poet delivered to the audience in the middle of the play). The only potential allusion to irony of this kind occurs in Lyceum fragment 42. Although Muecke sees this aspect as illustrative of Romantic irony, particularly in relation to Tieck and others, who practised what he calls Proto-Romantic irony, Wellek points out that at the time Schlegel composed the fragments, "he did not know Tieck's comedies and he never
considered them realizations of his ideals.\textsuperscript{48}

Schlegel's own works, particularly 	extit{Dialogue on Poetry} and 	extit{Lucinde}, by using a variety of literary forms (letters, critical essays, poems, dialogue, historical surveys, allegories), give an indication of the Romantic ironist's never ending quest for meaning by employing a profusion of disparate forms. Schlegel himself says of 	extit{Dialogue on Poetry}:

\begin{quote}
... the present dialogue ... is intended to set against one another quite divergent opinions, each of them capable of shedding new light upon the infinite spirit of poetry from an individual standpoint, each of them striving to penetrate from a different angle into the real heart of the matter. (DP,55)
\end{quote}

Behler and Struc comment on this process:

Moreover, the dialogue form allows the author to present his previous philosophical and critical positions, even if they stand in opposition to his later points of view. By including such contradictory stages, the work mirrors thinking-in-progress, the continuous struggle to overcome former positions in the manner in which thinking actually proceeds.\textsuperscript{49}

In this way the work itself, without the artificial device of the parabasis, draws attention to its own becoming.

In summary, Schlegel's notions see the Aristotelian notion of mimesis as no longer sufficient, for there is no fixed reality to be mirrored without taking account of the artist's vision. Consequently, perspectivism and the process of making meaning dominate the thought of the 	extit{Fragments} and 	extit{Dialogue on Poetry}. Muecke summarises succinctly:

\begin{quote}
Caught between his aspirations for an ideal he knows is beyond his reach and his limitations of which he is equally aware, the only possibility for the ironist is a continual dialectic process of ironic affirmations and
\end{quote}
We are left with establishing those elements of Schlegel's formulations on irony which assist in understanding Conrad's practice of irony. The fragmentary nature of Schlegel's formulations lends itself to broad as well as specific classifications. Interpretation is inevitably subjectivist, but, in general terms, it becomes obvious that the major theme of the aphorisms is the vitality of paradoxical vision—a vision which begins with the artist's attitude to the world and extends to his art.

It is quite clear that Schlegel's formulations arose out of a search for a Romanticism which could satisfactorily come to terms with a world conceived of as "chaos"; his formulations latterly gave rise to an endorsement of self-consciousness which could exploit the contradictory responses implicit in grappling with the limitations of the finite and the unattainable infinite. In seeking historical evidence for his insight, Ludovico in Dialogue on Poetry saw Shakespeare and Cervantes as illustrative of the romantic spirit in literary form. Schlegel saw Socrates as the master of deliberate dissembling, emphasising the self-parody, and combined the two intuitive insights to form a highly idiosyncratic aesthetic in which the artist could hover dialectically (between creation and destruction) over the literary product.

Although the intuitive nature of his formulations make them vulnerable to the charge of being a mere romantic extravaganza, the primary importance of Schlegel's insight is that it saw paradox as normal. The insight changed the function of irony from its reference to satirical modes to an indispensable
ingredient of artistic vision, whereby the artist acknowledges his own fictive patterning. Various modern critics have nominated ancient, Romantic and modern writers as Romantic ironists. Muecke includes Chaucer and Flaubert, but sees Thomas Mann as the most thoroughgoing modern representative of the form. Mellor and Simpson construct critical frameworks by which the English Romantic poets, primarily Byron, Keats, and Coleridge can be seen to exhibit Romantic irony.

It is my contention that unless we are to be satisfied with Hewitt's charge of "muddlement," it is necessary to use the resources available in Friedrich Schlegel's conceptions of irony to understand Marlow's early narratives. It is clearly possible to see uncertainty or ambivalence not only as "muddlement" but also, as Schlegel's character Ludovico states, an "artfully ordered confusion" or a "symmetry of contradictions" (DP,86).

Schlegel's formulations on irony are significant to this thesis in that they provide a framework in which Romanticism and irony are mutually interdependent. In Lord Jim, Marlow's irony against Jim is not merely a parody of romantic heroism. Much of the interpretative difficulty in that novel centres on what we make of the term Romanticism. Stein gives the romantic outlook a metaphysical dignity. His depiction of the romantic's frustration bears out Watt's and Kirschner's account of the gap between ideal and real. In talking of unfulfilled dreams, he says (as reported by Marlow): "'... Everybody knows of one or two like that,' ... 'and that is the trouble—the great trouble ...'" (LJ,217). Central to the romantic disposition is a persistent idealising ("'... but man he will never on his heap of mud keep still ...'" [LJ,213]).
The way we eventually understand the nature of Marlow's irony towards Jim's romanticism will depend on how we interpret Stein's often-quoted statement:

"'Yes! Very funny this terrible thing is. A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns—nicht WQ~f? . . . No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up. So if you ask me—how to be?' . . ." (LJ, 214)

Watt gives a detailed account of the various critical responses to the above passage, but I concur with his conclusion:

Stein presumably means that Jim, like many other, though not necessarily all other, men, ought not to renounce his romantic dreams (that is, try to climb out of the sea), but rather use them to support himself.53

And Guérard agrees:

A man is born ready to create an idealized conception of self, an ego-ideal. If he tries to escape or transcend this conception of self, he collapses. He should accept this ideal and try through action to make it "viable." (Which is very far from the frequent reading: man must learn to live with his unideal limitations.)54

There is an interpretative difficulty surrounding the phrase "destructive element." If we adhere strictly to Stein's wording, he equates the "destructive element" with romantic dreams, and yet, as Watt says, most critics "have equated the sea not with the dream but with the forces of reality which destroy it."

This sets in opposition the dream and the world, and, of course, destroys the suggestion that dreams themselves are destructive.
Watt argues:

Stein's advice fails to commend itself to the practical mind: we cannot easily imagine ourselves wanting to go on treading water forever if there is no prospect of rescue. In any case, why should dreams be destructive? And if Stein thinks they are, isn't he recommending self-destruction in adjuring us to "follow the dream"?55

It is possible to establish a dichotomy between the dream and the world by interpreting Stein's later advice, "In the destructive element immerse," (LJ,214) in such a way that the world becomes the "destructive element," because, as Watt says, this second use of the phrase has an "accommodating openness to almost any meaning."56 Such an interpretation involves a sleight-of-hand, for the original passage containing the phrase "destructive element" does not stand up to this reading.

It needs to be stressed, however, that the narrator creates the dichotomy between the dream and the world in Chapter 3 of Lord Jim. After the incident in that chapter, Marlow constantly endorses Jim's struggles to express his idealised notion of heroism, despite the defeats and embarrassments, until he comes near to mastering his fate. Marlow approves of Jim's dream, and, as his enthusiasm for Jim's quest increases, he sets up contrasts between Jim's idealism and the thwarting forces of reality, and between the idealising imagination and the sober imagination of more pragmatic identities. Much of the investigation of the irony in Lord Jim depends on an analysis of what Marlow makes of the dichotomy between idealism and pragmatism.

Although I have felt it necessary to stress that romantic dreams are seen as healthy by both Stein and Marlow and not
destructive, it is also possible to see Stein's phrase containing the ambiguity he expresses elsewhere (romanticism is seen as "Very good" and "very bad" [LJ, 216]). That is, while the romantic must follow his dream, the seeds of destruction exist within the very quest. This forces the character into the paradoxical situation: he must follow the dream, but it will destroy him.

Marlow is not a romantic; he is an ironist. While he is ambivalent about Stein's position, his retrospective narration provides evidence of a growing sympathy for the idealist. In the process of change in his own perspective he gives these varying perspectives:

(a) "... 'Did you expect us all to sit with downcast eyes out of regard for your susceptibilities?' ..." (LJ, 71)

(b) "... No doubt he was selfish, too, but his selfishness had a higher origin, a more lofty aim. ..." (LJ, 153)

(c) "... With every instant he was penetrating deeper into the impossible world of romantic achievements. ..." (LJ, 83)

Not only is there an obvious conflict in the above statements but also, as they are listed, there is a discernible progression in thought, which is indicative of Romantic irony. At the core of his narrative is a paradox, never resolved. Marlow himself admits to a doubt about the validity of the fixed standard for organising a life. Once he has admitted this doubt, he is forced to look at the opposite extreme, romanticism. In finding the maritime world claustrophobic (he departs from the fixed allegiances of Brierly and the French Lieutenant) and the infinite world impossible to attain (as quotation (c) above
indicates), he can only oscillate between enthusiasm and scepticism towards any single position. In my discussion of Marlow's early narratives, I will concentrate on the aesthetic ego and its function of hovering dialectically between extremes. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow also encounters idealists—the imperialistic idealism of several pilgrims and the youthful, adventurous idealism of the harlequin. As in *Lord Jim*, Marlow is forced to abandon previous convictions and explore new conceptions of identity. Both texts give evidence of process, change, and becoming, not only in Kurtz and Jim but also in Marlow. Even at the deaths of both these characters, the paradoxical element of his narrative surfaces in ambivalence, as he comes to terms with the fact that he must both admire and admonish them.

The irony surfacing from Marlow's explicit identification of the paradox in himself, caused by the tension between allegiances to the maritime and romantic worlds, is subtly different from the kind of irony cited by Tanner in *Lord Jim*. Tanner sees that novel as illustrative of a quixotic irony. The flaw in Tanner's argument is that he sees the major function of the irony to be parodic. But, as I have shown above, from the perspective of Schlegel's character, Ludovico, the irony in Cervantes is more complex than parody. Indeed, the notion of quixotism, arising out of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, is important to this thesis, because I am going to use it as a description of a common mode of idealism in Conrad's characters. It is surprising how often the notion explicitly occurs in the Conrad canon.

In *A Personal Record*, Conrad remembers his tutor calling
him an "incorrigible, hopeless Don Quixote" (PR, 44). Watts asserts that Conrad's bond with Cunninghame Graham was forged in a mutual quixotism. In Nostromo, Decoud uses the image of Don Quixote, in conjunction with that of Sancho Panza, to pinpoint the paradoxical nature of the South American character. In The Secret Agent, the Assistant Commissioner is twice referred to as a Don Quixote. Conversely, Heat is described as "not quixotic" (SA, 204). Kirschner points out the parallels between Turgenev's conception of an egoistic Quixote in Rudin and Conrad's in Lord Jim. Tanner and Secor analyse Lord Jim and Victory respectively as novels fitting into a genre of irony which they call quixotic.

Neither of the latter two critics shows any tolerance for the eccentric idealism of quixotism. Tanner sees it to be shown up as "ridiculous, inoperative, and at times dangerously out of step with the practical needs of a real situation." Secor writes this on quixotism: "In its parodied form, romance merges with the quixotic phase of satire . . . [which] like the demonic use of parody, finds real life mocking the purely conceptual." Quixotism and parody are clearly linked. However, the irony of Don Quixote itself is not merely parodic, nor is the irony of quixotism in Conrad's novels. I will now illustrate the complexity of irony in Don Quixote itself.

Alonso Quijano is bored with his monotonous life and obsessed with the ideal he has found in the romances of chivalry. Through Alonso Quijano, Cervantes creates Don Quixote as a character whose life is permeated by literature. His imitation of chivalric romances aims at such completeness that it becomes an attempt to live literature. His choice of
literature is a supremely fictitious form of epic; he is its idealised and superhuman hero. Once he really believes he is a knight errant and believes in his world of fiction, he steps off the pinnacle of inspired idealistic emulation into madness. However, what begins as a parody of chivalric literature becomes a more complex discussion of inner vision and private imagination. Cervantes' parodic intentions are obvious enough in the initial stages, where he clearly satirises the foolish Quixote, but, as the story progresses, the narratorial voice becomes less easy to detect, and consequently the irony becomes more complex. The narrator distances himself from any identifiable persona, allocating his role to that of retelling a translator's version of an historian's account of the heroic knight. Inevitably we get caught up in the problem of discerning the difference between truth and illusion, history and fiction. The first dichotomy is achieved by the narrator's insistence that his is a third-hand account. The second, between history and fiction, becomes especially difficult in Book 2, where we have Quixote reading Cervantes' account of his life in Book 1, which in turn is rivalled by another character, who claims that he has the authentic history. Thus, the novel raises questions about the nature of literary illusion and becomes eventually a book about books. Indeed, one critic, Riley, sees *Don Quixote* as a Romantic irony text in that it scrutinises the process of fictionalising. 62

Duran writes that Cervantes "had already come to grips with the anguished problem of being and nothingness." He sees him as describing a world in which "man does not know how to distinguish clearly between truth and the appearance of truth, that is to say, the image of truth he himself fashions. Man is
impelled by his own passions, illusions, feelings, appetites." De Ponseti agrees with this: "Data, we are forced to conclude, are nothing but fiction, for, however precise or concrete, their interpretation differs with each individual's perspective and set of values."*

Don Quixote's advocacy of idealised heroism meets its sternest test from the conservatism of the canon, who criticises chivalric literature on the grounds that it lacks verisimilitude. But even he admits that such literature has its good points in that it allows "a good intellect a chance to display itself" and points, unwittingly, to an author's capacity to idealise behaviour, which is substantially Quixote's argument. The idealising capacity is deep-seated. Not only does the canon recognise it but also, as Salvador de Madariaga points out, there is a discernible change in the two central characters. While Don Quixote eventually becomes increasingly disillusioned with his romantic quest, Sancho Panza becomes more confident of his new-found glory. The latent idealising capacities in the down-to-earth squire are evidenced in his believing that the peasant girl is Dulcinea, after having been persuaded by the governess, in his increasingly condescending attitude to his wife, and in his delight in the status of governor bestowed upon him. Conversely, Quixote, after the episode at the Cave of Montesinos, becomes increasingly disillusioned until he renounces any allegiances to chivalry on his deathbed.

This interrelationship between the two characters explores the dialectic between pragmatism and idealism. In the original text, quixotism involves the imposition of a chivalric ideal upon the world. Quixote transmutes objects and people from the
ordinary world into characters in a fairy tale. Realism presupposes romanticism and makes its sharpest points in juxtaposition with it. Accordingly, the major theme of the novel is the discrepancy between vision and facts.

This is a usual enough statement about quixotism, but the precise function of the irony is a little more difficult to determine. The author's own parodic intentions become increasingly less obvious. Parody, as a specific irony, depends upon the surety of narratorial perspective, which, in this case, is not sustained. However, Tanner insists on the corrective function of the irony, and Levin sees the quixotic principle as "... a register of development, an index of maturation. Its incidental mishaps can be looked back upon as milestones on the way to self-awareness." He agrees with George Lukács's interpretation of the quixotic principle, wherein "the subjectivity of the individual develops into an ironic overview of life."67 Levin's point is that the Quixote awakes from his fantasy world and sees the folly of his dream, but he does not make clear what kind of irony is involved in the "ironic overview," although there is a strong indication with the word "maturation" that he means specific irony, that is, irony as Tanner defines it. If we accept that this is the major function of the irony, that it is corrective, what do we make of the change in Panza? If Levin is correct, Panza must be charged with a loss of maturity. But there is no sure standpoint from which to issue such a charge.

A more satisfactory view of the irony, given the textual evidence, is Muecke's notion of double irony cited earlier in this thesis: the pragmatist ironises the idealist and vice versa. In this view, the novel contains a constant dialectic
between opposing viewpoints; and the status of Quixote's idealism is rehabilitated, as it affects the radical change in Panza. There is no stable base for the irony, unless we accede to the sermonising canon. Consequently, we are left with perspectivism as the source of meaning, and hence contradiction as normal (remembering that Quixote and Panza not only contradict each other but also each makes a contradiction of himself by the respective change of allegiances). It is the principle of contradiction that Schlegel's character Ludovico admires in Cervantes.

It is salutary to bring together the ideas associated with quixotism and Romantic irony and show their relevance to Conrad's fiction. In transferring from Cervantes to Conrad, the notion of quixotism becomes debased from its original chivalric associations. However, I am more interested in this quixotic principle: various Conradian characters yearn for an expression which releases an idealised self apart from the quotidian. In that the development of many of Conrad's texts depends on the progress of such characters, they exhibit the quixotic principle. It is clear that some of Conrad's characters are quixotic, not because they have chivalric notions of honour, but because their conceptions of self depend upon idealised notions of identity which are markedly at odds with their immediate physical or social surroundings. Accordingly, one of the first functions of the irony is to point out the incongruity between vision and facts, but it is important to realise that it is hardly appropriate to limit a study of quixotism to those characters who imitate the original Quixote in a relentless pursuit of chivalric honour both in action and articulation.
I see Almayer, Jim, Viola, Gould, the Assistant Commissioner, Anthony, and Heyst as quixotic, and yet the idealism which each follows has differing and various references. As Watt says, Almayer, like Emma Bovary in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, has dreams of petty bourgeois success. His preoccupation with the dream renders him oblivious of the scheming of Nina and Babalatchi. Jim, like the original Quixote, gleans his dreams of heroism from literature, and his immersion in the fiction glazes his vision to the point where he lives in the fantasy of his own imaginings. In *Nostromo*, Viola is consumed by his memories of Garibaldi with which he constructs an idealised republicanism, clearly ineffectual in the war-torn Sulaco. Gould is conceived of quixotically in that his yearning for success with the mine leads to his blindness to his disintegrating marriage and to the politically unsettling effects of the mine's success. In *The Secret Agent*, the Assistant Commissioner bears a physical resemblance to Don Quixote, but he is not on a chivalric quest. He is quixotic in his yearning for an "evil freedom," which he sees as a respite from the confines of marriage and work. In *Victory*, Heyst's quixotism depends on his following his father's dictum of non-involvement, which depends upon a complex "form of contempt" (V, 174), based on pity.

Even though quixotism in Conrad does not uniformly rely on the chivalric ideal, several principles remain the same. Firstly, whatever the ideal, quixotism depends upon a strong degree of obsession. As with the original Quixote, in order for a character to be deemed quixotic, the ideal he follows must manifestly consume his vision to the point where, at some point in the narrative, the narrator indicates that the character is
oblivious of aspects of the world outside his idealising imagination. (The Assistant Commissioner in *The Secret Agent* is the only exception to this aspect of quixotism.) The narrators then exploit the incongruity between the idealising imagination and the physical, social or political surroundings. Secondly, quixotism is the predominant means by which several narrators in Conrad's fiction explore the possibility of establishing and expressing identity in a way not provided for by adherence to conventional behaviour. It differentiates itself from the kind of idealism followed by such characters as Brierly and the French Lieutenant in *Lord Jim*. The ideals of both these characters are not explored in terms of a quixotism but in terms of a restricting adherence to a particular and rigidly defined code of honour. Their adherence to the prescribed code of honour does not, like the Quixotes', originate out of a sense of monotony, but out of an unquestioning and dutiful acceptance of the principle that to ascribe to conventional notions of honour is the only way to be.

The original Sancho Panza was, before his own quixotic transformation, down-to-earth, the exemplar of commonsense and simple-minded empiricism. It is interesting to note that Decoud, in *Nostromo*, explicitly uses the image of "Sancho Panza," contrasting it with that of "Don Quixote." He is accounting for the contradictory nature of the South American character:

"... There is a curse of futility upon our character: Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, chivalry and materialism, high-sounding sentiments and a supine morality, violent efforts for an idea and a sullen acquiescence in every form of corruption. ..." (N, 171)
Given the context of the whole novel and what else he says of various characters, he conceives of Gould, Viola, Pedrito Montero and Nostromo as Quixotes, and Avellanos, Guzman Bento, and Barrios as Panzas. The distinguishing factor between the contrasting psychologies, as represented by his parallelisms, is that Quixotes follow an ideal which consumes them and renders them oblivious of the surrounding political or social realities, while the Panzas work assiduously within the organised and existing structures, either stubbornly defending them or using them ruthlessly for political expedience.

Decoud's notion can be extended more generally to Conrad's other fiction. The French Lieutenant and Brierly act out a "supine morality" in contrast to Jim's "chivalry," as does Davidson in contrast to Heyst's "chivalry" in *Victory*. In *The Secret Agent*, the quixotic Assistant Commissioner contrasts with Inspector Heat, who is "not quixotic." In *Heart of Darkness*, the harlequin's "high-sounding sentiments" contrast with the manager's "sullen acquiescence in every form of corruption."

Two narrators, namely Marlow and that of *The Secret Agent*, deliberately polarise characters into quixotic and panzaic definitions. However, crucial to an understanding of the irony of quixotism is the notion of change. Decoud does not consider that Quixotes and Panzas can change to the point of defection from previous allegiances to the holding of the opposite impulse. Stein, in *Lord Jim*, the major exponent of romantic idealism, at the end of the novel shows a loss of faith in that mode of idealism. Similarly, Heyst in *Victory* and Anthony in *Chance* give up their quixotic characteristics.

Most importantly, Marlow himself changes. In *Lord Jim*, he
too had been an advocate of the Conway code. He does not become a Quixote but an ironist, ready to use the extremes for a continual intellectual oscillation.

In establishing quixotism as an important aspect of characterisation in Conrad, I look for the linguistic traces which indicate that a character is in some way severed from the actual world because of an obsession with an ideal. Quixotism differs from unreformed panzaism in that characters of the latter mould do not challenge the social or political status quo and certainly do not exhibit the tendency of psychological severance from the actual world. The distinction could easily remain a false dichotomy and would do so if the principle of change was not accounted for. It is often part of the double irony towards quixotism that an identification with one of the poles is not unchangeable. I have already mentioned change in various Quixotes. But we also have to note the suicidal change in Brierly and the change in the young captain of "The Secret Sharer," who repeatedly evokes the duality of his own nature.

The quixotic principle allows me to see patterns of quixotism not usually seen. In Heart of Darkness, the accountant blithely takes his European, civilised ideal into the wilderness, and the harlequin blindly quests after adventure. The former's routines, as they are viewed by Marlow, establish a quixotic imperialism, which is strikingly at odds with the immediate physical environment. The latter lives for an idealised form of adventure without regard for the surrounding physical dangers. Razumov, in Under Western Eyes, fits into a generalised discussion of Russian idealism, which the narrator establishes as a distinguishing factor of Easterners from
Westerners. Peter Ivanovitch idealises women, and there is one passage where Razumov reveals quixotic tendencies. His ideal of a single man to unit Russia is more than a political philosophy, as he expounds it in figurative terms. I am suggesting that we are directed by the narrator to see his rationalising of his betrayal of Haldin to be indicative not so much of a commitment to a political creed, to be taken seriously, as of the desperate construction of a notion of idealised political success within a reformed, autocratic establishment. His ambition scarcely takes into account the bureaucratic General T — and the sophisticate, Mikulin.

As well as nominating those characters in the fiction who show quixotic tendencies, it is imperative to analyse the narrators' attitudes to them if we are to understand the nature of the irony. From what I have already said about Marlow's penchant for contradiction, it will be obvious that he does not merely parody Jim's attempts at achieving idealised success. Marlow may well describe Jim as attempting to succeed in the "impossible world of romantic achievements," but he also acknowledges that the quixotic quest itself opens up the possibility of new conceptions of existence. Because, like Schlegel, he acknowledges that the infinite cannot be obtained, he marks himself as detached from Jim's romantic world, but after contact with Jim he realises that he cannot return to his old allegiance to the fixed standard. Necessarily, he must construct a dialectic between the oppositions of the finite world of maritime expectation and the extravagance of quixotism. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow learns that the chaos of the wilderness reduces the effectiveness of all human attempts at
order (although in part he admires the quixotism of the 
accountant and the harlequin), leaving him with no other 
response than the oscillation between enthusiasm and scepticism 
for any singular attempt to create personal identity. However, 
the irony of Marlow's last narrative does not sustain such an 
elaborate ironic mechanism. In Chance, the irony eventually 
 overtly satirises Anthony's chivalry.

The hallmark of the irony of Marlow's early narratives 
is the control the narrator achieves over his contradictory 
responses. This accords with Schlegel's notion of 
"self-restriction." As I will illustrate, The Secret Agent 
contains a similar unresolved paradox to that within the early 
Marlow narrations and a similar narratorial control. However, 
mastery with the irony is not evident in Nostromo and Under 
Western Eyes. In Nostromo, the function of the irony is quite 
obscure. Although there is early evidence of a paradoxical 
vision, it is not sustained. It is in this novel that Hewitt's 
charge of muddlement may be more appropriate. Crudely speaking, 
the narrator seems to change his mind and does not control his 
contradictory responses to Gould's quixotism. The sustaining 
of paradoxical consciousness is left to Decoud. But he, in 
turn, is criticised by the narrator. The net effect is that 
the novel generates contradictory responses to its main 
characters--Gould is both lauded for his quixotism and 
chastised, Nostromo is both heroic and puerile, Decoud 
perceptive and nihilistic, Monygham loyal and Machiavellian. 
In Under Western Eyes, the narrator is old and uninvolved 
with the protagonist (or involved to a much lesser extent than 
Marlow), and therefore the paradoxical consciousness is not
so insistent. He does not internalise the effects Razumov has upon him, but there are, nevertheless, strong traces of discomposure; the Professor is a retrospective narrator, and this aspect of the narration reveals several Marlovian features.

The kind of impetus that Schlegel's speculations on irony provide is important to an understanding of the irony in Marlow's early narratives and that of the narrator of *The Secret Agent*. Schlegel equates indestructible paradox with a much vaunted intellectual vitality. As I have pointed out, this kind of irony needs to extend to the literary form itself. The artist needs to acknowledge the limitations of art itself. This occurs explicitly in *Heart of Darkness* and in *Lord Jim* where Marlow acknowledges the impossibility of finding appropriate language to convey experience, and in *The Secret Agent*, where the narrator sees Stevie's art as "attempting the inconceivable" (SA,45). Although this acknowledgement exists in Conrad's novels, it is clear that it is not part of the ironic strategy to create a myriad of literary forms, the kind of extravaganza that exists in Schlegel's own works, *Lucinde* and *Dialogue on Poetry*. Wilde provides an interesting perspective:

> The change in irony over the past two hundred years from technique to vision has had as probably its most interesting result the transformation of distance (then and still one of the main aesthetic conditions for the successful functioning of irony) into a metaphor for a series of psychological and moral problems. Briefly, among the German Romantics, a source of freedom, mastery, and joy, distance gradually becomes the symbol of estrangement and alienation. . . . 69

Alienation is an appropriate word to describe Marlow's psychology on his return to Europe in *Heart of Darkness*; it is also an appropriate word to describe what some critics see as a
chilling narratorial perspective in *The Secret Agent*. Certainly, the "joy," as it manifests itself in the extravaganza of literary forms in Schlegel's works, disappears in Conrad's novels. Rather, those ironists in Conrad's works who operate with an indestructible paradox scrutinise the process of alienation from the physical and social environment.

In many of the novels and stories discussed, there is an assumption that routine existence depends upon myopic veils which social and moral necessities force many of Conrad's less insightful characters to hold between themselves and the brawling chaos, the jumble of threatening instances that is actually *out there* (typhoons, the wilderness, collisions, revolutionaries) and *within* the ironists, ready to show its face to those who dare to thrust the veils aside. In a modern context, one of the consequences of confronting the chaos is, as Wilde points out, psychological distress, which is not a consideration of Schlegel's. In *Nostromo*, Decoud, a thorough ironist, commits suicide. In many other works there are references to madness. In order to come to terms with the malaise of psychological disorder, I am now going to discuss the theories of a modern critic, Paul de Man, who provides a modern context for Schlegel's irony.

Paul de Man distinguishes between the language of everyday use and that of the ironist:

*In everyday, common existence, this is not how language usually operates; there it functions much more as does the cobbler's or the carpenter's hammer, not as the material itself, but as a tool by means of which the heterogeneous material of experience is more-or-less adequately made to fit. The reflective disjunction not only occurs by means of language as a privileged category, but it transfers the self out of the*
empirical world into a world constituted out of, and in, language—a language that it finds in the world like one entity among others, but that remains unique in being the only entity by means of which it can differentiate itself from the world. Language thus conceived divides the subject into an empirical self, immersed in the world, and a self that becomes like a sign in its attempt at differentiation and self-definition. 70

This analysis restates the dichotomy between the finite and the infinite common in Schlegel's formulations. The analogy concerning tradesmen's tools is particularly useful in regard to Marlow's dilemma. As a sailor he eventually comes to see the necessity for escaping from the maritime world, and he is characterised as exceptional and distinct from the other sailors by the frame narrator of Heart of Darkness. Marlow reveals himself to be aware of what Paul de Man calls the "reflective disjunction," of the fact that the ideas he becomes increasingly fascinated by have no fixed reference linguistically. In Lord Jim, the language of the law courts he finds useless (the court is interested in the "superficial how," not the "fundamental why" (LJ,56) of the affair). In Heart of Darkness, it is his revulsion at the manager's euphemism, "method," (HD,137) denoting efficiency, which motivates his choice of nightmares.

Once Marlow has been influenced by Kurtz's anarchy, he realises the necessity to find a language by which he can differentiate himself from the world, although in the spirit of Schlegel's formulations he realises the impossibility of complete communication with his fictional audience ("'... No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence...''' [HD,82]). He states in Youth that having read Carlyle's
*Sartor Resartus*, he prefers the "soldier" to the "philosopher" (Y,7). However, the dichotomy between the two dispositions is sustained dialectically in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* and becomes the basis of the indestructible paradox in both narratives. Indeed, Marlow's "reflective disjunction" is implicitly described by two minor narrators. The frame narrator of *Heart of Darkness* describes him thus:

> But Marlow was not typical (if his propensity to spin yarns be excepted), and to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze. . . . (HD,48)

In *Chance*, Powell describes him as "always chasing some notion or other round and round his head just for the fun of the thing" (C,33).

One possible consequence of the severance from the social world is madness. Paul de Man writes:

> Sanity can exist only because we are willing to function within the conventions of duplicity and dissimulation, just as social language dissimulates the inherent violence of the actual relationships between human beings. Once this mask is shown to be a mask, the authentic being underneath appears necessarily as on the verge of madness.\(^{71}\)

This is an excellent critique of the demise of Kayerts in "An Outpost of Progress," of Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*, and of Winnie in *The Secret Agent*. The notion of madness is explored in all these texts. The difference between madness and irony is the dialectical power of the latter. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow tolerates the "social language" of his audience for about one half of the narrative. He is forced to shed his mask.
because of the stifling conventionality and imaginative impoverishment of his listeners. He does confront the madness of Kurtz in the wilderness and experiences psychological imbalance himself on his return to Europe, admitting that it was his own imagination that "wanted soothing" (HD,152). It is crucial for the ironist to be able to mediate between the opposites of social convention and anarchy, between "system" and "no system." Mediation is the dominating idea of Romantic irony. While the chaos does intrude powerfully enough to upset his bearings, the ironist must, after the onslaught, objectify his response linguistically, even though the formal language pattern will be only a temporary oasis. The difference between the madman and the ironist, between Kurtz and Marlow, is the latter's capacity for mediation (Kurtz had "stepped over the edge" while Marlow had withdrawn his "hesitating foot" [HD,151]).

The ironist in Schlegel's sense cannot be satisfied with any level of insight, because any final form of identity is an illusion. The notion of illusion is important to this thesis. It refers to both the quixotic illusion (this is vividly portrayed in "Karain" as akin to the theatrical illusion) and to the illusion of security found by obeying social norms (this is portrayed in "An Outpost of Progress"). The ironist cannot ally unequivocally with either of these illusions. He must oscillate between them, as Marlow does in Heart of Darkness:

"... When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality—the reality, I tell you—fades. The inner truth is hidden—luckily, luckily. But I felt it all the same... . . ." (HD,93)

Paul de Man quite correctly repudiates Szondi's claim about the
strategy of the Romantic ironist:

In an ever-expanding act of reflection he tries to establish a point of view beyond himself and to resolve the tension between himself and the world on the level of fiction [des Scheins].

Paul de Man disagrees:

But it is precisely this assumption that the ironist denies. Friedrich Schlegel is altogether clear on this. The dialectic of self-destruction and self-invention which for him ... characterises the ironic mind is an endless process that leads to no synthesis. ... In temporal terms it designates the fact that irony engenders a temporal sequence of acts of consciousness which is endless.

The idea of temporality is important in Marlow's two early narratives where he grapples with past and present conceptions of self. This creates the inevitable tension between an allegiance to the standards of the Conway code and the scepticism of the storyteller in the narrative present. That tension is definitely not resolved at the level of fiction. Synthesis, as Schlegel defines it and Paul de Man reiterates, means juxtaposition, not reconciliation.

As a comparison, it is interesting to look at the irony of two other stories. In "An Outpost of Progress," the retrospective element is missing. The detached narrative voice is sure about its thematic and ironic purposes—when the civilised order is removed Carlier and Kayerts resort to barbarism. The focus of the irony is a rhetorical denunciation of a society that breeds characters unable to develop any independence. But, even when there is a retrospective narrative voice, there is no guarantee that the irony will engender a "temporal sequence of acts of consciousness which is endless."
In "The Secret Sharer," for example, the young captain tries to account for the effect of a murderer on his "ideal conception" (SS,94) of himself, which is like Brierly's ideal in Lord Jim rather than a quixotic ideal. Constantly throughout the narrative he refers to his "dual nature," but at the beginning of the story he gives no indication of the fractured self which is to eventuate. He posits notions of "stability" and "unity":

To the left a group of barren islets, suggesting ruins of stone walls, towers, and blockhouses, had its foundations set in a blue sea that itself looked solid, so still and stable did it lie below my feet... I saw the straight line of the flat shore joined to the stable sea, edge to edge, with a perfect and unmarked closeness, in one levelled floor half brown, half blue under the enormous dome of the sky. (SS,91)

Here, as Szondi's claim indicates, the tensions of the dual self are reconciled artistically, but this is not Romantic irony. At the end of the story the young captain is ecstatic at his ridding of Leggatt, which leaves him with a clear, straightforward vision, "the perfect communion of a seaman with his first command" (SS,143).

I have argued in this introduction that the most sophisticated irony is that which arises from an unresolvable paradox. As I have shown, such a notion originates from Schlegel's fragmentary speculations which connect Romanticism and irony in a highly idiosyncratic aesthetic. Irony for Schlegel provides the means of fusing intellectual detachment with eclectic literary forms as the artist comes to terms with a world conceived of as "chaos." In order to construct the artist needs a system. But, so that he can express a multiplicity of ideas, he needs the freedom of no system; hence, the inevitable dialectic between creation and destruction.
Schlegel's irony needs to be understood as an attitude towards the world which extends towards art itself. I am suggesting that Schlegel's formulations assist in understanding the irony in *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, and later in *The Secret Agent*.

As I have indicated, it is important to take account of the modern context for irony. Wilde's contention that distance (an aesthetic necessity for the successful functioning of irony) has been transformed into a metaphor for a series of psychological and moral problems, is an accurate appraisal of the function of irony in the two early Marlovian narratives. The artist as ironist in Schlegel's formulations becomes the paradoxical narrator, who is dissatisfied with orthodox social allegiances and who attempts to vindicate quixotic modes of identity. He must mediate between extremes of illusion, and this mediation is adequately described by Paul de Man's phrase "reflective disjunction," a differential from the empirical world and madness. Paul de Man's notion of temporal process also captures the flux, and consequently the instabilities, in which the ironic creativity originates and is sustained.

I am, of course, illustrating these principles of irony from the fictional works, but it is also interesting to note that in the Author's Note to *Within the Tides* Conrad himself accounts for the romantic impulse and accords it status:

> If these things appeal strongly to me even in retrospect it is, I suppose, because the romantic feeling of reality was in me an inborn faculty. This in itself may be a curse but when disciplined by a sense of personal responsibility and a recognition of the hard facts of existence shared with the rest of mankind becomes but a point of view from which the very shadows of life appear endowed with an
internal glow. And such romanticism is not a sin. It is none the worse for the knowledge of truth. It only tries to make the best of it, hard as it may be; and in this hardness discovers a certain aspect of beauty. (WT,vii-viii)

He comments later in the Author's Note on the breakaway from "organised social life":

My subjects are not mediaeval and I have a natural right to them because my past is very much my own. If their course lie out of the beaten path of organized social life, it is, perhaps, because I myself did in a sort break away from it early in obedience to an impulse which must have been very genuine since it has sustained me through all the dangers of disillusion. (WT,viii)

The "impulse" which Conrad describes above I have termed the quixotic. It is not the only eccentric impulse in the novels. In *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, another such impulse is represented by the anarchists Wait and Donkin. In *Falk*, the eccentricity is represented by cannibalism, and in *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* not only by quixotism but also by revolutionaries. However, in this thesis I am primarily interested in quixotism as the impulse which takes various narrators from "the beaten path of organised social life."

I begin by examining some of the texts before *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* in order to show that the ingredients of Marlow's irony--quixotism, contradiction, and ambivalence--are already present in the fiction. Marlow makes the irony more sophisticated, because his retrospective narrations illustrate the process by which meaning is made, and his paradoxical vision is indestructibly sustained. Only one other novel, *The Secret Agent*, is able to sustain this kind of irony. However, while
the paradoxical base for the irony can be deduced from the text, we are not privy to a retrospective narrator explicating his own heuristic search for meaning. Nevertheless, the irony in important ways, as I will show, depends on a narratorial disaffection from the social and physical surroundings and on a scrutiny of the quixotic alternative. In Nostromo, paradox is identifiable in the text. Gould is established as quixotic, but the paradox is not indestructible. Consequently, Gould's quixotism does not enjoy the status accorded to Jim's by Marlow. In Under Western Eyes, the irony does not spring from an indestructible paradox established by the narrator. The idealising capacities of the Russians are explored. In particular, Razumov, the youthful idealist, finds himself in the uncongenial world of revolutionaries--an incongruity which instigates a sequence of dramatic ironies--but his dream of independence and latterly discovered love of Natalia create a paradox which becomes textually explicit only at the end of the novel. In Chance, especially, and in Victory, quixotism does not enjoy the status it had achieved in the early Marlovian narratives. These later novels do not possess narrators who are inspired with the desire to escape from the limits of their social and physical environment and explore new structures of experience. The irony has a more stable base, and in Chance quixotism is eventually repudiated. In Victory, the narrator achieves a general irony, but this is not sustained because he eventually privileges "action," like the narrator of Nostromo; from that point, his focus is on revealing Heyst's gradual disillusionment with his dream of sanctuary on Samburan, and hence the irony becomes specific.
This thesis is a textual study of the ironic mechanisms in the major fiction. It has as its purpose what Gekoski's book did not. He stated that it was not his purpose to discuss the particular ways in which irony is manifested in the fiction. However, I contend that it is impossible to determine the function of the irony, if there is not an accurate classification of its type and mode.

Detecting irony depends upon recognising the juxtaposition of incongruous elements which signals that the ostensible meaning of a particular context is in need of dismantling and reconstruction. Once the ironic signals are detected it becomes a matter of determining the nature of the intellectual discrepancy between the two layers of the ironic mechanism. The discrepancy will range from a very wide distance (between victim or object and ironist) to a gap that hints at complicity with the victim or object being undermined. The nature of that gap will determine whether the irony is specific or general. If the irony is demonstrably general, it is then a matter of discovering what happens to the tension generated by ambivalence or contradiction. If the narrator exploits the tension to the point where he announces that his own vision is indestructibly sustained by paradox and then gives indications that this vision extends to the recognition of and frustrations with the limits of his art, he defines himself as a Romantic ironist.

In describing the type of irony, I use Muecke's types of irony: specific, general, and Romantic. In describing the various modes of irony, I will be using terms which belong to one of two modes: verbal or structural irony.

In its verbal form, irony reveals itself in the double speech of ambivalence, contradiction, paradox and incongruities.
With structural irony, we need to examine the sustained, organising structures of the novels: character interrelationships, dramatic irony, retrospective narratives, inconsistent narrators, dramatized irony.

As I see the study of irony, it is important to describe the mode of irony and allocate it a type, and it is necessary to differentiate between the various types and modes, because as these change so does the function of the irony. Gekoski's refusal to differentiate between types and modes leads him to make statements, as I will illustrate later, about the moral perspective of various narrators which often are not sustainable from either the ironic language or the structures of the text being scrutinised. Continual vigilance of the verbal and structural ironies as textually explicit evidence of particular types and modes is essential; otherwise, interpretative presuppositions unduly influence reading and the resulting critical framework.

* * * * *
Romanic irony is best exemplified in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. In confronting the predicaments of Jim and Kurtz, Marlow is forced to re-examine his own value system. Accordingly, his retrospective narratives establish poles between which he oscillates. The extremes are those of a stolid acceptance of social norms and the centrifugal energies of quixotism or anarchy. The particular dilemmas he faces when scrutinising the validity of each pole are these: he admires the flight from convention of the anarchic Kurtz and the quixotic Jim, but he is also aware of the dangers of unbridled individualism and the impossibility of final romantic achievement; he is repulsed by the imaginative impoverishment of stolid, social allegiances, but he is also aware of the protection such a commitment provides from the psychologically unsettling effects of megalomania and quixotic arousal.

A study of the early texts indicates the development in irony by the time Marlow narrates. In looking at several of those early texts I will consider the similarities with and differences from the thematic preoccupations and narratorial perspectives of the Marlovian narratives. In *Almayer's Folly*, we witness the attempts of a dreamer to achieve material success. However, the ambitions and frustrations of a quixotic Almayer do not instil an internal contradiction in the narrator,
and consequently the irony is not dialectical.

The internal contradiction and the consequent oscillation are evident in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*. In a narrative structure similar to that of *Lord Jim*, the initial narrative voice is aloof and assumes omniscience, but is quickly replaced by the perspective of a crew-member, who is contradictory.

Three of the *Tales of Unrest* are particularly relevant to a study of the irony in Conrad's early fiction. In "Karain," the hero is conceived in quixotic terms, and, as with the crew-member of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, there are traces of the Marlovian voice, ambivalent, vexed, and retrospective. In "An Outpost of Progress," the thematic associations with *Heart of Darkness* are well established. But, in the earlier story, the narrator is aloof and much more specific with his ironic intention. In "The Return," there is a significant discussion of the word "conscience." Hervey learns to reform his conscience, previously conceived in social terms, with a new, albeit ill-defined base. This shows important links with the notions of conscience in *Lord Jim* and later in *Under Western Eyes*.

In *Almayer's Folly*, the irony tackles a quixotic character, but not in as sophisticated a manner as the irony in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, principally because the reader is not privy to the musings of an ironist who has been radically affected by his contact with the dreamer. Consequently, the irony is predominantly specific in intention. As I have pointed out in the Introduction, the narrator's voice is aloof in a way which Watt finds similar to the narratorial stances of Maupassant and Flaubert. The first paragraph introduces a theme which persists in Conrad's fiction: "The well-known shrill voice
startled Almayer from his dream of splendid future into the unpleasant realities of the present hour" (AF,3). The dichotomy between the romantic dream and unpleasant reality is at the heart of the quixotic principle. While genuine status is given to dreamers in other novels of Conrad's, here the irony tends to be reductive of a weak-willed materialist. In Watt's words, Almayer's dream is a "petty bourgeois version of romantic aspiration." This is certainly evident in this description:

For the last fortnight Almayer was absorbed in the preparations, walking amongst his workmen and slaves in a kind of waking trance, where practical details as to the fitting out of the boats were mixed up with vivid dreams of untold wealth, where the present misery of burning sun, of the muddy and malodorous river bank disappeared in a gorgeous vision of a splendid future existence for himself and Nina. (AF,62)

A significant difference between quixotism in this novel and that of Lord Jim is illustrated early on:

One of those drifting trees grounded on the shelving shore, just by the house, and Almayer, neglecting his dream, watched it with languid interest. The tree swung slowly round, amid the hiss and foam of the water, and soon getting free of the obstruction began to move down stream again, rolling slowly over, raising upwards a long, denuded branch, like a hand lifted in mute appeal to heaven against the river's brutal and unnecessary violence. Almayer's interest in the fate of that tree increased rapidly. He leaned over to see if it would clear the low point below. It did; then he drew back, thinking that now its course was free down to the sea, and he envied the lot of that inanimate thing now growing small and indistinct in the deepening darkness. As he lost sight of it altogether he began to wonder how far out to sea it would drift. Would the current carry it north or south? South, probably, till it drifted in sight of Celebes, as far as Macassar, perhaps! (AF,4)

Through the sustained metaphor of the log's journey, Almayer
explores his frustration at being unable to achieve his dream. The log is carried out to sea and courts far away places. But the transference of his own dream on to the passage of the inanimate object signals the difference between Jim and Almayer. Almayer "neglects" his own dream and watches only with "languid" interest. This passivity is never evident in Jim. In Jim's quixotic aspirations, as in the original Quixote, there is a characteristic energy, epitomised by Stein's imperative, "... with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up..." (LJ,214). In contrast, Almayer's will is paralysed.

Later on in the novel the paralysis turns to anger:

Almayer's head rolled from shoulder to shoulder in the oppression of his dream... Get away! But how? If he attempted to move he would step off into nothing, and perish in the crashing fall of that universe of which he was the only support. And what were the voices saying? Urging him to move! Why? Move to destruction! Not likely! The absurdity of the thing filled him with indignation. He got a firmer foothold and stiffened his muscles in heroic resolve to carry his burden to all eternity... With terror he felt an irresistible hand shaking him by the shoulder, while the chorus of voices swelled louder into an agonized prayer to go, go before it is too late. (AF,158-59)

The words "absurdity" and "terror" anticipate Razumov's grievances in Geneva. Like Almayer, he finds agonising the discrepancy between his previous dream and the diabolical circumstances he actually exists within. Here there is a definite change in Almayer's focus; whereas he had previously "neglected" his dream, he now is determined to carry on with "heroic resolve." The passage is more interesting for its representative portrayal of the idealist's dilemma than for its particular characterisation. Almayer's plight and the
psychological consequences of not fulfilling a dream are typical of many other Conrad characters. The similarities with Razumov's plight I have intimated. Kurtz dies with the expostulation "The horror! The horror!" Nostromo's dreams are shattered with the recognition of betrayal, Brierly and Decoud commit suicide. In Conrad's fiction, the crisis point invariably occurs when the idealist confronts the possibility that his plan is no longer tenable. While the narrator dramatises that point in the above passage, he is not able to sustain a discussion of an interesting psychological grievance, because the original dream of financial success has neither the magnitude nor the philosophical status of the projects of many other characters in Conrad's fiction. Consequently, the narrator is not forced to change his own bias. The major function of the irony is to reveal systematically Almayer's demise. The predominant mode is dramatic irony: Almayer is oblivious of the scheming of Nina and Babalatchi.

It is significant that the narrator of this first novel grapples with some of the problems associated with quixotism. Two structural elements contribute to a more sophisticated scrutiny in the later novels. Firstly, the dreams of the Quixotes become larger than mere "petty bourgeois aspiration." Secondly, the narrators become self-reflective.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus" is the first text to contain the unresolvable paradoxes which make Conrad's irony congruent with Schlegel's formulations. Aspects of the contradiction present in Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim are already present in The Nigger of the "Narcissus". Although many critics focus on the theme of solidarity evident in the Preface, the following text does not unequivocally endorse the moral value of
solidarity, if we take into account the vacillations of the crew-member's narrative. Gekoski sees the novel as making Conrad's "strongest statement of his vision of social responsibility; the values propounded are those of obedience to authority, work, and stoical acceptance; severely rejected are introspection, concern with the feelings, and metaphysical questioning." This kind of criticism does not establish the base from which such surety of moral bias is elicited.

It is necessary to remember that Conrad's fiction is typically populated by characters who do not simply conform to normative values. In many instances, this defiance is characterised by a form of quixotism, but, in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, that defiance is expressed by the narcissistic Wait and the opportunistic Donkin. Both these characters make an impact on the perspective of the crew-member narrator and instil in him a consciousness of the limitations of a simple work ethic. Hence, the novel is not merely about solidarity. It also explores the important theme, the burden of consciousness. In reply to Cunninghame Grahame's letter advocating an "educated" Singleton, Conrad unabashedly claimed that consciousness and action were mutually exclusive. Later, however, in Marlow's narratives it is precisely that battle--between consciousness and action--which is dramatised, especially in *Heart of Darkness*.

In *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"*, the crew-member, unlike Marlow, does not reveal his own inner turmoil. That is, he does not own up to that turmoil directly. He prefers the collective "we," which has the effect of enforcing solidarity. But it is a clumsy artifice, as there is no indication that all of the characters are capable of the range of responses of the
crew-member. The crew-member narrator, with his propensity for contradiction, is, I contend, the progenitor of Marlow.

Work on board ship is necessary for survival. The sailors' activities are praised during the onslaughts which threaten the ship's passage, but there remains the gnawing question: what happens after the work has been completed? Wait instils in the sailors a consciousness of death and Donkin a consciousness of their conditions. The former awakens their compassion; the latter arouses idle dreams. Both compassion and dreaming are serious threats to the ship's routine. Work is salutary, as long as there are storms and the sailors do not have the leisure to meditate, but, with the presence of the defectors from the ship's routine and their effect on the others, the narrator is equally capable of seeing the sailors as both heroic and foolish. This ambivalence presages Marlow.

The novel has a similar narrative structure to that of *Lord Jim*--an initial, detached narrator is followed by a first person account. There is a tradition of criticism which sees Singleton as valuable because he steers and which maintains that this devotion to the task is the ultimate value of the novel. However, there are several perspectives on Singleton. The first view of the character, provided by the omniscient narrator, notes an incongruity: Singleton is not steering but reading Bulwer Lytton. The narrator is derogatory about the literature, but remains fascinated by the contrast between the pragmatic sailor and the fiction which absorbs him. The reading-steering dichotomy does not translate into dialectic (as does its equivalent in *Lord Jim*), but the incongruity is significant. Although the literature is seen here as mere fantasy, it does not provoke the omniscient narrator into advocating the work
Ethic. Rather, he sees Singleton and his colleagues as "life-long prisoners of the sea" (NN,7).

The strength and inarticulate stoicism of Singleton and his type are lauded: "... they were effaced, bowed and enduring, like stone caryatides ..." (NN,25). When Singleton's character is juxtaposed with Wait's, however, the reactions are less effusive. Wait's rebelliousness makes a sufficient impact on the consciousness of the crew-member, who announces that "All our certitudes were going ..." (NN,43). According to the crew-member, the sailors were "fascinated" by Jimmy: "He would never let doubt die" (NN,46-47). The effect of Jimmy is to reverse the crew's reaction to Singleton: "We had thought him till then as wise as he looked, but now we dared, at times, suspect him of being stupid—from old age" (NN,42).

Later, work is enslaving. The prison motif resurfaces: Singleton is described as being "fettered by the long chain of disregarded years" (NN,99), and an "immensity tormented and blind ... when life was over, would claim the worn-out body of its slave ..." (NN,99). In contrast, Donkin's insurgency is accorded accolades. The narrator records the crew's paradoxical reaction to Donkin, whose skilful rhetoric instils in them a consciousness of their poor conditions: "Our contempt for him was unbounded—and we could not but listen with interest to that consummate artist" (NN,100). Wait is "demoralising" in a complex way:

He was demoralising. Through him we were becoming highly humanised, tender, complex, excessively decadent: we understood the subtlety of his fear, sympathised with all his repulsions, shrinkings, evasions, delusions—as though we had been over-civilised, and rotten, and without any knowledge of the meaning of life. (NN,139)
Wait's rejection of work arouses a sense of human concern and fellowship ("The latent egoism of tenderness to suffering . . ." [NN,138]), which otherwise would not have been felt or expressed. The narrator is demoralised because certainty about values has broken down, and this uncertainty instigates a paradoxical reaction:

The secret and ardent desire of our hearts was the desire to beat him viciously with our fists about the head; and we handled him as tenderly as though he had been made of glass. . . . (NN,73)

The meaning of the sailors' lives without either Wait or Donkin is to be unimaginative functionaries. Both of them bring to the surface impulses that normally lie dormant, beneath the surface of their work-filled days. The recognition by the crew-member that they arouse these kinds of reactions takes him into unorthodox psychological territory. This is exactly what happens to Marlow in the wilderness, in *Heart of Darkness*, and, when he returns to Europe, he recognises that the stable, civilised world is no longer a satisfactory arbiter of value and knowledge.

". . . I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets . . . to dream their insignificant and silly dreams. They trespassed upon my thoughts. They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence. . . . (HD,152)

While work is effective for the safety of the ship, and Alistoun, like MacWhirr in *Typhoon*, tenaciously asserts the necessary discipline, this novel gives early indication of a "reflective disjunction." But, although the narrator is capable of paradox, he does not explore the consequences of an
internalised paradox. The narration is a retrospect—his memory selectively chooses the paradoxical instances, but these are clearly differentiated from straightforward descriptions of sailors' working together against the elements. Jimmy's death represents an exorcism of a disruptive force, and, at the end of the novel, the crew-member is effusive about the group's solidarity. The paradoxical tension between the necessity to work and doubt about that commitment is released:

Good-bye, brothers! You were a good crowd. As good a crowd as ever fisted with wild cries the beating canvas of a heavy foresail; or tossing aloft, invisible in the night, gave back yell for yell to a westerly gale. (NN,173)

Although the Preface has often been associated with solidarity, little is made of another passage from the Preface:

Confronted by the same enigmatical spectacle the artist descends within himself, and in that lonely region of stress and strife, if he be deserving and fortunate, he finds the terms of his appeal. His appeal is made to our less obvious capacities: to that part of our nature which, because of the warlike conditions of existence, is necessarily kept out of sight within the more resisting and hard qualities—like the vulnerable body within a steel armour. (NN,vii-viii)

In Conrad's prescription then the artist tackles a chaos, conceived of metaphorically as war. It is primarily an internal war, a fight with consciousness. The crew-member narrator of this early novel does not nominate his anxiety as his own, nor does his capacity for paradox instigate a sustained dialectical irony, but the ambivalent flirtation with deviancy, which becomes common in Conrad's fiction, begins in this early novel. In Heart of Darkness, the personal battle of the artist is owned up to—there, the "less obvious capacities" are fully exposed.
In "Karain," there are some important thematic and structural parallels with Marlow's narrations. For the first time, the role of memory becomes an explicit theme. This is a retrospective narration; immediately in the text, there is an attempt to indicate the effect of time on the narrator and his fellows. In the first sentence, the narrator strikes a nostalgia for a previous, adventurous youth (its "unprotected days" [K,3]), which foreshadows Marlow's evocation of the glamour of youth's illusions in *Youth*. Like the crew-member of the "Narcissus," the narrator constructs his narrative from the perspective of a corporate mentality ("We"), and he postulates that the group of which he is a member has not become "dim-eyed" and can see beyond the "befogged respectability of their newspapers" (K,3). In *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, Marlow belligerently chides his audience for succumbing to the illusions that civilised society fosters.

The natives are evoked in a similar way to those in *Heart of Darkness* ("They had an independent bearing, resolute eyes, a restrained manner . . ." [K,4]). Karain is their war-chief. Early in this narrative, there is a significant repetitive image, that of the stage, which helps to establish Karain's grandeur:

(a) ... he indicated by a theatrical sweep of his arm. . . . (K,4)

(b) It was the stage where, dressed splendidly for his part. . . . (K,6)

(c) ... he presented himself essentially as an actor. . . . (K,6)

(d) Mean-time he filled the stage with barbarous dignity. (K,8)

(e) ... he appeared before us incomparably faithful to the illusions of the stage. . . . (K,9)
The reiterative use of the dramatic image evokes the illusions of a Quixote. Several times Karain is evoked quixotically: "... his quality was to appear clothed in the illusion of unavoidable success" (K,7); he has an idealised view of the British crown, speaking of it with "chivalrous respect" (K,13); his sagacity was "only limited by his profound ignorance of the rest of the world" (K,18); and he "raved like one inspired" (K,18). There is an explicit statement by the narrator which illustrates well the relationship between irony and quixotism in Conrad. It concerns quotation (a) above:

... he indicated by a theatrical sweep of his arm along the jagged outline of the hills the whole of his domain; and the ample movement seemed to drive back its limits, augmenting it suddenly into something so immense and vague that for a moment it appeared to be bounded only by the sky. (K,4-5)

The notion of driving back limits is of course central to Schlegel's irony. The Quixote, with his relentless commitment to the illusions of heroism, conveys a much grander identity than that of the Europeans entrenched in ordinary society. It is the narrator's insistence here, as it is in Marlow's narratives, on giving quixotism status, which infuses the narrative with a centrifugal energy. This energy instigates the necessary intellectual inquiry, as the narrator comes to terms with the restrictions of organised society and the extravagances of quixotism. In Heart of Darkness, Marlow finds some approval for the early Roman colonists' barbarism, because it illustrated an adventurous struggle with an "idea." In "Karain," the hero is also struggling against "a thought, an idea" (K,23). The death of the hero's sword-bearer induces his struggle with the memories of lost love and betrayal. In Heart
of Darkness, Marlow reveals the difficulty he has in finding language to convey the effect of his journey to the wilderness, and quite strikingly the narrator has the same problem in accounting for the effect of Karain:

It is impossible to convey the effect of his story. It is undying, it is but a memory and its vividness cannot be made clear to another mind, any more than the vivid emotions of a dream. (K,26)

We can compare this directly with Marlow:

"... It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream—making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation. . . . "... No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence..." (HD,82)

The story describes what happens when belief in illusions collapses. Karain's belief collapses at the sword-bearer's death and behind the theatricality of the hero's antics, which momentarily cannot be sustained, lies, according to the narrator, "a sudden convulsion of madness and rage" (K,43). At this breakdown point, Karain seeks to go to Western civilisation, where people "live in unbelief" (K,44). However, the narrator realises that his illusions, now stirred to the point of "madness," would not find any expression in the European world: "We felt as though we three had been called to the very gate of Infernal Regions to judge, to decide the fate of a wanderer coming suddenly from a world of sunshine and illusions" (K,45).

Hollis is especially cynical of European society's potential reaction to Karain: "'The ghosts there are in society,
and talk affably to ladies and gentlemen, but would scorn a naked human being—like our princely friend . . . " (K,44). It is with the coin that Hollis reinvigorates Karain's belief in his illusions, whereupon he is able to return to the "glorious splendour of his stage" (K,52), a triumph for quixotic illusion. This is similar to Marlow's problems in dealing with Jim, who cannot remain in conventional society. Marlow, through Stein, finds him the stage of Patusan.

The final section of the story provides a direct contrast between the "stunning" (K,54) Karain and the bourgeois gloom. Jackson finds the memory of Karain more enticing than his local environment. The narrator describes the street as "deep as a well and narrow like a corridor . . . full of a sombre and ceaseless stir" (K,54). Jackson describes the physical and social environment of home:

"'It is there; it pants, it runs, it rolls; it is strong and alive; it would smash you if you didn't look out; but I'll be hanged if it is yet as real to me as . . . as the other thing . . . say, Karain's story.'" (K,55)

However, the narrator twice advises Jackson that he may have been "too long away from home" (K,54,55), thus creating the final note of ambivalence towards quixotism and its illusions that characterises Marlow's narrations.

"An Outpost of Progress" introduces another definition of the word "illusions" than that used in "Karain." Illusions in this second story refer to the uncritical commitment to social norms and conventions. Frequently, in Conrad's fiction, the term is used in both senses, and it becomes the mark of Marlow's narration to discriminate and oscillate between both kinds of
illusions. What happens when the securities are taken away?
Kayerts's insight, like that of Kurtz, comes after an immersion
in the wilderness:

He seemed to have broken loose from himself altogether. His old thoughts, convictions, likes and dislikes, things he respected and things he abhorred, appeared in their true light at last! Appeared contemptible and childish, false and ridiculous. He revelled in his new wisdom. . . . (OP,114)

The narrator compares him with lunatics (OP,115), and it is important to remember that Kurtz is described as having gone mad. It is also relevant to remember Paul de Man's contentions about madness and irony. The former occurs when we see beneath the social "mask," and it is the function of the latter to find the detachment to reflect upon the madness, and thereby control its ravaging insight. Neither Kayerts nor Kurtz has that irony. We can also consider Winnie Verloc's discovered insight into her previous, stolid marital commitment; the narrator of The Secret Agent frequently reminds the reader that her breaking from the established illusions creates a deluded wisdom. Winnie's conception of freedom is "not sound," and "governed too much by a fixed idea" (SA,249). We need to wait for these later novels for a fuller discussion of how irony can create a dialectic between madness and social allegiance. This story simply charts the break away from social allegiances and the demise of a character who can no longer believe in the social illusions. Early on, the "wilderness" (OP,89) is symbolised as the fateful antagonist of the solitary individual, as it is in Heart of Darkness. Gradually, the pair of characters discovers that "no power on earth" (OP,98) could help them against it, and the demise of the characters illustrates the disruptive
process of leaving the shelter of home. Unlike the irony of *Heart of Darkness* which is dialectical, the irony of this story is specific. Here, Muecke's distinction between the "victim" and the "object" of irony is significant:

The object of irony may be a person (including the ironist himself), an attitude, a belief, a social custom or institution, a philosophical system, a religion, even a whole civilisation, even life itself.

The victim of irony is the person whose 'confident unawareness' has directly involved him in an ironic situation.

Kayerts and Carlier are not so much personally morally reprehensible as the creatures of a society which does not equip them with independence. Society is the object of the narrator's irony:

Society, not from any tenderness, but because of its strange needs, had taken care of those two men, forbidding them all independent thought, all initiative, all departure from routine; and forbidding it under pain of death. They could only live on condition of being machines. (OP,91)

Later it is described as a "rubbish heap" (OP,116), and Kayerts's swollen tongue is an obvious insult to the establishment. The function of the irony in "An Outpost of Progress" is to expose the inability of society to create independent civilians. Marlow also indulges in antisocial rhetoric, but does not uncritically endorse his own satire. In other words, his irony is dialectical. While his antisocial stance allows him to explore the possibility of other modes of being, he painfully concedes that societal commitment is a necessary illusion. It is not until we meet the Professor of *The Secret Agent* that we again witness such a vitriolic attack on the
social mechanism. But, like Marlow's irony, the irony of the narrator of *The Secret Agent* is dialectical, for, although he admits that the Professor "had genius," he also concedes that he "lacked the great social virtue of resignation" (SA, 75).

"The Return" deals with the departure and return of Hervey's wife. The narrator describes the Herveys' social sphere satirically:

They moved in their enlarged world amongst perfectly delightful men and women who feared emotion, enthusiasm, or failure, more than fire, war, or mortal disease; who tolerated only the commonest formulas of commonest thoughts, and recognised only profitable facts. It was an extremely charming sphere, the abode of all the virtues, where nothing is realised. . . . (R, 120)

Alvan Hervey constructs his identity within this milieu, but his wife, after "five years of prudent bliss" (R, 121), leaves, it seems, with a literary man. On her return, she talks in terms of self-discovery and claims: "'I have forfeited everything . . . to learn . . . to learn . . .'" (R, 161). After her return, Hervey feels her presence as "destructive breath . . . mysterious breath" (R, 130); he also sees "the barrenness of his convictions" (R, 140). She becomes "mysterious, significant, full of obscure meaning—like a symbol" (R, 139). Nevertheless, he lectures her on the need for restraint:

(a) "Self-restraint is everything in life, you know. It's happiness, it's dignity . . . it's everything." (R, 155)

(b) "... Nothing that outrages the received beliefs can be right. Your conscience tells you that. They are the received beliefs because they are the best, the noblest, the only possible. They survive. . . ." (R, 157)
He equates her mental state with madness: "'Your mind is unhinged' . . ." (R,163). However, this dogmatic rhetoric is not sustained. He becomes fascinated by the "incomprehensible" (R,175) and realises that he will never know why she had behaved in this way. At that point he sees her as an "enigma" (R,176), with the concomitant recognition that previously "they had lived in a world that abhors enigmas" (R,176). He then dichotomises his previous life as a "shadow" and the search for something beyond social existence as "substance" (R,181). He is then in exactly the same position as Winnie, deludedly conceiving of her freedom. In a similar way to the narrator of The Secret Agent, the narrator of "The Return" remains aloof from and unenthusiastic about Hervey's apparent discovery. Concerning Hervey's "longing for the truth of its substance" (R,181), he concludes that his "desire of it was naïve" (R,181). Hervey discovers for himself a new conscience: "It came to him in a flash that morality is not a method of happiness" (R,183). The recognition that he can no longer remain in the old, constricting social routine, that his "conscience was born" (R,184), and that he could not stand to "live with that unfathomable candour where flit shadows of suspicions and hate" (R,185), induce in him a severe psychological distress and his final departure.

The story raises interesting ideas, which are more fully explored in Marlow's narratives. Hervey's wife returns and is prepared to tolerate the marriage again. She indicates by this that she recognises the need for social allegiances and illusions--indeed, while it is not explicitly stated, her very return indicates that what Hervey calls substance is itself another shadow. Marlow sides with Hervey's wife. He comes to see all experience as a matter of illusion and controls his
response to those illusions with irony. Hervey's wife seems to exhibit a similar control. However, Hervey himself becomes unhinged, as did Kayerts in "An Outpost of Progress," and, like Winnie Verloc, he departs under the delusion of having discovered a new conscience. In Lord Jim, the word "conscience" becomes important also. There Marlow learns to accept that Jim's romantic conscience is more interesting than the conventional, restrained conscience described by Hervey above, but, unlike Hervey, he construes the opposing notions of conscience into an indestructible paradox.

These early stories explore what happens to characters who depart from norms or social routines. The reduction of Almayer's quixotism is not typical of the early Marlow narratives. Such a reduction does not recur until Nostromo and Chance. In "Karain," the effect of Karain on the narrator is akin to that of Jim and Kurtz on Marlow. Both narrators respond ambivalently. The narrator of "Karain" and the crew-member narrator in The Nigger of the "Narcissus" also initiate a process which becomes significant to the irony of Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim. The two early narrators construct retrospective narratives, as they come to terms with the uncertainty induced by their scrutiny of unconventional behaviour.

We can combine this exploration of the quixotic and anarchic impulses with the consequences of remaining stolidly within social convention, as "An Outpost of Progress" and "The Return" illustrate. There, as Hervey describes it, the socialised characters live in the "shadow," metaphorically an analogue to Paul de Man's notion of the "mask." Once, this "shadow" is shown to be an illusory security, there is the
potential for madness to set in. This also becomes a prominent theme in *Heart of Darkness*. Marlow's achievement is to depart from the myopia of routine sufficiently to allow the quixotic or anarchic illusion to make an impact on his perspective. With the detachment from the events which time affords him, he constructs narratives which depend on the indestructible paradox of man's being both quixotic or anarchic and reliant on social convention. The retrospective narratives allow him the imaginative scope to oscillate between the poles of a dialectic. In that oscillation he experiences many identities: sailor, friend, sceptic, narrator; he finds vicarious allegiances with outlaws, romantics, imperialists. In so doing, as an alternative to madness, he constructs an ironic rhetoric of temporality, within which he battles with past memories, new allegiances, and, as the narratives develop, the entrenched convictions of his fictional audience.

* * * * *
As I have stressed in the Introduction, irony which springs from a stable premise will tend towards satire. Irony which issues from a consideration of the predicaments aroused by quixotism will be heuristic. In dealing with Marlow's irony, critical commentary has failed to stress this distinction, and yet this distinction between the two major types of irony is crucial. Marlow is in part a satirist, but he is also a scrutineer of the various structures of human existence, the illusions by which characters fashion their identities. Hence, he uses specific irony, where the psychic tension is generated and rapidly released, and a general irony which acknowledges that the problem of creating personal identity constitutes a genuine predicament. We also need to consider the temporal aspects of his narrative as direct contributors to the irony, for the irony is affected by the retrospective narration and by his interaction with his audience.

At one level, Marlow is aghast at the moral nullity of the pilgrims' mean-spirited imperialism, and a portion of his ironic intention is directed towards exposing it as a sham. At another level, he sees the wilderness as both symbolically and actually a chaos and that European conceptions of value are severely threatened in such an oppressive setting. Kurtz could not hold faith in the civilised order, and, in his cry "Exterminate all
the brutes!" (HD, 118), he recognises the fatuity of imperialism. Through Kurtz, Marlow confronts the general question of how one constructs an identity when the life-preserving laws and routines of organised life are taken away.

The narration occurs a long time after the events, and hence Marlow indulges in a speculative argument concerning the various structures of identity—the accountant's, his aunt's, the manager's, Fresleven's, the harlequin's, Kurtz's—all of which are treated with ambivalence. He holds unequivocal allegiance to none of them. It is at this level that we need to understand the kind of irony elucidated by Paul de Man—the rhetoric of temporality—as Marlow eventually acknowledges that he is unhinged from a stable moral and linguistic base and tentatively appraising the value and efficacy of various forms of identity to an audience which abhors his apparent facetiousness.

Quixotism, as I have stated, takes its meaning from its departure from empiricism. In Conrad's fiction, it refers to a character following an ideal which is manifestly at odds with the nature and circumstances of the surrounding environment. The original Quixote was so enamoured of chivalry that his imagination turned windmills into giants and peasant girls into princesses. The source of that quixotism is the obvious incongruity between the nature of the actual object or person and what is made of them by the transmuting antics of the idealising imagination. Quixotism, in *Heart of Darkness*, does not work with either parodied chivalry or with bizarre transmuting antics, but it does depend on idealism, which is relentlessly followed, despite the uncongenial and threatening environment of the wilderness. This process I call the
quixotic principle. In these terms, there are two Quixotes in the story: the accountant, who persists with a quixotic imperialism, and the harlequin, who follows a dangerous ideal of adventure, primarily the journey into ideas for which Kurtz is his prime mentor.

Marlow is ambivalent about both these characters, and our understanding of the general irony will depend on our coming to terms with that ambivalence. The irony directed against the accountant is not straightforward satire. Although he stresses the incongruity of the accountant's elegant routine in the jungle, he in part admires it. The harlequin's thirst for intellectual arousal is treated with respect as well as condemnation because the youth genuinely attempts to broaden his understanding with, as he insists, the help of Kurtz.

Kurtz begins as a Quixote and ends as a megalomaniac. The defection from the previous imperialistic ideal dramatises the process by which his previous ideal is rejected and replaced by a highly personal imaginative arousal which eventuates in flagrant anarchy. Like Don Quixote himself (at the end of the novel), who sees the folly of following ideals, Kurtz becomes disillusioned with the ideal of imperialism. Unlike Marlow, however, he is not an ironist. Whereas Marlow's awareness of the gap between ideal and real results in ambivalence and paradoxical formulations, Kurtz's awareness results in wanton power. Nevertheless, Kurtz's defection from the European ideals instigates Marlow's reflective disjunction, from which he creates a text full of the evasiveness and subtlety of Romantic irony.

At this point I will illustrate my objection to critical
accounts of the irony in *Heart of Darkness*. Wiley says impressively:

> Binding all this is a controlling play of irony wholly fitted to the temper of Conrad's mind and imagination, an irony that grows in depth and complexity as the narrative proceeds and that never falters either in purpose or in relentless bite.¹

The phrase "relentless bite" presages an irony which Wiley sees as satirical (specifically Swiftean) rather than general. When Wiley writes of Marlow's ironic accord with Kurtz, he sees the liaison as ironic because we would not expect such accord with anarchy: it is a choice of nightmares evoked by the horror of the alternative, mean-spirited materialism.² Such a commentary exhibits no awareness of Marlow's strategic portrayal of ambivalence, of his achieving a detachment from as well as an accord with Kurtz, of his simultaneous rejection and acceptance.

Brown's thesis is similarly limited by its assumption of a moral centre from which Marlow can illustrate his satirical revulsion at imperialism and progress.³ Gekoski's argument begins promisingly in that he admits that all Marlow's personal convictions and social contacts are modified and affected by Kurtz, but his analysis lapses in his discussion of Marlow's treatment of the accountant and the manager, for he sees Marlow as exposing an immorality-success dualism implicit in the dandyism of the accountant and the foolish emptiness of the manager.⁴ However, such criticism does not see that the dualism evoked by Marlow in dealing with these characters is fundamentally epistemological, not conventionally moral. As I will illustrate, his language comprises a variety of speech modes which illustrate the difficulty of accounting for two
modes of quixotism to an audience which does not understand and
an anarchy which threatens the values Marlow's audience clings
to, but within which Marlow attempts to find redeeming features.

The most obvious factor concerning Marlow's narrative is
that it is retrospective. In this, *Heart of Darkness* is Marlow's
autobiography. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary defines
autobiography as "The writing of one's own history; the story
of one's life written by himself," thereby drawing attention
to perhaps the only certain fact about autobiography: the fact
that writing an autobiography is a reflexive activity, since
the author and his subject are by definition the same person.
Or so the ordinary conventions of thought and language and
everyday life compel us to assume. But, if we allow ourselves
to question the unity and identity of the person who writes the
autobiography and the subject who is written about, and
consider the possibility that neither the autobiographer nor
the autobiographee is a single self, but that they are rather
multiple sets of selves, it becomes apparent that the writer
of an autobiography is engaged in an activity far more complex
than the word "reflexive" comes anywhere near to suggesting.
The appropriate visual analogy ceases to be that of a painter
painting a self-portrait and becomes that of someone occupying
a temporal corridor of mirrors and communing in turn with
images of past and present selves. We cannot suppose that
writing an autobiography is simply a process during which a
person writes down his memories of his past life, since neither
the person writing the autobiography nor the person being
written about is really such a simple entity, as such a
description would seem to imply. The autobiographer cannot be
just a camera to his own past, but must (cannot but) select
his memories in the light of his present conception of himself; and his memories are not just audiovisual tape recordings of the events in his past, but are experiences pressing for (or sometimes resisting and eluding) imaginative recollection and carrying with them revivable past conceptions of both the author and his subject. The process of writing an autobiography is, I am suggesting, not one in which the present "I" records the events in the life of the past "me," but one in which a dialectic takes place between the present "I" and the idea of the past "me," at the end of which both have changed. This dialectic creates the paradox of past and present selves and lays the ground for Friedrich Schlegel's notion of continual self-creation between antitheses. Necessarily, a multiplicity of selves eventuates, as Marlow oscillates between previously held notions of work, routine and present realisations of the inadequacy of such structures in a wilderness. This retrospective aspect of his narration forms a major structural element of the novel and has strong associations with the irony. In recounting the events in the jungle, Marlow creates a conception of himself as being preoccupied with the sailor's craft. We also learn that, on his return to Europe, he had felt psychologically unwell. However, in the narrative present, he is obviously no longer primarily concerned with physical survival, and his identity as sailor is only one element of a complex psyche. He no longer has to endorse unequivocally survival mechanisms, and the values or duties associated with the sailor's craft form one element of the imagination-efficiency dialectic, which absorbs him in the narrative present. Afforded the opportunity of narrating rather than sailing, he can see the limitation of
adhering exclusively to the work ethic and can attempt a wider epistemological scrutiny. In the narrative present, he shows an intellectual control and subtlety that rescinds his previous mental disorder. This retrospective element is also important in Lord Jim, where he sceptically evaluates his old allegiances to the Conway code in the face of the invigorating challenge of Jim's romanticism.

Allied to the retrospection, there is another element of Marlow's narration which contributes to the rhetoric of temporality: Marlow's relationship with his audience. Marlow's ironic focus is seriously affected by the intrusions of his audience in Heart of Darkness. He seems to change his mind as he narrates. Later I look more fully at this relationship between Marlow and his audience and the consequence of their interaction for the irony.

In both Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness, Marlow's relationship with his audience is a natural field for irony, a field in which Marlow tolerates some of their convictions, but is vastly different in his attitude to Jim and Kurtz. In Heart of Darkness, a certain set of assumptions builds up between Marlow and his listeners, a group of less sophisticated former sailors. His listeners comprise a company director, an accountant, a lawyer, and a primary narrator: all of them ex-seamen. Watt says of this audience-narrator bond:

Marlow himself, of course, is a composite, combining the two main roles in life that Conrad had experienced—the seaman and the writer; and the moral perspective which Marlow's commentary endorses is very largely the professional and social ethic that he shares with his immediate audience.
The composite element is correct, but I doubt the simplicity of the moral perspective. When the primary narrator mentions the listeners, he describes them collectively as representative of the bond of solidarity, of trustworthiness, of tolerance, and of a slightly disdainful ignorance. This unthinking allegiance is not part of Marlow's sensibility.

Marlow's journey into Africa elicits an imaginative response that neither his listeners nor the pilgrims could have created. His consciousness is absorbed by two interrelated ideas. He learns that the jungle is a wilderness, physically and symbolically oppressive in its threat to annihilate puny human beings and that Kurtz saw that his originally conceived ideas were inadequate in the wilderness, which realisation threw him into a state of anarchy that resulted in an extravaganza of wanton power.

Gekoski provides an interesting analysis of Kurtz's demise. I quote him because not only does he provide a significant phrase but also he concentrates exclusively on the "evil" generated by Kurtz, a common critical stance:

(a) ... 'safety' and 'value' are illusions that can only be generated and preserved within a given society, while any attempt to place oneself outside these artificial, but necessary, moral structures will drive any man into a perilous condition of 'excited imagination'.

(b) Yet the assumption that a man in a state of absolute freedom will do good is nonsense; at the very 'heart of darkness' every man desires, like Kurtz, to 'take a high seat among the devils of the land.' ... Kurtz's fate is that of any man who attempts to take upon himself the entire structure of morality.

Quotation (a) above provides the phrase "excited imagination,"
which is a very useful description of Kurtz's eccentric psyche. But quotation (b) is a little limited in its analysis of the consequences of Kurtz's "excited imagination," for the novel is about more than the exposure of Kurtz's lapse into evil. Indeed, Marlow spends little time on lamenting Kurtz's abominable crimes. What Kurtz symbolises is never entirely clear, but Marlow does not set about to expose a guilty and latterly repentant Kurtz. He alludes to the abominations, often with an accompanying excuse, and therefore we can be sure that the narrator's intention is not to criticise Kurtz single-mindedly with the conventional notions of good and evil. Marlow goes beyond moral disapproval. He recognises that Kurtz was a "remarkable man" (HD,151) because he had the imagination to respond to the uncharted wilderness, and it is the problems associated with what Gekoski calls the "excited imagination" which preoccupy Marlow in both Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim.

In this novel, Kurtz's anarchic imagination differs markedly from the quixotic imperialism of the accountant and the stolid efficiency of the manager, and it provides Marlow with an alternative intellectual allegiance at the point where he can no longer tolerate the mental atrophy in the Western preoccupation with efficiency. The interpretative difficulties concerning Kurtz's expostulation, "The horror! The horror!" (HD,149), are similar to the difficulties with Stein's phrase, "destructive element," in Lord Jim, which has, as Watt suggests, an accommodating openness to any meaning. Certainly, Gekoski's analysis of Kurtz's final words, in terms of Marlow's response to them, is unsubtle. Following on from describing Kurtz's fate as "that of any man who attempts to take upon
himself the entire structure of morality," Gekoski continues his analysis in overtly religious terms: "Marlow, however, is certain of his own interpretation; he sees Kurtz's last words as a confession, as a final attempt at self-purification: 'a judgement upon the adventures of his soul upon this earth.'" Although this is certainly a controversial area of criticism, I believe Gekoski's analysis to be too dogmatic, with its use of religious terminology. When Marlow comes to discuss more fully Kurtz's last words, he does not deal with the confessional element, as Gekoski suggests, but with the word as an expression of "candour" (HD,151) and as a "vibrating note of revolt" (HD,151). I have already said that Marlow often attempts to find excuses for Kurtz's behaviour, and we also need to consider that, at the point of death, Kurtz does not seek atonement, but remains proud of his new ideas and determined that they be recognised and carried out. I will deal more fully with Marlow's interpretation of Kurtz's demise later.

Marlow's irony issues from an internal paradox (which is never resolved). Before I look systematically at the text, I will illustrate the control which Marlow is able to achieve as he narrates. It is important to remember that when Marlow returns to Europe after his experience in the jungle, he finds the Westerners' lifestyle repugnant: "'... They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to—me an irritating pretence...'" (HD,152). Marlow's difficulty is well diagnosed by Paul de Man's notion of the reflective disjunction, for he admits that, while his "behaviour was inexcusable," it was his "imagination that wanted soothing" (HD,152). For the ironist, the language of empiricism, with its fixed context, becomes intolerably limited; the limitation instigates a search for a new system
of symbols. But, as Paul de Man points out, a prerequisite to
the search and discovery is a severe imaginative upheaval,
which, if not harnessed by a mediating irony, can slide into
madness. Marlow is at his most vulnerable on his return to
Europe, because he has not had the opportunity for the
intellectual reflection which can create a system of ironic
inferences. That he can eventually create such a system is a
measure of the psychological difference between Marlow and
Kayerts, in "An Outpost of Progress," who was similarly
unbalanced, but never regained control.

A key ingredient of the kind of irony proposed by Schlegel
is self-restriction, which necessitates the dialectical control
of opposite impulses. The notion of self-restriction as a
theme and as an important ingredient of irony is well
illustrated in Marlow's treatment of the harlequin:

"... I was seduced into something like
admiration—like envy. Glamour urged him on,
glamour kept him unscathed. He surely wanted
nothing from the wilderness but space to
breathe in and to push on through. His need
was to exist, and to move onwards at the
greatest possible risk, and with a maximum of
privation. If the absolutely pure,
uncalculating, unpractical spirit of adventure
had ever ruled a human being, it ruled this
be-patched youth. I almost envied him the
possession of this modest and clear flame. It
seemed to have consumed all thought of self so
completely, that even while he was talking to
you, you forgot that it was he—the man before
your eyes—who had gone through these things.
I did not envy him his devotion to Kurtz,
though. He had not meditated over it. It
came to him, and he accepted it with a sort of
eager fatalism. I must say that to me it
appeared about the most dangerous thing in
every way he had come upon so far. ..."
(HD,126-27)

Two aspects of Marlow's character are evidenced here. In the
first instance, Marlow acknowledges that he identified with the intrepidity of the harlequin and was "seduced into something like admiration—like envy." This approval of the "spirit of adventure" is important, because it signals his preparedness to investigate the status of a quixotic identity, which he finds far more stimulating than the passivity of the Westerners on his return to Europe. The approval given here is also consistent with that given to the Romans very early in the narrative. Marlow exaggerates his response to the harlequin with the word "seduced." Indeed, unlike the harlequin, he did not become a disciple of Kurtz, and he strongly disapproves of the former's devotion to Kurtz, on the grounds that he had not "meditated over it." It is this capacity for meditation which characterises the second aspect of Marlow's character, for his achievement in the above passage is to forge a dialectic between quixotism and more conventional behaviour. He needs the greater freedom symbolised by the harlequin's adventurousness, but at the same time he realises the necessity to curb that freedom. Self-restriction is his theme. One of the consequences of behaviour like the harlequin's is that it easily degenerates into the anarchy of Kurtz. That is why, according to Marlow, the harlequin's devotion to Kurtz is "about the most dangerous thing in every way he had come upon so far."

Marlow's complex perspective, the harbouring of antithetical responses, can be most accurately gauged at the end and at the beginning of the retrospective narration, both of which occur at least one year after the initial African expedition. His lie to the Intended has commonly been seen as his supporting of her illusions; at the beginning, in the lotus position (as
W. Stein points out he has the aspect of control and equilibrium, poised in intellectual ambivalence and yet simultaneously supportive of necessary illusions. In between he wavers between varying and often contradictory modes of speech: apparent endorsement of Kurtz, condemnation of Kurtz, anti-imperialistic speech, satire, controlled double irony, enraged rhetoric, sarcasm and the deliberate lie. It is my contention that these different modes of speech need to be seen in the context of an ironic intelligence which is struggling to illustrate the exigencies of combating a wilderness to an audience which is largely unsympathetic. His evasive speech is the result of a reflective disjunction which has found inadequate the language of conventional reference. For discussion purposes I will divide Heart of Darkness into sections, as follows.

SECTION ONE

The narrative is initiated by one of Marlow's listeners. As the frame narrator he is quite disdainful of his fellow listeners, stressing their lack of curiosity and "direct simplicity" (HD,48). However, he lauds the bond of solidarity. Later, Marlow finds himself in a quandary, as he battles against an admiration for their cohesion and a disdain for their impoverished imaginations. This tension becomes a major part of the irony of the novel, as Marlow gradually begins to reveal explicitly his allegiances to the opposite poles of a paradox, whereas previously he had been subtly dialectical and the irony largely covert.

The frame narrator creates an atmosphere of generalised epic; his voice is effusive, historical and unironic:
The tidal current runs to and fro in its unceasing service, crowded with memories of men and ships it had borne to the rest of home or to the battles of the sea. It had known and served all the men of whom the nation is proud, from Sir Francis Drake to Sir John Franklin, knights all, titled and untitled—the great knights-errant of the sea. . . . What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth! . . . The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires. (HD,47)

The chivalric images evoked here are relevant to the terms of this thesis; the frame narrator uncritically enthuses over the heroes of the British Maritime Service and exalts their conquering mien. This becomes the subject of Marlow's narrative, but his treatment is not couched in such exalted rhetoric. He reacts both enthusiastically and sceptically. The frame narrator not only sets up the theme of quixotism, but also he stresses that Marlow's narratorial style is idiosyncratic. We learn that Marlow is a wanderer and that he is distinct from the majority of seamen who possess minds of a "stay-at-home order" (HD,48), and he comments on Marlow's unusual narratorial technique: "... to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze . . . (HD,48).

The frame narrator has an important function in the initial stages of the novel in that he is able to separate himself and Marlow from the fictional audience and able to establish an idealised epic as a laudable means of self-expression. Marlow explores the epic through recounting the adventures of the early Roman colonists. He indicates that the Romans, as earlier conquerors, had faced the darkness, which he associates with an uncharted wilderness. He stresses not their anarchy but
their courage ('... They were men enough to face the
darkness ...' [HD,49]) in an atmosphere which is perpetually
intent on overwhelming puny individualism ('... He has to
live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also
detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work
upon him ...' [HD,50]). Marlow initiates here discussion of
an idea which later becomes a preoccupation in his reminiscence
of his encounter with Kurtz: the mysterious life of the
wilderness offers no accommodation for civilised man, and yet
the conqueror cannot impose his own will upon it. He stresses
that the wilderness, an untrammelled and primitive force,
excites the human imagination into chaotic impulses ('... you
know, imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape,
the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate' [HD,50]).
When the wilderness incites the chaotic, imaginative response,
the conqueror cannot retreat to civilised notions of value for
survival. The Romans reacted lustfully, and Marlow's generalised
treatment of the Romans prefigures his treatment of Kurtz who
also reacts anarchically.

Having stressed the abominable void and the courage of the
Romans, Marlow apparently differentiates himself and the
audience from such an extravagant response: ''Mind, none of us
would feel exactly like this. What saves us is efficiency—the
devotion to efficiency ...'" (HD,50). In terms of Marlow's
context, there is a juxtaposition of incompatible ideas in the
second sentence. He has stressed the oppressiveness of the
wilderness, its capacity to incite chaos in the human
imagination, and the courage of the Romans to face the darkness.
Then he introduces the idea of efficiency; this creates a
double irony. In the context of what we have heard about the Romans and of what Marlow later says about Kurtz, the word "saves" is used ironically. It simply means the opposite, something like "kills" ("what kills us . . ."), and yet we learn that Marlow is a devotee of work and is conscious of efficiency as a means of order. Later on, his preoccupation with rivets and the steering of the steamer are significant components of his survival, and to be efficient is his major responsibility. Being efficient provides a means by which the psychologically unsettling effects of the wilderness can be eliminated. Thus, part of Marlow's psyche finds the statement literally true. He also knows that his audience responds solely to the literal truth of the statement, and it is an illusion which, at this stage of the narrative, he needs to preserve. The reader can detect the double irony, which involves the imagination-efficiency conflict, very prominent in Conrad's early fiction. At this stage of the narrative Marlow is able to sustain a dialectic between oppositions. However, Watt remains confused about this passage:

Unselfish belief in the idea, and a devotion to efficiency, constitute a rather weak and asymmetrical alliance of powers to set up against greed, violence, and the call of the wilderness. It is especially difficult to know what to make of efficiency, since the Romans were not notably inefficient in most senses of the term. Marlow's reasoning is probably empirical and psychological: the automatic British "devotion" to the "unselfish idea" of efficiency immunises the believer against all morbid solicitations. But this defence of "what saves us" leaves untouched Marlow's moral and social grounds for condemning "the conquest of the earth"; and there is no reason to believe that Conrad intended to dissociate himself from this contradiction of attitudes, since Marlow is usually, as Wayne Booth writes, a "reliable reflector of the clarities and ambiguities of the implied author." Without assuming any ironic
intention on Conrad's part, then, we must register both the conciliatory intention, and the intrinsic inadequacy, of Marlow's attempt to exclude his listeners and his country from the ugliness of imperialism; and we must also note that while Marlow nowhere retracts his views on "efficiency" and "a definite idea," they play a rather minor and extremely ambiguous role in the rest of the story.8

Watt previously had seen the themes of Marlow's preamble as "colonisation and atavistic regression."9 But, in that preamble, Marlow stresses emphatically the strength of their personal psychologies ("... They were men enough to face the darkness ...") in confronting the wilderness. Watt's focus on Marlow's conventional moral stance misses the nuance of his voice, which is juxtaposing antithetical responses. Marlow is clearly not excluding his audience from "the ugliness of imperialism," but he is aware that, secure in the illusions formed in the safe networks of civilisation, they have not the strength to face the darkness, and therefore he must be tactful. Later on, as I will show, this tact wilts and he rails at them in enraged anti-bourgeois rhetoric. The implication of Watt's phrase ("Without assuming any ironic intention ..."), is that Marlow is not indulging in a specific irony attack on Western civilisation, and clearly he is not. But Marlow is responding with a double irony and sees the claims of both sides of the imagination-efficiency conflict. Watt's commentary does no justice to the ambivalence which follows in Marlow's narration:

"... They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind—as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty
thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. 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. . . ." (HD,50-51)

Here Marlow does talk about "atavistic regression," but not in a tone of moral denunciation. In part, it is, of course, the kind of rhetoric which his audience would expect to hear. However, they would not have expected the word "proper," which in this context, is not a word denoting morally acceptable behaviour, but an endorsement of the individual strength necessary in the void of the wilderness. In this sense, Kurtz's acts were "proper." This strength is the redeeming "idea," the idea of imaginative response when faced with the annihilating wilderness, not the idea of efficiency, which Watt suggests. However, Marlow is able to juxtapose his imaginative identification with an idea which leads to anarchy with moral repudiation ("'... It was just robbery with violence . . .'"), and this juxtaposition illustrates my claim that he is able to sustain simultaneously an intellectual commitment to antitheses.

The effect of contact with the wilderness is dramatised in Fresleven's demise. Marlow's irony is obvious in the whimsical depiction of Fresleven's contradictory behaviour: he was "the gentlest, quietest creature" who "whacked the old nigger mercilessly" (HD,54). Marlow's use of the word "noble" (HD,54) is sarcastic, in the context of what else he has to say about imperialistic proceedings, but even though the treatment contains elements of farce (the squabble was over hens), Marlow does not merely parody Fresleven's need for self-expression ("'... Oh, it didn't surprise me in the
least . . ." [HD,54]). The analysis of Fresleven's psychology is vague. We cannot tell whether the primitive environment of the wilderness threatened him, or whether the submergence of the self to the cause so subordinated any sense of identity that he felt stifled. What is clear is that, unlike the accountant, he could not maintain an unequivocal allegiance to the "noble cause." Marlow surmises that he "probably felt the need at last of asserting his self-respect in some way" (HD,54). Imaginative response, albeit chaotic and anarchic expression, has usurped efficiency. Kurtz also defects from the cause, which makes no impression on the wilderness, and is propelled into self-assertiveness with more dire consequences.

In the city, the imagination is not threatened by the chaos of the wilderness. Accordingly, the routines of the officials are seen as uninvigorating and determined by a submissiveness to an unexamined, civilised order. However, Marlow's treatment of his appointment in the "sepulchral city" (HD,152) is interesting for its controlled irony. The narration is disciplined by Marlow's retrospective analysis, which struggles with the imagination-efficiency dialectic. He oscillates between the poles. His voice is restrained, marked by a recognition that he can be neither as impulsive as Fresleven nor as static as the women knitting. He is taut, psychologically suspended between the two extremes; he knows the sterility of submission, but is able to accommodate that response as a necessary illusion for at least the veneer of civilisation.

Marlow prefaces his treatment of his meeting with the officials with an image that has Biblical associations: "' . . .
In a very few hours I arrived in a city that always makes me think of a whited sepulchre. Prejudice no doubt . . . "[HD,55]). The image "whited sepulchre" is Jesus Christ's image of hypocrisy. Shortly afterwards, Marlow uses the phrase "city of the dead" (HD,57) as a figurative depiction of the lifelessness of the bureaucracy. The description of the street and houses indicates that these inanimate objects are more imposing than humans—significantly, the street is "deserted" (HD,55). Marlow focuses on the "high houses, innumerable windows with venetian blinds . . . imposing carriage archways . . . immense double doors standing ponderously ajar" (HD,55). In this setting, humanity is insignificant ("... I slipped through one of these cracks . . . " [HD,55]). The images used to describe his entry into the Company Office continue the associations with sterility and inertness. The staircase is "as arid as a desert" (HD,55), and the slim woman prompts him to consider "getting out of her way, as you would for a somnambulist" (HD,55).

The irony levelled against the secretary is partly satirical and is engendered by a Dickensian technique of making an inanimate object, the desk, more alive than the man:

A door opened, a white-haired secretarial head, but wearing a compassionate expression, appeared, and a skinny forefinger beckoned me into the sanctuary. Its light was dim, and a heavy writing-desk squatted in the middle. From behind that structure came out an impression of pale plumpness in a frock-coat. The great man himself. He was five feet six, I should judge, and had his grip on the handle-end of ever so many millions. (HD,56)

However, we also need to account for the adjective "compassionate,"
which is used twice to describe the secretary. His being "full of desolation and sympathy" (HD,56) indicates that Marlow realises that the secretary knew the details of the ensuing encounter. He differs from the women secretaries. The old one had a look of "indifferent placidity" (HD,56) and a glance of "unconcerned wisdom" (HD,57). Marlow scolds his audience for a similar indifference later in the narrative.

Marlow's meeting with the doctor is the most enlightening encounter. The doctor shows real insight into the possible consequences of going into the jungle and the best means of combatting the tropics:

(a) "'... the changes take place inside...!'"
(b) "...'Ever any madness in your family?'..."
(c) "'... In the tropics one must before everything keep calm.'..." (HD,58)

However, Marlow's aunt does not show any of this succinct insight. Like the clerk who "glorified the Company's business" (HD,57) in a "vein of joviality" (HD,57), she is "triumphant" (HD,59) about the progress of imperialism. His aunt had "represented" him to the wife of a high dignitary:

"... as an exceptional and gifted creature—a piece of good fortune for the Company—a man you don't get hold of every day. Good heavens! and I was going to take charge of a two-penny-half-penny river-steamboat with a penny whistle attached! ... She talked about 'weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways,' till, upon my word, she made me quite uncomfortable. ..." (HD,59)

Language as official rhetoric is a veneer of civilisation. Another is the feminine illusion ("...'... It's queer how out
of touch with truth women are . . .'" [HD,59]). Marlow comments here on the Intended as well as his aunt. He protects the feminine faith in civilised values and does not indulge in a misogynist's rhetoric, content to note the ironic incongruity between his aunt's exalted belief in the Company and the actuality of a mission being completed in a "river-steamboat with a penny whistle attached!"

Marlow's retelling of his appointment in the city can be seen in the context of his original statement, "'... What saves us is efficiency—the devotion to efficiency. . . .'" This kind of devotion is apparent in the dispositions of the secretary, the women knitting, the clerk, and his aunt. But their efficiency stifles any more invigorating response to Marlow's imminent encounters in the jungle. My reading of "what saves . . ." as "what kills . . ." is borne out in this section, where Marlow explicitly uses an image of death ("city of the dead" [HD,57]) to evoke the atmosphere of the European civilisation and bureaucracy. The doctor remains the one character who exhibits insight into the difference between the civilised and primitive worlds. Nevertheless, Marlow's irony, in exploiting the aunt's ignorance of this discrepancy between the two worlds, is not incorrigibly satirical. His meditative delivery sustains a restrained narrative and illustrates his understanding of the paradox of discovering light in the darkness. Irony is anarchic, while stability and civilisation depend upon the veneers the ironist shatters in order to gain his insights.

SECTION TWO

The irony in this section is satirical. It is not
manifested by a determined, anti-imperialistic rhetoric, but by a highly concretised description, where the satire issues out of Marlow's skill at evoking the incongruities between setting and action, grandiose imperialistic rhetoric and the actual atrocities. He is not obsessed by railing at the imperialists, but rather he constructs an impressionistic lens by-which he can relay antithetical images. The natural setting and the natives' energy initially attract Marlow:

"... they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf along their coast. They wanted no excuse for being there. They were a great comfort to look at. ..." (HD, 61)

In contrast to the natural vitality of the natives, Marlow works an overt irony against the militarism of the French man-of-war. The satire works through a succession of images that establish the imperialists' aggression as puny attempts to make an impression on a continent:

"... In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent. Pop, would go one of the six-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little white smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech—and nothing happened. Nothing could happen. ..." (HD, 61-62)

Marlow's cognisance of the treachery of language is revealed in his recording of someone aboard calling the natives "criminals" (HD, 64). His abhorrence of the European label and the consequences of imperialistic progress are clear in his depiction of the natives' "deathlike indifference" (HD, 64) in the service of the "great cause of these high and just proceedings" (HD, 65). The word criminals renders them legal
outcasts and provides the imperialists with a justification for the atrocious treatment. The zealous commitment to progress generates an ugly euphemism:

"... Another mine on the cliff went off, followed by a slight shudder of the soil under my feet. The work was going on. The work! And this was the place where some of the helpers had withdrawn to die. . . ." (HD,66)

The "work" in this context is flagrant slavery. Western law justifies its activity because the natives had come "from the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts" (HD,66), and the cruelty is concealed by that legality. The satire emerges succinctly from the incompatibility of the imperialistic jargon and the resultant barbarism. In the next section, Marlow's irony, relying again on incongruity, is more complex.

**SECTION THREE**

This section is dominated by Marlow's discussion of several pilgrims. Gekoski notes the incongruity of the well-groomed accountant amidst the sordid surroundings and sees it as part of the "thematic association of success with immorality." However, it is also necessary to account for the succession of plaudits lavished on the accountant by Marlow:

(a) "... He was amazing. . . ."
(b) "I shook hands with this miracle. . . ."
(c) "... Moreover, I respected the fellow. . . ."
(d) "... That's backbone. . . ."
(e) "... His starched collars and got-up shirt-fronts were achievements of character. . . ."
(f) "... Thus this man had verily accomplished something...." (HD,67-68)

It is important to consider the way Marlow characterises him. Marlow's enthusiasm is aroused by his recognition that the accountant has survived in the wilderness with the European ideal of civilisation. Placed in the setting of the jungle, the accountant's ideal becomes quixotic, and Marlow's irony depends on the incongruity between that ideal and the facts of the primitive environment. When we consider that the accountant is a perfectionist and that he has maintained his Western ritual for three years in the bizarre setting, we can see that his psyche is of a different order from those who ally unimaginatively to the illusions of security found by obeying social norms. These latter characters (for example, the manager in *Heart of Darkness*, Kayerts and Carlier in "An Outpost of Progress," and Winnie in *The Secret Agent*) accept the illusions in a very unidealised manner. A key element of quixotism is obsession. The accountant holds to his ideal of clerical accuracy to the point where he is intolerant of the atrocities occurring around him:

"... 'The groans of this sick person,' he said, 'distract my attention. And without that it is extremely difficult to guard against clerical errors in this climate.' ..." (HD,69)

"... 'When one has got to make correct entries, one comes to hate those savages—hate them to the death.' ..." (HD,70)

Marlow points out the incongruity of the clerical fastidiousness:

"... the other, bent over his books, was
making correct entries of perfectly correct transactions; and fifty feet below the doorstep I could see the still tree-tops of the grove of death. . . ." (HD,70)

The net effect of this characterisation is similar to that by the narrator of Nostromo of Gould, "straight out of some green meadow at the other side of the world" (N,48). The idealism is different in kind, but the degree of obsession with the respective ideals and the incongruity of their ideals in their respective environments are similar.

Marlow characterises the accountant as both an idealist and as an efficient colonist, and so the previous dichotomy between the imagination and efficiency momentarily disappears, for the accountant has idealised efficiency. Marlow is intent on portraying the psyche of a character who transfers the routines of a Western civilisation to the jungle and, in maintaining that idealised ritual, enacts a quixotic imperialism. The above quotations illustrate the incongruity of such a transference. However, Marlow's awareness of the incongruity as a factor in the imagination-efficiency dialectic supersedes that of any moral dualism like immorality-success. The wilderness is threatening, and the first requirement is a survival kit. If the accountant's ideal of efficiency is bizarre, it allows him to survive, even flourish elegantly. Marlow's irony has changed its focus. Whereas in Section Two he is satirical about the consequences of the "high and just proceedings" (HD,65), his treatment of the accountant suggests that he wishes to stress more than just revulsion at the European ideal and one of its representatives. Certainly, the accountant's appearance is "that of a hairdresser's dummy"
(HD,68), continuing Marlow's discrediting of the imperialistic mentality, but the wilderness is not Europe, and the change of environment necessitates a change in irony. The denunciation and the plaudits establish Marlow's irony as double irony. He is intellectually more interested in the predicament of how one survives in the wilderness. The accountant illustrates one method, the manager another:

"... He was obeyed, yet he inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect. He inspired uneasiness... You have no idea how effective such a... a... faculty can be. He had no genius for organizing... He had no learning, and no intelligence... He originated nothing, he could keep the routine going—that's all. But, he was great..." (HD,73-74)

There is clearly more going on in Marlow's mind than the positing of an immorality-success dualism or the satirical demolition of the manager's foolish emptiness. As with the accountant, it is necessary to account for Marlow's praiseworthy comments ("... You have no idea how effective..."; "... But he was great..."). Elsewhere in Conrad's fiction the ironic capacity of not possessing imaginative insight is explored through characters like Singleton in The Nigger of the "Narcissus" and MacWhirr in Typhoon. Indeed, there is a striking resemblance between the above passage and the opening of Typhoon, where the character's capacity to survive is stated similarly in negativity:

Captain MacWhirr, of the steamer Nan-Shan, had a physiognomy that, in the order of material appearances, was the exact counterpart of his mind: it presented no marked characteristics of firmness or stupidity; it had no pronounced characteristics whatever; it was simply ordinary, irresponsible, and unruffled. (T,3)
For the accountant, survival depends on his unflappable transference of an imperialistic ideal to the jungle; for the manager, it depends upon a sound constitution. Both characters survive (albeit with different styles) and accordingly are, in part, treated generously by Marlow, who acknowledges that to keep the routine going is an achievement.

His treatment of the brickmaker is more directly satirical. Marlow cannot respond to anything admirable in his behaviour. There is no sign of any industry associated with the brickmaker's trade:

"... The business intrusted to this fellow was the making of bricks—so I had been informed; but there wasn't a fragment of a brick anywhere in the station, and he had been there more than a year—waiting. ..." (HD,77)

This recognition of inertia, distinctly different from the manager's, gives Marlow the opportunity for direct attack on the sham of the colonisation:

"... There was an air of plotting about that station, but nothing came of it, of course. It was as unreal as everything else—as the philanthropic pretence of the whole concern, as their talk, as their government, as their show of work. The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a trading-post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages. ..." (HD,78)

Marlow illustrates the sham of the "philanthropic pretence" through a dramatized irony by reporting the brickmaker's speech, which remains at the level of inflated official rhetoric. As Marlow intimates, his "dear aunt's influential acquaintances were producing an unexpected effect upon that young man" (HD,79-80):
"... 'He is an emissary of pity, and science, and progress, and devil knows what else. We want,' he began to declaim suddenly, 'for the guidance of the cause intrusted to us by Europe, so to speak, higher intelligence, wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose.'..."

(HD,79)

The brickmaker's approbatory language concerning Kurtz succinctly encapsulates the imperialistic fervour as quixotic. In contrast, as Marlow is to reveal, Kurtz is renowned for an insight which penetrates the colonists' illusions, most notably evidenced in his report, "Exterminate all the brutes" (HD,118). This contrast with the "papier-maché Mephistopheles" (HD,81) is clearly at the forefront of Marlow's mind. The brickmaker, as the colonists' most articulate spokesman, has no redeeming features from Marlow's point of view. Through this character Marlow is able to expose the mean-spiritedness and moral nullity of the European enterprise; that is, using Booth's terminology, Marlow has a stable base for his irony. Where the irony has been specific and straightforward, we have been able to detect that Marlow's mission has been to expose the sham of the philanthropic pretense of the whole colonial concern. Indeed, Marlow soon expresses his abhorrence of the Eldorado Expedition quite straightforwardly:

"... Their talk, however, was the talk of sordid buccaneers: it was reckless without hardihood, greedy without audacity, and cruel without courage. ... To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe. ..."

(HD,87)

It is within this moral squalor that Marlow signals his allegiances to Kurtz, who had at least gone out there "with
moral ideas of some sort" (HD,88). The clear-cut moral
denunciation above is the stable base for Marlow's specific
irony strategies so far employed. It elucidates the moral
surety with which Marlow can generate various ironic contexts.
He has achieved these ironies through different means--
juxtaposition of incongruous images, dramatized irony, satirical
images, direct criticism. But if the irony is discernibly
specific, with varying tones of bitterness and humour towards
characters like his aunt, the women secretaries, and the
brickmaker, it is not as clear-cut in his treatment of characters
like the accountant and the manager. There, as Muecke aptly
describes the effect of double irony, the psychic tension is
generated, but not rapidly released. We respond to both these
characters in a double way. It is at that point that we
recognise that Marlow's irony, on another level, is dialectical.
The ironic aphorism, "What saves us is efficiency—the devotion
to efficiency," harbours the opposing poles of a dialectic,
which Marlow constantly scrutinises. Efficiency in Europe is
arid and stultifying, but in the wilderness it is an essential
component of survival, and, when it is usurped, the result is
a demise like Fresleven's. Accordingly, Marlow's mind
oscillates between revulsion at and admiration for the
accountant and the manager.

The specific irony against the "high and just proceedings"
(HD,65) is an important aspect of the irony of Part 1 of the
tale, but by the end of the first part has largely run its
course, and the dialectical irony, largely covert until this
point, surfaces as the predominant intellectual concern of
Marlow. While recounting his impressions of the brickmaker,
he signals his greatest preoccupations--with the overpowering
impression the wilderness makes on his imagination and the consequences of Kurtz's journey into its unchartered territory:

"... What were we who had strayed in here? Could we handle that dumb thing, or would it handle us? I felt how big, how confoundedly big, was that thing that couldn't talk, and perhaps was deaf as well. What was in there? 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. I believed it in the same way one of you might believe there are inhabitants in the planet Mars..."

(HD,81)

Marlow is in a region which does not respond to laws, morals or Western conceptions of identity. The wilderness is actually and symbolically a chaos. As he indicates in his preamble on the Romans, it has the effect of unsettling the imagination and provoking fear and bewilderment in those who have the capacity for responding to it. This intuition of the potentially destructive powers of the wilderness is always in his consciousness, and in the above quotation he overtly expresses it. Only one of his listeners, the frame narrator, is alert to the "faint uneasiness inspired by this narrative" (HD,83). It becomes clear in the next section that this "uneasiness" is not caused by an exposition of immoral human behaviour, a dramatisation of evil, but by a gradual recognition that Marlow is prepared to embrace the awesome fact that illusions of identity and value are deposed in the uncompromising setting of the wilderness. At this point of his narrative, Marlow signals his awareness of the difficulty of finding language to convey experience:
"... Do you see him? Do you see the story? 
Do you see anything? It seems to me I am 
trying to tell you a dream—making a vain 
attempt, because no relation of a dream can 
convey the dream-sensation, that commingling 
of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in 
a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of 
being captured by the incredible which is of 
the very essence of dreams. . . ."

He was silent for a while.

"... No, it is impossible; it is impossible 
to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch 
of one's existence—that which makes its truth, 
its meaning—its subtle and penetrating essence. 
It is impossible. We live, as we dream—alone. 
. . ." (HD,82)

It should be remembered that the originator of this kind of 
attitude to language is the narrator of "Karain" who says:

It is impossible to convey the effect of his 
story. It is undying, it is but a memory, and 
its vividness cannot be made clear to another 
mind, any more than the vivid emotions of a 
dream. (K,26)

Marlow is attempting to relay to his audience that the 
consequences for him of contact with the wilderness and Kurtz 
are the mental dislocation from the secure world they take for 
granted and a resulting struggle for language from that 
reflective disjunction. In his description of the wilderness 
he says: "'. . . it didn't bring any image with it . . .'" 
(HD,81); the story becomes "a dream" (HD,82) and articulation 
"impossible" (HD,82). Language is no longer easily available, 
as the experience is ineffable. Paul de Man's contention is 
that once the ironist finds himself unhinged from the empirical 
world he is divided:

Language thus conceived divides the subject 
into an empirical self, immersed in the world, 
and a self that becomes like a sign in its 
attempt at differentiation and self-definition.13
This is a restatement of the kind of dialectical tension that issues from Friedrich Schlegel's thought and encapsulates the divided Marlovian psyche. Final self-definition is, of course, impossible in Schlegel's aesthetics, and Paul de Man argues correctly that the divided self can only utter a "temporal sequence of acts of consciousness which is endless," if it is to avoid the claustrophobia of finite reference and the madness potentially lurking in the abandonment of the social allegiances. Marlow's regret at his incapacity to find the language to convey his story establishes him as a Romantic ironist who expresses his realisation of the linguistic uncertainty which the chaos of the wilderness arouses. For the first time, Marlow acknowledges his self-consciousness in the role of narrator, and the control and surety of narrative voice, previously established as both satirical and dialectical, are themselves ironically scrutinised. This tentativeness does not show "muddlement," but uncertainty, which is at the heart of Friedrich Schlegel's aesthetics. Marlow reveals more explicitly the consequences of possessing the divided self in the next section, where members of his audience intrude and adjure him to be civil. He attempts to relay to his largely unsympathetic audience the results of Kurtz's imaginative response to the wilderness. He finds more latitude for his own imagination, and the temporal aspect of the irony becomes more apparent, as the sequence of acts of consciousness gradually reveals that his juxtaposition of the antitheses of imagination and efficiency is self-creating, in the manner of Schlegel's definition of the ironic idea.
SECTION FOUR

In this section, both sides of the dialectic implicit in the sentence, "What saves us is efficiency—the devotion to efficiency," are evoked more fully. Until this point of the narrative he has stressed the need for efficiency. Initially, in this section, he continues to stress the threat of the wilderness and work as a myopic antidote; several times he cites his own and the helmsman's work as a means of order. He also admires the diligent scholarship in Towson's book. But the restrained ironic consciousness, harbouring his fascination with the effects of the wilderness on the imagination, disintegrates at the intrusions of his audience, increasingly participatory and contemptuous of his vacillation.

The first intrusion occurs after his description of the wilderness and evocation of work as a means of order:

"... I had to keep a look-out for the signs of dead wood we could cut up in the night for next day's steaming. When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality—the reality, I tell you—fades. The inner truth is hidden—luckily, luckily. But I felt it all the same. . . ." (HD,93)

This passage illustrates the oscillations of the Romantic ironist. He is able to describe himself in the committed world of work, see that as illusory, and intimate another reality, which, he suggests, he is unable to face ("... The inner truth is hidden—luckily, luckily . . ."), but which he recognises ("... But I felt it all the same . . ."). Muecke provides an interesting analogy to describe the capacity of the Romantic ironist for simultaneous involvement and detachment:

... I would say that the ironist is like the circus clown on the tight-rope. First
the ordinary tight-rope walker performs his feats seriously. Then the clown, sent aloft by the ring-master, pretends to be afraid of heights, pretends to fall, perhaps falls, but the wire catches him by one of his enormous buttons, recovers himself and runs the rest of the way so as to get across quickly; but all the time he is much more skilful than his fellow acrobat. He has raised tight-rope walking to a higher power, in that he is performing at two levels simultaneously—as a clown and as a tight-rope walker, and demonstrating at the same time both the possibility and impossibility of tight-rope walking.\textsuperscript{15}

The measure of Marlow's self-parody in the previous passage can be seen in a comparison with another passage, where he reveals a more single-minded attitude to work:

"... No, I don't like work. I had rather laze about and think of all the fine things that can be done. I don't like work—no man does—but I like what is in the work,—the chance to find yourself. Your own reality—for yourself, not for others—what no other man can ever know. ..." (HD, 85)

Marlow's divided self is discernible in a juxtaposition of the two passages about work. The above passage occurs in the context of his frustration with the lack of rivets. However, that kind of preoccupation is an example of what he later calls "mere incidents of the surface," an aspect of his sailor's craft. Certainly, at the time of events in the jungle, the work was important (and the lack of rivets riled him), but in the narrative present, the single-minded concentration on routine is anathema to Marlow. By the time of the self-parody, he is ready to broaden the discussion to a scrutiny of the illusions which both unfortunately and necessarily block out the effect of confronting the awesome "inner truth." Marlow goes on to suggest that his audience also are presided over by the "inner
truth" while they perform their tasks:

"... The inner truth is hidden—luckily, luckily. But I felt it all the same; I felt often its mysterious stillness watching me at my monkey tricks, just as it watches you fellows performing on your respective tightropes for—what is it? half-a-crown a tumble—" (HD, 93-94)

Muecke's use of the analogy of the clown as tight-rope walker to elucidate the duplicities of the Romantic ironist is particularly apt, for Marlow also uses the image of tight-rope walking. Marlow's ironic barb towards his audience confirms that he is "performing at two levels simultaneously," for, at his most poised, he respects the need for efficiency and social allegiances, but his previous antithetical attitudes to work establish that he is functioning intellectually at a dual level, respecting work and repudiating it.

The series of interactions with his audience illustrates that Marlow harbours an intellectual scope of which they are not capable. In the above passage, his irony focuses on the small and unadventurous world of his audience—-it is the first direct attack on their illusory order, which, as Marlow is determined to illustrate, is imaginatively stifling. But the provocation is met only by the retort, "'Try to be civil, Marlow'" (HD, 94). The connotation of the word "civil" is clear enough and differentiates the audience from Marlow. His awareness of this elicits the deferential reply, "'I beg your pardon . . . '" (HD, 94). He is able to sustain a commitment to their less invigorating order (he acknowledges that they do their "tricks" very well [HD, 94]) and maintain a tight control over the narrative at this point and soon after, when he is
challenged to face the darkness by one of his audience. Having described the "unearthly" earth (HD,96) and the passionate uproar of the natives, he cites the necessity of an "inborn strength" (HD,97). He admits that he did not go ashore for a "howl and a dance" (HD,97), and a listener levels a charge of hypocrisy with "Fine sentiments" (HD,97). As an explanation, he cites his responsibilities as a sailor ("... There was surface-truth enough in these things to save a wiser man...") [HD,97]). Again, he is able to assert the pragmatic impulse. However, at the point of the narrative where Marlow discusses the anger he felt at the prospect of not getting to Kurtz (at the helmsman's death), his rhetoric enthusiastically exalts Kurtz's power. He relegates the efficiency element of the dialectic in order to focus on the gifted Kurtz (significantly it is Kurtz's gift with words which intrigues Marlow) who had responded to the wilderness. He concentrates on Kurtz's gift of expression and dismisses as irrelevant his immorality: "... Hadn't I been told ... that he had collected, bartered, swindled, or stolen more ivory than all the other agents together? That was not the point ... ." (HD,113).

We saw earlier that Marlow acknowledges that he finds it impossible to convey the effect of his story, and here the theme of language becomes prominent again, for Kurtz's words represent the "bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness" (HD,113-14). To have missed hearing Kurtz speak would have been tantamount to missing his "destiny in life" (HD,114). As I have
illustrated, language in its various usages has formed a significant theme in the novel, not only in Marlow's statements of Romantic irony, but also in his exposure of the deceitful officialese, his own exploitation of ironic nuance, and here effusive rhetoric. For the first time, Marlow portrays himself as apparently unequivocally allying with Kurtz, whose capacity for response in the wilderness is dynamic, not static like that of other pilgrims. Marlow says that Kurtz's gift of words generates a "sense of real presence" (HD,113); later he elaborates on the poetic, richly suggestive quality of his language. The audience clearly does not understand Marlow's effusiveness, claiming it to be "Absurd" (HD,114). Marlow breaks his previous restraint after a "pause of profound stillness" and says in reply: "'Absurd! ... 'This is the worst of trying to tell ... '" (HD,114). Thus, he acknowledges again the difficulties of the autobiographical process. He then directly attacks his audience, citing their security as stifling. His previous tolerance of their illusory order now explodes into an infuriated rhetoric, which exalts Kurtz's eloquence and rails at their bourgeois entrenchment:

"... Everything belonged to him—but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own... " (HD,116)

Once Kurtz had responded to the wilderness, he had defected from the quixotic imperialism. The phrase, "Exterminate all the brutes," indicates that he saw the sham of the imperialistic ideal; his "excited imagination" had aroused in him a will to power, which inevitably led to self-aggrandisement, after a flouting of civilised norms and values, because these
were useless in the wilderness. Marlow attacks his audience who have not been threatened by the wilderness:

"... You can't understand. How could you?—with solid pavement under your feet, surrounded by kind neighbours ... stepping delicately between the butcher and the policeman. ... ." (HD,116)

He is frustrated at their stasis ("... Then the earth for you is only a standing place ... ") (HD,117). The ironic poise has temporarily disappeared. Marlow allows the imagination element of the imagination-efficiency dialectic a full expression, in an attempt to articulate the cause of Kurtz's anarchy, and he reveals that the narrative preceding this stance is in part a dramatic irony sequence in which all of his listeners, with the possible exception of the frame narrator, are innocently unaware of the sophistication of his dialectical irony. However, his defection from dialectic is only momentary, for he is able to change his narratorial stance and disassociate himself from single-minded allegiance to Kurtz:

"... No; I can't forget him, though I am not prepared to affirm the fellow was exactly worth the life we lost in getting to him. I missed my late helmsman awfully,—I missed him even while his body was lying in the pilot-house. ... ." (HD,119)

This stance is similar to that of "I affirm nothing" (LJ,339) in Lord Jim. He is able to oscillate between antithetical responses, both affirming and denying the effect of Kurtz on his own consciousness. The detachment from Kurtz indicates that Marlow can maintain dialectical control over the narrative. This control is further evidenced in his treatment of the harlequin, who had sided unequivocally with Kurtz. Marlow
stresses that the Russian's lack of meditation made for a naïve alliance, but he is able to exploit the memory of the harlequin as an alter-ego, through which he can endorse the enthusiasm of his idealism and simultaneously repudiate it. The Russian is the purest exponent of a quixotism in the novel ("... [he] started for the interior with a light heart, and no more idea of what would happen to him than a baby ..." [HD,124]), and he exalts Kurtz's intellectual powers ("... He made me see things—things.
..." [HD,127]). Marlow accords with that capacity of Kurtz and with the Russian's claim that "You can't judge Mr. Kurtz as you would an ordinary man" (HD,128), but the difference between the two responses is that the Russian does not meditate on his zealous devotion, while Marlow uses the memory of Kurtz as impetus for a dialectical scrutiny.

In contrast to both the Russian and Marlow, the manager judges Kurtz's method to be unsound. Like the harlequin, Marlow chooses to ally with Kurtz, but it is "a choice of nightmares" (HD,138). All illusions of identity are at this point dishevelled, for he does not actually ally even with Kurtz ("... 'I had turned to the wilderness really, not to Mr. Kurtz, who, I was ready to admit, was as good as buried ...'" [HD,138]). The wilderness all through the novel has symbolised chaotic, threatening vitality and is the stimulus for Marlow's Romantic irony. The phrase "choice of nightmares" is a declaration of Romantic irony, for he makes a choice which itself is deflected (on to the wilderness), and in that setting he realises that all conceptions of self are limited, illusory, and inadequate. After his disgust with the manager, he evokes the Romantic universe directly:
"... He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man! he had kicked the very earth to pieces. He was alone, and I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air. I've been telling you what we said—repeating the phrases we pronounced—but what's the good? They were common everyday words—the familiar, vague sounds exchanged on every waking day of life. But what of that? They had behind them, to my mind, the terrific suggestiveness of words heard in dreams, of phrases spoken in nightmares. 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—barring, of course, the killing him there and then, which wasn't so good, on account of unavoidable noise. But his soul was mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad. I had—for my sins, I suppose—to go through the ordeal of looking into it myself. No eloquence could have been so withering to one's belief in mankind as his final burst of sincerity. He struggled with himself, too. I saw it,—I heard it. I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself. I kept my head pretty well. . . ." (HD,144-45)

This passage needs full discussion; it also requires Marlow's prefatory remarks concerning Kurtz's megalomania:

"... I tried to break the spell—the heavy, mut smell of the wilderness. . . . This alone, I was convinced, had driven him out to the edge of the forest, to the bush . . . this alone had beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations. . . ." (HD,144)

Several times, as I have shown, Marlow sees the wilderness as igniting a chaotic, imaginative response. In the second passage quoted above, Marlow concedes that Kurtz's response was anarchic, "beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations."

However, legal or moral imperatives are not sufficient to combat the wilderness. If Kurtz was to respond truthfully to the
challenge of the wilderness, he had to do away with all previously established illusions of identity, as none of these was useful or efficacious. That is why he seemed to have "kicked himself loose of the earth." Significantly, Marlow had found himself unhinged from any secure foundation ("... and I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air ... "); this statement confirms that he is a Romantic ironist. Kurtz's confrontation with and response to the wilderness incite what Marlow calls madness—a total rejection of all forms of identity, illusion, restraint, or faith. But, even though Marlow calls him "mad," he shows semantic subtlety by insisting that he was not a "lunatic." Kurtz reveals to Marlow what happens when one can no longer find an easy accommodation with the immediate environment. A measure of the change between European civilisation and the wilderness is Kurtz's new language system which, by Marlow's interpretation, is akin to the "suggestiveness" of poetry, through which Kurtz seeks to express the struggles of a chaotic soul. Many other characters in this novel carry with them the illusions of identity forged out through uncritical allegiance to the norms of civilisation, which are reflected in their language. The net results of the imperialistic proceedings, conceived in terms of Western ideals of progress, are Fresleven's demise in the service of the "noble cause," the accountant's dandyish routine, the brickmaker's rhetoric, and the manager's adjudication "unsound method." Kurtz too had begun with quixotic ideals, but he soon saw the disjunction between ideal and real. Unlike Marlow, he did not oscillate intellectually between the poles; the breakdown of his restraint
led to anarchy and a will to power. In contrast to the effete language of the imperialists, Kurtz's language is poetic, quite distinct from the "familiar, vague sounds exchanged on every waking day of life." He can only struggle with suggestive, poetic language, because there is no stable reality to denote in the uncharted territory of a "soul . . . struggling blindly with itself." Paul de Man's notion of the reflective disjunction is relevant here. Once the perceptive character is unhinged from the language of fixed reference he has two choices--either madness or irony. Kurtz's language eventually illustrates that his struggle ends in madness; Marlow's capacity for restraint issues in irony. It is important to see that Marlow is both involved with and detached from Kurtz. While there is an obvious sympathy for Kurtz, he also signals his narratorial detachment ("'... I kept my head pretty well . . .'") and speculates on the possibility of throttling him.

I will now look at several critical reactions to the Kurtz-Marlow bond. Watt cites these responses by two critics:

Thus Lawrence Graver argues that Kurtz has the attraction of the romantic outlaw who crosses "the boundaries of conventional morality" and explores "the possibilities of living on the other side" . . . and Lionel Trilling writes that Marlow "accords Kurtz an admiration and loyalty which amount to homage, and not, it would seem, in spite of his deeds but because of them." 16

Watt himself writes:

When Marlow comments that Kurtz "had summed up—he had judged. 'The horror!'" (151), he indicates that they had at least momentarily shared their vision of evil. 17
None of these accounts does justice to Marlow's irony. He does admittedly indicate an alliance with Kurtz during the actual experience:

(a) "... 'All right,' said I, after a time. 'Mr. Kurtz's reputation is safe with me.' I did not know how truly I spoke. . . ." (HD, 139)

(b) "... I did say the right thing, though indeed he could not have been more irretrievably lost than he was at this very moment, when the foundations of our intimacy were being laid—to endure—to endure—even to the end—even beyond. . . ." (HD, 143)

But Marlow is not uncritically seduced. The function of the Russian is to illustrate the difference in response to Kurtz between the two. Marlow's narrative in the present exhibits a subtle reflectiveness on the intimacy with Kurtz. The focus is not on evil, as Watt claims, but on the dramatic results (which Marlow finds intellectually liberating), of Kurtz's defection from the ineffectual European ideal, his sheer confrontation with the chaotic wilderness, and his discovery and exploitation of suppressed passions. Kurtz provides Marlow with the opportunity to explore the possibilities of living on the other side of conventional morality, as Graver argues, but it is important to realise that Marlow does not defect totally from conventional morality.

Marlow's vacillating perspective, appearing as deviousness to his audience, indicates Marlow's dialectical control of enthusiasm for and scepticism towards Kurtz. While the Romantic ironist delights in the recognition of new possibilities for self-expression, he would not be consistent with his irony if he was not ironic about his enthusiasm. Marlow illustrates
this dialectical skill most emphatically in the narrative present and is keen to exhibit his detachment from and refusal to identify completely with Kurtz. Even after exalted pieces of rhetoric extolling Kurtz's powers, he is able to signal his detachment from Kurtz by revealing that he was not "prepared to affirm the fellow was exactly worth the life we lost in getting to him. I missed my late helmsman awfully ..."

(HD,119). After describing Kurtz's lack of restraint, faith, and fear that had led him to madness, Marlow establishes that he remained calm ("... I kept my head pretty well ..."). Conversely, however, his insistent search for redeeming factors in Kurtz's anarchy illustrates his preparedness to evaluate in unconventional terms:

"... But this must have been before his—let us say—nerves, went wrong, and caused him to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites. ..."

(HD,117-18)

And of the skeletal poles, he says:

"... They only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him—some small matter. ..."

(HD,131)

There is no possibility of static identification in this novel for Marlow. Once the atrocities of the Europeans have been exposed, the irony issues from the dialectical base implicit in his aphorism, "What saves us is efficiency—the devotion to efficiency." In the dialectic between allegiance to conventional values (we have seen that he values work, expresses outrage at the colonists' atrocities) and his interest in Kurtz,
and in his combat with his audience, he exhibits an array of selves: committed sailor, storyteller, sceptic, satirist, dialectician, Romantic ironist. He achieves a dialectic after the experience, expresses it, destroys it to explore old memories and new perspectives, admits to the difficulty of finding language, and at the end lives in a painfully achieved renewed dialectic: this is the rhetoric of temporality. Work as a component of efficiency is significant, but only as a shielding screen from the wilderness, and increasingly Marlow is preoccupied by relating the effects of Kurtz's confrontation with that wilderness.

With efficiency as a base for evaluation, Kurtz is obviously anarchic, but Marlow rejects the manager's intolerance of Kurtz on the grounds of "unsound method." With the energy of Romantic irony as a source of evaluation, Kurtz is in part invigoratingly heroic, because, as Graver says, he crosses "the boundaries of conventional morality." And yet Marlow himself does not cross the boundary (we learn later that he withdrew his "hesitating foot" [HD,151]). The simultaneous advocacy and repudiation of Kurtz illustrate Marlow's Romantic irony and cause the apparent "muddlement," which on analysis shows itself to be a deliberate juxtaposition of opposing points of view. As well as being wary of seeing Marlow as exposing Kurtz's evil, we also need to be wary of Trilling's idea of homage, with its suggestion that Marlow uncritically admires Kurtz: that is the harlequin's response, not Marlow's.

There is no overt textual evidence that Kurtz's expostulation "The horror! The horror!" (HD,149) reveals an awareness of evil, as Watt and Gekoski suggest. By claiming
that Kurtz's last words indicate that Kurtz and Marlow momentarily shared their vision of evil, or that they are a final attempt at self-purification, both these critics bring moral presuppositions to bear on their critical interpretation. Certainly, such an unequivocally conventional moral interpretation is not owned up to by Marlow himself. Later I will examine Marlow's reactions to the last words in more detail, but at this point I wish to stress that in the context of what Kurtz was struggling to do, even on the verge of death, it is unlikely that his final expostulation represents an attempt to gain absolution.

Kurtz stubbornly seeks to have his ideas advanced. For this, Marlow was crucial to him. Kurtz had said to the manager:

"'. . . I'll carry my ideas out yet—I will return. I'll show you what can be done. You with your little peddling notions—you are interfering with me. I will return. I. . . .'. " (HD,137)

He says to Marlow:

"'. . . 'I was on the threshold of great things,' he pleaded, in a voice of longing, with a wistfulness of tone that made my blood run cold. 'And now for this stupid scoundrel—'. . . .'" (HD,143)

Both of these statements confirm his recognition of his own more invigorating response (albeit megalomania) to the wilderness and his abhorrence of the manager's pettiness and stolidity; Marlow endorses that criticism and makes his "choice of nightmares," (HD,138) because the alternative is untenable. Before Kurtz dies his speech is delirious, but it contains images of ambition and self-aggrandisement:
'... 'You show them you have in you something that is really profitable, and then there will be no limits to the recognition of your ability.'... 'Of course you must take care of the motives—right motives—always.'... 'Oh, but I will wring your heart yet!' he cried at the invisible wilderness... He had been writing for the papers and meant to do so again, 'for the furthering of my ideas. It's a duty.'..." (HD,148-49)

Kurtz's aroused self-consciousness demands expression which cannot be implemented, for he is in the wilderness and dying. Given that context, he is much more likely to be lamenting the impossibility of self-expression than expressing moral regret for his actions: the wilderness is unaccommodating, and civilisation is stultifying. Kurtz's imagination, initially controlled by "moral ideas of some sort" (HD,88) had seen the impossibility of implementing those ideas. He refers to the wilderness as the antagonist, providing evidence of his awareness of the dichotomy between the idealising imagination and the chaotic, threatening wilderness. In contrast, the accountant did not acknowledge the dichotomy. Both Kurtz and Marlow refer to "ideas." Speaking of the Romans' barbarism, Marlow says: "'... What redeems it is the idea only..."'" (HD,51). It is this idea, the energy of the adventurer in an unaccommodating milieu, which is the source of his insistent attempts at exonerating Kurtz. Marlow himself is able to achieve a self-creating dialectic between the poles of the paradox: the crucial bridge that eluded Kurtz.

SECTION FIVE

After revealing Kurtz's last words, Marlow gives a final summation of his response to Kurtz's adventures, discusses the
significance of the words ("The horror! The horror!")
indicates that his reabsorption into European society was not
an easy transition, berates the unimaginative Westerners, and
creates several dramatic irony sequences through his memory of
encounters with an official, Kurtz's cousin, a journalist, and
Kurtz's Intended, who are all oblivious of the significance to
Marlow of Kurtz's jungle experience.

Marlow explicitly acknowledges that Kurtz's final
expostulation is an aggressive utterance, contemptuous of the
whole universe:

"... He had summed up—he had judged.
'The horror!' He was a remarkable man.
After all, this was the expression of some
sort of belief; it had candour, it had
conviction, it had a vibrating note of
revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling
face of a glimpsed truth—the strange
commingling of desire and hate. ..."
(HD,151)

Later he tells his audience of his haunting memory of Kurtz,
as he rang the bell of the Intended's door:

"... while I waited he seemed to stare at
me out of the glassy panel—stare with that
wide and immense stare embracing, condemning,
loathing all the universe. I seemed to hear
the whispered cry, 'The horror! The horror!'
..." (HD,156)

These quotations indicate that Kurtz had chided the world, not
himself. But, even amidst Marlow's apparent admiration, he
discriminates between Kurtz and himself:

"... True, he had made that last stride,
he had stepped over the edge, while I had
been permitted to draw back my hesitating
foot. And perhaps in this is the whole
difference; perhaps all the wisdom, and all
truth, and all sincerity, are just
Marlow describes here the two processes of anarchy and Romantic irony. Marlow's dialectical skills prevent him from stepping over the edge. The concessional "perhaps" is a statement of recognised differentiation between Kurtz and himself. He did not act like the anarchic Kurtz, but the processes of his narrative depend upon Kurtz's megalomania, which provides Marlow with the vicarious possibility of exploring beyond the boundaries of conventional morality.

Marlow's lie to the Intended has commonly been seen as his support for her illusions, and I agree with that analysis. He prepares us for the lie with his previous aphorism, "It's queer how out of touch with truth women are" (HD,59). Her adulatory language springs from a feminine idealisation, remote from the darkness:

"... 'of all his promise, and of all his greatness, of his generous mind, of his noble heart... You know what vast plans he had. ...'" (HD,160)

The ironies are multiple. Marlow's restraint during the interview and at other points of the narrative (at the earlier European appointment, with his audience) illustrates his recognition that all attempts at identity construction are illusions, but that those illusions need to be protected. The limitations of the Intended's illusions are obvious, but Marlow protects her from the truth of Kurtz's last words ("... I could not tell her. It would have been too dark—too dark altogether. ...'" [HD,162]).
Marlow simultaneously sees the necessity and irony of illusions. In so doing, he confirms Muecke's contention:

To recognise an irony in the incompatible demands of the individual and society is, in a sense, to raise oneself above these demands though one still remains both an individual and a member of society. This ironic acceptance of an incompatibility can then be the basis, can at least be proposed as a basis for a way of living that reconciles the assertive and submissive, the seclusive and the gregarious instincts. 18

Marlow's Buddha pose illustrates his equilibrium. William Stein's analysis of such a pose sees it as a mystical renunciation of the world; but more accurately, in the context of the total narrative, it is a symbol of ironic control, forged by the kind of irony proposed by Muecke above. 19

Marlow's irony is both specific and general. At the most straightforward level, the irony satirises the imperialism of the Europeans. However, the narratorial intelligence does not leave it there. Marlow, in confronting the wilderness himself and witnessing the demise of Kurtz, raises the irony to a general level by sustaining the imagination-efficiency dialectic. In coming to terms with the subtlety of Marlow's irony, we need to consider the temporal aspects of Marlow's narration. As a retrospective narrator, he no longer needs to be preoccupied by the immediate tasks of a sailor's craft, nor does he simply espouse efficiency as the sole ingredient of sanity and fulfilment. In the narrative present, he oscillates in allegiance to both efficiency and anarchy and other imaginative responses. The oscillation occurs as a consequence of his contact with the wilderness, which instigates his awareness that European notions of identity are useful only
in a settled and unthreatening environment.

The irony directed against the characters of Europe and their stalwarts in the jungle is seldom as specific as that in "An Outpost of Progress." While the narrator of that story reviles a society which cannot produce independent civilians, Marlow is prepared to see a value in the myopic illusions, because those illusions shield the characters from the unsettling effects which experience of the wilderness provokes.

The first half of his narrative consists of an attempt to shield his audience from that instability. However, it is his relationship with his audience which, to a large extent, defines the second element of the rhetoric of temporality. He is eventually provoked into challenging them about their illusory security when his audience adjure him to be "civil" (HD,94).

Marlow had already, with varying ironic tones, seen the language of the accountant, his aunt and the brickmaker as representative of European, civilised values. The word "civil" continues that kind of allegiance, but instigates Marlow's frequent attempts to broaden the context of his discussion, and necessitates his explicit acknowledgement that he finds the psychological and linguistic foundations of his audience restrictive and stultifying. From this point, he is more free to explore the vitality of Kurtz's suggestive language. But, while Marlow seems to exalt Kurtz, he does not do so unequivocally. In Friedrich Schlegel's aesthetics, "no system" necessarily had to be counter-balanced by "system." Careful examination of Marlow's language indicates that his irony remains dialectical. Kurtz is symbolic of "no system" and "unsound method." He provides Marlow with more imaginative latitude, but it is a key
characteristic of Marlow’s narration that he continually counteracts his enthusiasm for Kurtz with a sceptical denunciation.

Marlow reveals his understanding of Paul de Man’s notion of the reflective disjunction emphatically, although he had already exhibited that understanding with a subtle, dialectical irony, covertly rather than overtly expressed in "What saves us is efficiency—the devotion to efficiency" (HD,50). What matters most to Marlow is imaginative latitude, which is more important than moral declamation against Kurtz. As I have pointed out, he is much less insistent on denouncing Kurtz as evil than he is on hearing Kurtz speak and stressing the vitality that poetic utterance arouses in an atmosphere which is physically annihilating as well as intellectually stagnant and effete. As the narrative proceeds, we realise that Marlow refuses to be satisfied with any final level of insight. He is careful to be dialectical, not quixotic (like the harlequin) or anarchic (like Kurtz). Already, he had shown his penchant for self-parody (over his commitment to work), for the Romantic ironist’s distrust of his own medium, in this case, language, and we soon see that his relationship with his audience is as Schlegel describes it between the ironist and his audience:

It is a very good sign when the harmonious bores are at a loss about how they should react to this continuous self-parody, when they fluctuate endlessly between belief and disbelief until they get dizzy. . . . (L,108)

* * * * *
CHAPTER 4

LORD JIM

Structural and interpretative problems abound in Lord Jim. Much of the difficulty centres on what we make of the romantic element in the novel. Guérard raises the key issue when he says that we are asked to determine whether a pejorative or favourable construction is to be placed on the word romantic.¹ Both Watt and Gekoski assume at various places in their criticism that the pejorative connotation is paramount. Gekoski says that we are to assume that the first part illustrates the bad aspects of romanticism and the second part the good aspects.² Watt says that Marlow early in the narrative had tended to equate the word romantic with an unrealistic, irresponsible and self-indulgent placing of the individual self above social norms.³ Berthoud sees Marlow's struggle as falling into two parts. In the first part, Marlow tries to solve the problem posed by Jim's betrayal largely by means of moral judgement; in the second, by imaginative sympathy.⁴ Similarly, Guérard sets up a sympathy-judgement mechanism by which we are to evaluate Jim's case, without an adequate appraisal of the base that is to be used to judge.⁵

Watt examines the various codes of honour applicable to the novel:

Lord Jim, indeed, reflects this by presenting a continuous confrontation between the exalted
ideal of personal honour on the one hand, and
the more modern, more widely applicable, but
much more prosaic collective values of the code
of solidarity on the other. In that conflict
Conrad found himself siding more and more with
his ancestral inheritance, and its ideal of
individual honour; though possibly fated to
isolation and failure in the modern world, it
nevertheless possessed an unmediated directness
of personal application, and a nostalgic heroic
resonance, which Marlow's conception of
solidarity was found to lack.  

There are two aspects of this commentary worth exploring.
Firstly, Watt makes a distinction between Conrad and Marlow,
linking the former with a growing approval of "personal honour,"
while the latter exemplifies the values associated with
solidarity. However, as I will later illustrate, Marlow's
own conceptions are radically challenged in this novel, and he
comes to see the value of following a personal ideal. That
change in Marlow will be the most important ingredient in
determining the nature of the irony. Secondly, and more
usefully, two conflicting codes of honour are cited by Watt.
The two prime representatives of these different codes of
honour are the French Lieutenant and Stein. The obligation to
be true or faithful to a social code is exemplified by the
former, and the latter is an exponent and critic of the personal
vision. The basis of objection to Jim's egoism is that a
personal honour encourages a self-indulgence, which leads to
his alienation from moral virtue or civic duty. Nevertheless,
Stein, Marlow's chief mentor, advocates persistence in following
the personal dream and the attempts to make it viable in the
world.

It is obviously important to understand the conflicting
definitions of the word "honour" as exploited in Lord Jim if
we are to understand the nature of the irony. Clearly, if the
French Lieutenant's conception of honour was definitive, the irony levelled against Jim would be specific and straightforward: Jim's act was reprehensible and therefore he was deservedly disgraced. But, as is a critical commonplace, there is no final verdict passed on Jim, and for the most part this is attributable to the narratorial ambivalence and apparent double talk, leading Hewitt to suggest that Marlow is "muddled":

The effect of muddlement which is so commonly found in Lord Jim comes, in short, from this—that Marlow is himself muddled. We look to him for definite comment, explicit or implicit, on Jim's conduct and he is not able to give it.7

Marlow's "muddlement," as I have suggested in the Introduction, is more profitably interpreted as ambivalence, as he comes to terms with a romanticism which threatens his allegiance to the "fixed standard." The specific mode of romanticism is quixotism, and several critics have characterised Jim in that particular way, some assuming pejorative connotations. Tanner writes:

But there is another genre—best represented by Don Quixote—which forces the heroic Ideals into damaging collision with unredeemed, earthy empirical reality. This genre does not necessarily utterly destroy the Ideals—Don Quixote is a figure of true pathos with a genuine aura of crumbling and tattered nobility about him—but it challenges their viability in the material world, it shows them up as ridiculous, inoperative, and at times dangerously out of step with the practical needs of a real situation. It may offer a lament for the passing of the heroic Ideals—so that they are seen in a sort of elegiac twilight: but it refuses to take those Ideals at their face value, bringing out their inner weakness as well as revealing their essential inaptness for the external concrete world. This is one of the genres of Irony. . . .8
Guerard compares fictional introverts with their real life counterparts and suggests that art demands an intensified response to the introverted vapourings, which in actual life would be dismissed as intolerable. Guérard's attitude to Don Quixote is interesting:

And would we not, in real life, also turn away from the gross vulgarity of Jay Gatsby and his mass of silk shirts, or from the ruggard brutality of Michael Henchard, or from the violent tirades of Ahab, or from the posturings of Emma Bovary, or from the lank ugliness and mad loquacity of Don Quixote?9

It is clear that both Tanner and Guérard focus on the pejorative connotations of quixotism. However, Watt sees it in a different light:

... and Jim's struggles can be seen as embodying Unamuno's affirmation that, despite his awareness of foredoomed defeat, the individual should nevertheless, like Don Quixote, live as though his faith were more real than any of the negations by which reason and experience alike demonstrate its futility.10

Kirschner similarly is more enthusiastic about quixotism:

Whereas Turgenev affirmed, "None would like to acquire the appellation of 'Don Quixote!"", Conrad remembered being called an incorrigible Don Quixote for wishing to go to sea, and feeling "vaguely flattered at the name of the immortal knight turning up in connexion with my own folly". For Conrad, Don Quixote was not an "enthusiast, a servant of an idea"—that would have seemed repellent—but an adventurous and energetic egoist, believing in the effectiveness of his own action.11

The only way we have of coming to terms with the nature and status of quixotism in Lord Jim is to scrutinise the attitudes of the narrators towards this particular romantic mode. As in
The Nigger of the "Narcissus", there are two principal narrators--the omniscient narrator of the first four chapters and Marlow.

We need to recall Muecke's contention about the objective and subjective elements of a general irony mechanism. Muecke's claim that the objective element of general irony is "reducible to one great incongruity, the appearance of free and self-valued but temporally finite egos in a universe that seems to be utterly alien" is particularly apt when considering the quixotic predicament depicted early in this novel. A particular narratorial lens presents the incongruity, and obviously this generates the subjective element, for, although the omniscient narrator does not reveal overt, personal responses, as does Marlow, certain predilections can be deduced textually which show that the omniscient narrator sees Jim to be in a genuine predicament.

The paradox in Jim's nature is described in the first chapter:

... and his manner displayed a kind of dogged self-assertion which had nothing aggressive in it. It seemed a necessity, and it was directed apparently as much at himself as at anybody else. (LJ,3)

The paradox of self-assertion being directed at himself rather than outwards portrays Jim's fundamental dilemma: what do you do with romantic energy? The phrase "it seemed a necessity" reflects the narrator's awareness of its insistency. The result of this unresolved internal paradox leads eventually to his dismissal, the appellation, "Confounded Fool!" (LJ,4), by his employers, and the narrator's comment: "This was their criticism
on his exquisite sensibility" (LJ,4). This early indication of the employers' attitude towards Jim quickly informs us of Jim's difficulty: he cannot nonchalantly absorb himself in the world of coarser functionaries.

Watt sees the irony levelled against Jim in the early chapters as overt and specific:

\[\ldots\text{and so }\text{Lord Jim}\text{ opens with a critical and sardonic view of its hero and his self-indulgent dreams. This negative attitude is increasingly qualified by sympathy during Marlow's narrative, but it does not wholly disappear until the Stein episode.}\]

Although the paradox of Jim's nature and his incongruity in the work place are exposed, it is difficult to see the irony as specific, as Watt suggests. The narrator's attitude is indeterminable in his presentation of the incongruity of Jim, the dreamer, on deck:

On the lower deck in the babel of two hundred voices he would forget himself, and beforehand live in his mind the sea-life of light literature. He saw himself saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line; or as a lonely castaway, barefooted and half naked, walking on uncovered reefs in search of shell-fish to stave off starvation. He confronted savages on tropical shores, quelled mutinies on the high seas, and in a small boat upon the ocean kept up the hearts of despairing men—always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book.

"Something's up. Come along."

He leapt to his feet. The boys were streaming up the ladders. Above could be heard a great scurrying about and shouting, and when he got through the hatchway he stood still—as if confounded. (LJ,6)

This passage contains an explicit quixotism. Jim idealises his identity, which, like the original Quixote's, is gleaned from
literature. It eventuates in Jim's basking in the dreams of glory (living "in his mind the sea-life of light literature"). This idealising tendency is seen to be at odds with the outside world, for, confronted with the demands of the actual craft of sailing, Jim is "confounded." In his musings, Jim constructs an undiagnosed contradiction. He sees himself as "always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book." In this novel, the notions of "devotion to duty" and "as unflinching as a hero in a book" represent the opposing impulses of social responsibility and personal autonomy. Much of Jim's predicament, for both the character himself and Marlow, is created by the eventual awareness that the two notions are mutually exclusive--that he is forced to model himself on either the French Lieutenant or Stein. However, as far as the irony in the above passage is concerned, the incongruity between the idealising imagination and the actual world is displayed, but there is no clear scepticism levelled against the character, Jim. The objective element of a general irony is established. In contrast, overt, specific irony is reserved for Jim's father:

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. (LJ,5)

Here it is possible to determine precisely the irony of the narrator. It specifically satirises the father's ecclesiastical surety; identifiably, specific irony is reserved for this sensibility without contradictions.

This chapter illustrates the incongruity of an internally directed self-assertion. The romantic energy has not been
unleashed and expressed in "practical" ways (as Stein later advocates it must be) and therefore remains introverted. The consequence of this introversion is the idealising tendency of a Quixote who remains locked in his ideal and out of touch with the external world. Nevertheless, the irony does not parody quixotism. The narrator is content to see Jim as caught in the predicament of being romantic, but not being able to express himself effectively. He differentiates Jim from his coarser employers and his religious father; it is this latter character who is subject to specific irony, not Jim.

In Chapter 2, the narrator describes the thwarting power of natural forces over puny individuals:

There are many shades in the danger of adventures and gales, and it is only now and then that there appears on the face of facts a sinister violence of intention—that indefinable something which forces it upon the mind and the heart of a man, that this complication of accidents or these elemental furies are coming at him with a purpose of malice . . . which means to smash, to destroy . . . to sweep the whole precious world utterly away from his sight by the simple and appalling act of taking his life. (LJ, 10-11)

It is with this kind of threat that the sailors must act out their lives. The narrator suggests that there are two types of sailors:

These were of two kinds. Some, very few and seen there but seldom, led mysterious lives, had preserved an undefaced energy with the temper of buccaneers and the eyes of dreamers. They appeared to live in a crazy maze of plans, hopes, dangers, enterprises, ahead of civilisation, in the dark places of the sea; and their death was the only event of their fantastic existence that seemed to have a reasonable certitude of achievement. (LJ, 12-13)

Much of the vocabulary complements the previous quixotic
characterisation ("undefaced energy," "eyes of dreamers," "crazy maze," "fantastic existence"). While the narrator depicts the eccentricity of quixotic individualism, there is a neutrality of tone which prevents any easy assumption that he is cynically dismissive of such behaviour. There is no suggestion that the narrator's attitude to quixotism is as reductive as Tanner's.

The narrator then describes the other type of sailor:

They talked everlastingly of turns of luck: how So-and-so got charge of a boat on the coast of China—a soft thing . . . and in all they said—in their actions, in their looks, in their persons—could be detected the soft spot, the place of decay, the determination to lounge safely through existence. (LJ,13)

Here the criticism is more explicit and resembles some of Marlow's anti-bourgeois rhetoric in Heart of Darkness. As we saw in that text, Marlow maintains that confronting the wilderness is much more dangerous but more stimulating than the unimaginative acceptance of routine. Similarly in this novel, the omniscient narrator shows a predilection for the Quixote, the first type, who demonstrably achieves more status than the idler, the second type.

Chapter 3 explores the idealising imagination of the romantic. The narrator is aware of the Irony of Events; Jim, unlike the narrator, "did not see the shadow of the coming event" (LJ,19). With the prior knowledge, the narrator is able to focus on Jim's ill-founded security in his dreams:

At such times his thoughts would be full of valorous deeds: he loved these dreams and the success of his imaginary achievements. They 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. There was nothing he could not face. (LJ, 20)

The natural stillness is only apparent and the transforming process of the quixotic imagination is signalled by the narrator's early use of such words as "seemed" and "as though," "as if":

(a) ... the stars ... seemed to shed upon the earth the assurance of everlasting security. (LJ, 17)

(b) The propeller turned without a check, as though its beat had been part of the scheme of a safe universe ... (LJ, 17)

(c) Jim paced athwart, and his footsteps in the vast silence were loud to his own ears, as if echoed by the watchful stars. ... (LJ, 19)

The quixotic illusion is further intensified by his sense of being "different" (LJ, 25) and of a "superiority" (LJ, 23). Guérard is intolerant of Jim's imagination:

He differs from other introverted dreamers chiefly in the degree of his Bovaryism; he can literally confuse reality and dream at times, and so can hardly believe his own disreputable acts.15

Guérard sees Jim's acts as disreputable, but the narrator does not. Although irony is detectable, it is not a specific irony against quixotism. The narrator focuses on the irony of events and thereby stresses that there is a vast gap between idealisation and the harsh, uncompromising actualities of the external world.

In Chapter 4, the narrator allies with Jim against the legalism of the court. Jim's initial description of the
disaster is figurative: "'She went over whatever it was as easy as a snake crawling over a stick'" (LJ,28). The narrator admires the simile ("The illustration was good . . ." [LJ,28]). The court aims at finding the facts, but the narrator does not show any evidence of unequivocal faith in legalism: "He was made to answer another question so much to the point and so useless . . ." (LJ,32). Indeed, he himself uses a simile to describe Jim's mental claustrophobia:

. . . his mind positively flew round and round the serried circle of facts that had surged up all about him to cut him off from the rest of his kind: it was like a creature that, finding itself imprisoned within an enclosure of high stakes, dashes round and round, distracted in the night, trying to find a weak spot, a crevice, a place to scale, some opening through which it may squeeze itself and escape. This awful activity of mind made him hesitate at times in his speech. . . . (LJ,31)

We can recall Paul de Man's contention that once unhinged from the empirical world the mind is potentially on the verge of madness. Jim's "awful activity of mind" indicates that he has left the world of facts and is on the verge of severe mental distress. Being a Quixote, rather than an ironist, he uses figurative language, tentatively and unsuccessfully searching his memory for an account of the mishap:

"The captain kept on moving here and there on the bridge . . . he walked right into me as though he had been stone-blind. . . . He mumbled to himself; all I heard of it were a few words that sounded like 'confounded steam!' and 'infernal steam!'—something about steam. I thought . . ." He was becoming irrelevant. . . . (LJ,31)

The persistent questioning, demanding the answers "yes" or "no" drives Jim to despair ("'What's the good of this! what's the
good" [LJ,32]) and to the "deliberate opinion that speech was of no use to him any longer" (LJ,33). It is interesting that Marlow, witnessing Jim's struggle, "seemed to be aware of his hopeless difficulty" (LJ,33). This recalls his frustration with language in Heart of Darkness when he realises that vocabulary associated with social routines or imperialism cannot ameliorate the frustrations of a Romantic ironist. In Jim's case, recall of the facts is irrelevant to the issue of his tarnished, romantic image of himself.

The first four chapters show little evidence of Watt's claim concerning the narratorial tone. Quixotism is not merely parodied. The omniscient narrator is more intent on constructing the objective element of a general irony mechanism, in which the quixotic Jim is seen to be in a genuine predicament. His romantic energy is introverted, and he does not recognise that his idealising imagination is separate from and threatened by the ravaging powers of the external world. Rather, he luxuriates in his illusory world. Nevertheless, the bias of the narrator becomes clear—he exhibits a marked sympathy for Jim as opposed to the passive sailors and for Jim's inarticulateness as opposed to the empiricism of the law court.

The full range of Marlow's voice can be detected in Chapter 5. Initially, he wants his listeners to understand that everyone harbours a contradiction ("... I am willing to believe each of us has a guardian angel, if you fellows will concede to me that each of us has a familiar devil as well...") [HD,34]). He then claims that there are two kinds of men: the type of man who expects "dashed little help" from those he "touch[es] elbows with right and left" (LJ,35) and the type
for whom "the whole of life is like an after-dinner hour with a cigar; easy, pleasant, empty . . ." (LJ,35). The differentiation of types is a signal to his preparedness to be aware of the difficulty of assessing Jim's case, for it is the latter type who normally obeys conventions and thereby establishes himself on the side of the law, while the first type takes risks, often at the expense of legalism. In his description of the second type, the key word is "empty"; Marlow finds the law-abiders dull, and eventually he explicitly chides his audience for living the conventional life, as he does in Heart of Darkness.

On recollecting his first view of Jim, Marlow confirms his delight at Jim's measuring up to the Conway standards of a sailor's requirements:

". . . This was my first view of Jim. He looked as unconcerned and unapproachable as only the young can look. There he stood, clean-limbed, clean-faced, firm on his feet, as promising a boy as the sun ever shone on. . . . He had no business to look so sound. . . ." (LJ,40)

He is careful to stress that this approbation was an initial reaction. In the narrative present, he hints at a devious fascination with vagabonds, acquaintances of the captain, who were "twice as instructive and twenty times more amusing than the usual respectable thief of commerce you fellows ask to sit at your table . . ." (LJ,41). Camouflaged in Marlow's perspective is a change of allegiance--an earlier commitment to the values of the Conway code has been subverted by a fascination with more eccentric modes of identity. Indeed, he corroborates the omniscient narrator's disquiet about the surety of perspective, which remains secure because untested:
The commonest sort of fortitude prevents us from becoming criminals in a legal sense; it is from weakness, unknown, but perhaps suspected, as in some parts of the world you suspect a deadly snake in every bush—from weakness that may lie hidden, watched or unwatched, prayed against or manfully scorned, repressed or maybe ignored more than half a lifetime, not one of us is safe..." (LJ,42-43)

Then he reverts to his memory of Jim and extols his virtue of apparent devotion to duty:

"... I mean just that inborn ability to look temptations straight in the face—a readiness unintellectual enough, goodness knows, but without pose—a power of resistance... an unthinking and blessed stiffness before the outward and inward terrors..." (LJ,43)

This leads to his expostulation, "Hang ideas!" (LJ,43); ideas pose a threat to decent living. This, in turn, inspires a long rhetoric on the soundness of the lives of the Conway boys' training and of the virtues instilled into their characters. In this context, there is "some informal alloy in his metal" (LJ,45), implying a judgement of insufficiency in Jim.

Marlow digresses after this description of fixed standards to an account of the delirious chief engineer. It occupies about one third of the chapter, and in the middle of his reminiscence Marlow implants a very curious but important segment, detailing the effect of Jim on his own life:

"... Why I longed to go grubbing into the deplorable details of an occurrence which, after all, concerned me no more than as a member of an obscure body of men held together by a community of inglorious toil and by fidelity to a certain standard of conduct, I can't explain. You may call it an unhealthy curiosity if you like; but I have a distinct notion I wished to find something. Perhaps, unconsciously, I hoped I would find that something, some profound and redeeming cause,
some merciful explanation, some convincing shadow of an excuse. I see well enough now that I hoped for the impossible—for the laying of what is the most obstinate ghost of man's creation, of the uneasy doubt upring like a mist, secret and gnawing like a worm, and more chilling than the certitude of death—the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct. It is the hardest thing to stumble against; it is the thing that breeds yelling panics and good little quiet villainies; it's the true shadow of calamity. Did I believe in a miracle? and why did I desire it so ardently? Was it for my own sake that I wished to find some shadow of an excuse for that young fellow whom I had never seen before. . . . I fear that such was the secret motive of my prying. I was, and no mistake, looking for a miracle. The only thing that at this distance of time strikes me as miraculous is the extent of my imbecility. I positively hoped to obtain from that battered and shady invalid some exorcism against the ghost of doubt. . . ."

(LJ,50-51)

Marlow's condescending attitude towards Jim, phrased in a rhetorical question is probably a nervous concession to or identification with the illusions of his audience. Looking at Jim's case from their perspective, it is, indeed, an "unhealthy curiosity," but, as he reveals more, it becomes obvious that his commitment to their allegiances was vicariously overthrown. He was forced to doubt, and, once he discovered in himself a radical paradox (that he believed in and doubted the value of a "fixed standard of conduct"), his imagination could not sustain a fixed centre for analysis. His search for a "miracle" and his recognition of what he calls the "imbecility" of this search confirm him as a general ironist, cast into the fundamental contradictions implicit in constructing an identity. From this perspective, it is obviously impossible for Marlow to discount the young romantic's position. His question ("... Was it for my own sake...?") bespeaks a self-
reflectiveness and an explicit recognition of the effect Jim's idealising nature has had on his own perspective. From this point, explicit and static identification with any fixed world view is untenable, as his treatment of Brierly illustrates.

The above passage indicates that at some point after the initial contact with Jim, Marlow became speculatively fascinated by Jim's imaginative response and that it affected him in a dynamic way. In a statement prefacing the above piece, Marlow acknowledges that he sought out the chief engineer "in the eccentric hope of hearing something explanatory of the famous affair from his point of view" (LJ,50). Although Marlow does not elaborate, the chief engineer's demise is explanatory: delirium is an imaginative disorder and poses a threat to fixed standards, as does romanticism. His reply "Not in the least" (LJ,55) to the doctor concerning the usefulness of the engineer's testimony is ironically untrue, given the fuller narrative. It is certainly immaterial in the court of law, as is Jim's figurative language, but is significant to Marlow's pursuit of deciphering the nature and status of quixotism.

The preceding discussion indicates that Marlow is either muddled, as Hewitt suggests, or a Romantic ironist. Clearly, Marlow's confession reveals a doubt not about Jim, but about the "fixed standard." Here he reveals a reflective disjunction --he disassociates himself from an unequivocal acceptance of the status quo and, as becomes increasingly obvious in the novel, searches for new conceptions of identity. Marlow is indeed contradictory. He extols the virtues of the Conway training, which he sees as more valuable than intellectual scrutiny ("'... Hang ideas! ...!" [HD,43]) and then probes subtly
the nature of his anxiety about threats to the contrivance of a "fixed standard," admitting he can never lay the "ghost of doubt." This vacillation is repeated in Chapter 21 and provides cogent evidence here, as there, of a persistent rhetoric of temporality. Marlow battles with past and new-found allegiances -- he unequivocally endorses neither Conway attributes nor Jim's eccentricity -- and, as he narrates, creates the series of ironic perspectives. In *Heart of Darkness* and in *Lord Jim*, explicitly in Chapter 21, Marlow eventually reveals that part of his frustration is with his audience.

Marlow berates his listeners because they have certain expectations about existence, and, as in *Heart of Darkness*, he needs to placate them before he challenges them. His strategy is to show allegiance and yet inform them of his own maturation in his understanding of a new way of self-expression: romantic individualism. He is in a narratorial predicament, which has its own general irony element, caught in the paradox of coming to terms with old allegiances and new reactions. In the long tract above, the question ("... Was it for my own sake? ...") indicates his self-reflectiveness, and, when the ironist senses his own involvement in a dilemma, the focus and tone of his irony are radically affected. Through his involvement with Jim and the consequent meditation, he is forced to change his analytical centre; given that conscious alteration, it is probable that he has an ironic awareness of his own rhetoric, and hence the Conway passages are not an espousal of incontrovertible convictions.

Chapters 5 and 6 show that he is not a single-minded proponent of legal proceedings or fixed standards. The law court
irritates Marlow, as its object is to discover not the "fundamental why," but the "superficial how," (LJ,56) of the affair. His treatment of Brierly illustrates the effect of the internal paradox on his irony. Here we have another example of Marlow's oscillating capacity in a directly and pointedly ironic passage:

"... 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. This was enviable. As I looked at him flanking on one side the unassuming pale-faced magistrate who presided at the inquiry, his self-satisfaction presented to me and to the world a surface as hard as granite. He committed suicide very soon after. ..."

(LJ,58)

Previous to this description, Marlow had built up Brierly as a man impervious to the world's destructive claim. He reinforces this image in his reference to the ineffectiveness of a pin's scratch on a rock. He consolidates Brierly's external complacency and then undercuts our expectations with the understated revelation of his suicide. In this passage, Marlow generates opposite reactions towards Brierly. Marlow's choice of images shows that he both admires Brierly and yet simultaneously doubts the capacity of Conway standards to instil genuine strength in its adherents. The images of "rock" and "granite" are illustrative of an admirable power of resistance; they refer to the "blessed stiffness before the outward and inward terrors" (LJ,43). Jim lacks this quality. However, with the knowledge of Brierly's suicide, we see these images in another light. "Surface" becomes a pivotal word. If this is an admirable exterior signifying endurance, it is also Brierly's only quality, an illusion or surface in the
sense of facade. Hence, his "complacent soul" exudes only a
deluded stoicism.

Marlow's ironic treatment of Brierly needs to be seen in
the context of two previous tracts: (a) the extolling of his
own years as a Conway trainer and (b) the admission of his doubt
about fixed standards. He exhibits the reflective disjunction,
with which he can react both enthusiastically and sceptically,
showing that he is poised between opposing reactions. He
reveals that he has synthesised (in the sense of juxtaposed)
the terms (social responsibility, personal vision) into a
paradox and that the irony issues from a hovering aesthetic ego,
which has rejected the finite system of Brierly's stoicism for
an as yet undefined but more imaginative alternative. His
defection from an uncritical allegiance to a fixed standard of
conduct is confirmed in his digressive anecdote concerning
Jones. There he focuses not on a guilty Jim, but on a suicidal
Brierly, who "had suddenly perceived the gates of the other
world flung open wide for his reception" (LJ,59).

It is also interesting to note that Brierly uses the word
"shame" when talking to Marlow about Jim:

"'... This infernal publicity is too
shocking: there he sits while all these
confounded natives, serangs, lascars,
quartermasters, are giving evidence
that's enough to burn a man to ashes
with shame. This is abominable. ...'"
(LJ,67)

Brierly's sympathy for Jim indicates that he imaginatively
identified with his dilemma and that this personal
identification superseded his legal responsibilities. In this
he parallels Marlow's own position. But, whereas Brierly
committed suicide, Marlow's solace is meditative irony. These two chapters illustrate the demise and maturation of middle-aged men as much as they advance our knowledge of Jim's nature. Marlow's maturation is revealed at the end of Chapter 6, where he shows his initial reaction to Jim as critical ("... 'Did you expect us all to sit with downcast eyes out of regard for your susceptibilities?' ... " [LJ,71]) and on reflection, sympathetic ("... I don't know what in these words, or perhaps just the intonation of that phrase, induced me suddenly to make all possible allowances for him ... '" [LJ,72]).

Chapters 7-10 have two time structures and several layers of consciousness. Marlow is recalling his meeting with Jim and ostensibly relaying through impressionistic detail the anguish and fear of a failed romantic. However, many of his reactions to Jim at the meal have a different ironic tone to his narrative in the present. In Chapter 7, Marlow structures the narrative around the two types of men. The globetrotters' inanity forms the ironic backdrop to his appointment with Jim:

"... There were married couples looking domesticated and bored with each other in the midst of their travels; there were small parties and large parties, and lone individuals dining solemnly or feasting boisterously, but all thinking, conversing, joking, or scowling as was their wont at home; and just as intelligently receptive of new impressions as their trunks upstairs. Henceforth they would be labelled as having passed through this and that place, and so would be their luggage. ... " [LJ,77]

Initially, he reveals that his tone towards Jim was rather subdued and that he played the role of a confessor: "... I had no intention, for the sake of barren truth, to rob him of the smallest particle of saving grace that would come in his
Marlow also shows here his preparedness to allow Jim to reveal his anguish and that he is not performing undercover detective work for the law court. Accordingly, there is no fixed moral or legal perspective employed for judgement; we witness the exposure of an injured romantic consciousness. But Marlow has not simply changed allegiances; he exhibits a noticeable detachment from Jim's self-indulgence:

"It was solemn, and a little ridiculous, too, as they always are, those struggles of an individual trying to save from the fire his idea of what his moral identity should be..." (LJ,81)

It is important to note that Marlow's irony here is in part an irony against the romantic position. He has not dismissed the romantic's concern to establish his identity (his own discussion is heuristic), but he has given the first indication of his awareness of the impossibility of attaining infinite, romantic expression. While he has rejected the limitations of Brierly's perspective, he acknowledges here that its opposite, intense romantic individualism, is a "little ridiculous." Thus, the polarities of his consciousness are exposed. Until this point his narrative has focused on finding a position from which he can establish the plausibility of Jim's case, the case of the romantic. With that established, Marlow illustrates his most detached position on the matter, wryly aware of the overly solemn nature of romantic questing.

His vision now oscillates between the finite and the infinite. When Jim sees his defection in terms not of guilt but of a missed chance, Marlow is able to sympathise with the idealist in his frustration ("... He had no leisure to
regret what he had lost, he was so wholly and naturally concerned for what he had failed to obtain . . ." (LJ,83)), but he also states explicitly his recognition that the quest for boundless imaginative expression is ultimately doomed: ", With every instant he was penetrating deeper into the impossible world of romantic achievements . . ." (LJ,83). It is this kind of double response which characterises a Romantic ironist. Marlow acknowledges that Jim's quest is more interesting than Brierly's, for Jim is not restricted by a limited view of the world, but he is set on a path on which he will not satiate his ambitions. Marlow can only oscillate between enthusiasm and scepticism. This kind of dual perspective in the narrative present establishes in the text an irony which is more complex in intention than the irony levelled against Jim at the time of the interview, where Marlow, uninitiated in the vagaries of romantic egoism, is sarcastic. On Jim's regret at not staying on board, given that the ship did not sink, he says: "It is unfortunate you didn't know beforehand!" . . ." (LJ,84). In Chapter 8, when Jim acknowledges that he always believed in "being prepared for the worst," Marlow comments: "I nodded my approval of the sound principle, averting my eyes before the subtle unsoundness of the man . . ." (LJ,89). On alluding to the third engineer's weak heart, Jim exclaimed "Weak heart! . . . I wish sometimes mine had been." . . ." Marlow replies, in irritation: "Do you?" [he] exclaimed with deep-rooted irony . . ." (LJ,108).

The aloof, ironic detachment from Jim at the time of the interview is rather reduced when Marlow finds himself measuring
the distance "to the mass of denser blackness in the middle of the grass-plot before the verandah" (LJ,107), in the hypothetical case of the house moving, and in the narrative present he is able to record a fully ambivalent response:

"... I felt the risk I ran of being circumvented, blinded, decoyed, bullied, perhaps, into taking a definite part in a dispute impossible of decision if one had to be fair to all the phantoms in possession... He swayed me. I own to it, I own up. The occasion was obscure, insignificant—what you will: a lost youngster, one in a million—but then he was one of us; an incident as completely devoid of importance as the flooding of an ant-heap, and yet the mystery of his attitude got hold of me as though he had been an individual in the forefront of his kind, as if the obscure truth involved were momentous enough to affect mankind's conception of itself..." (LJ,93)

Prefacing this passage, Marlow says: "... It seemed to me I was being made to comprehend the Inconceivable... " (LJ,93). While the ambivalence might indicate a muddlement, it also obeys Romantic irony principles. Marlow is able to "create" and "destroy." He sees Jim as momentous in his capacity to undertake the romantic quest and as ridiculous, because of his relative unimportance. The term "Inconceivable" is a restatement of the "impossible world of romantic achievements"; given the restrictions of the finite and the unattainability of the infinite, Marlow can only be ambivalent.

While the surface narrative reveals Jim's impressionistic fear and anguish, Marlow's ironic stances on the interview are varying and exhibit this kind of development: (a) initially, an irony directed against Jim's self-indulgence; (b) recognition of a vicarious involvement with Jim; (c) fully-fledged
understanding of Jim; (d) in the narrative present, an ambivalent attitude; (e) in the narrative present, the creation of a Romantic irony text, where an aesthetic ego hovers between the finite and the infinite. Thus, Marlow's apparent inconsistencies can be shown to have an order. The process outlined above reflects his growing awareness of the power of romanticism and his pondering upon the validity and effectiveness of romantic energy. It seems to me conceivable that we are witnessing the growth of two sensibilities: the painful struggle of a Quixote trying to achieve honour, and the middle-aged sceptic who comes to realise his dissatisfaction with all levels of consciousness and who, through Jim's dilemma, makes a Romantic irony text for himself. Before his expression of an ambivalent attitude to Jim, he announces his narratorial quandary: "'... I can't explain to you who haven't seen him and who hear his words only at second hand the mixed nature of my feelings...'") (LJ,93). Marlow creates an ambivalent text, which has at its centre a restrained dialectic between an enthusiasm for and scepticism towards romantic individualism.

Guérard writes:

We must remember that in every chapter and on every page the double appeal to sympathy and judgement is made, though one or the other may dominate; we are not being subjected to the blunt regular swings of a pendulum.16

But, if we are sitting in judgement, what can we take to be normative? The law courts are not treated sympathetically by either the omniscient narrator or by Marlow, who complains that they were interested in merely the "superficial how" (LJ,56) of the affair; Brierly, one of the judges, is swayed by Jim's
personality sufficiently to undertake a revaluation of his commitment to fixed standards. Marlow survives to dramatise the flux involved in that revaluation. After the initial interview, he does not unequivocally judge or return a verdict on Jim.

Watt writes (on accounting for Jim's blushing):

In both cases Jim's blushing is surely a sign not of guilt, but of shame. The nature of the distinction remains moderately obscure, partly because the word "guilt" is used in so many different ways; but it is usually agreed that shame is much more directly connected than guilt with the individual's failure to live up to his own ideal conception of himself. As Gerhart Piers puts it in his psychoanalytic treatment of the distinction: "Whereas guilt is generated whenever a boundary (set by the Super-Ego) is touched or transgressed, shame occurs when a goal (presented by the Ego-Ideal) is not being reached. It thus indicates a real 'shortcoming.' Guilt anxiety accompanies transgression; shame, failure." Marlow characteristically judges Jim on the basis of guilt: "The idea obtrudes itself," Marlow comments, "that he made so much of his disgrace while it is the guilt alone that matters" (177). The case of Brierly establishes the contrast. Brierly characteristically sees Jim primarily as a "disgrace" because his basic standards of judgement for himself and others are based on shame; and it is the thought of possibly falling short of his own ideal, not of transgression as such, which drives him to suicide.17

The distinction between shame and guilt is useful. As Watt argues, shame is associated with a failure to live up to an ego-ideal, while guilt acknowledges the transgression of some external code. However, I disagree with Watt's claim that Marlow "characteristically judges Jim on the basis of guilt." Watt's quotation avoids seeing Marlow's comment on Jim's guilt in context. More of that context needs quoting:

"... still the idea obtrudes itself that he
made so much of his disgrace while it is the
 guilt alone that matters. He was not—if I
 may say so—clear to me. He was not clear.
 And there is a suspicion he was not clear to
 himself either. . . ." (LJ,177)

Marlow does not remain satisfied with an unequivocal moral
judgement. He insists on the lack of clarity concerning Jim's
case, and it is that lack of clarity which sustains his
ambivalence towards Jim. Later on he says: "... To tell this
story is by no means so easy as it should be—were the ordinary
standpoint adequate . . ." (LJ,275).

Several times, in the early chapters, Jim refers to his
missed chance, confirming the usefulness of Watt's distinction
between shame and guilt.18 On two of the occasions Marlow does
not comment. But, on the first occasion, he uses it as an
opportunity to show an understanding of Jim and then reveal his
ironic scrutiny of romantic achievements. Jim's sense of shame
at this instance fuels Marlow's own inquiry into the romantic
process. It does not incite a legalistic mentality, but
provides the meditative Marlow with an opportunity to express
his knowledge of the final impossibility of romantic questing:
"... he was penetrating deeper into the impossible world of
romantic achievements . . ." (LJ,83). The second instance of
shame, concerning the missed chance, involves the "weak heart"
episode. Here Marlow's sarcasm reflects the irony of a witness
who has just been initiated into Jim's introspection and is
consequently tentative but dismissive. Both instances concern
the same dilemma in Jim, but the different occasions are
treated differently by Marlow. Hence, his reaction is not
static, as Watt suggests, for his own viewpoint is constantly
under evaluation, even as he narrates.
Watt's claim (that Brierly characteristically sees Jim primarily as a disgrace) is dubious. Indeed, as I have already explained, Brierly uses the word shame in discussing Jim with Marlow. We need to be aware that Brierly's suicide is the tragic recognition by that character of either a fear of failure to live up to his own ideal or a statement of awareness of the futility of the code he had obeyed. The motive is unclear. However, Marlow's scepticism towards Brierly seems to be directed at the sterility of his efficiency in achieving honour, as it is with the French Lieutenant. Brierly's reputation, achieved by the perfect accord with established rules and rewarded with the gold watch, represents an arid success as far as Marlow is increasingly concerned to show. There is no indication that Brierly had dreamed of his present status, but that he had achieved it prosaically. Two questions remain: what does Marlow mean by the "gates of the other world" (LJ,59), and why is the gold watch left symbolically behind? The episode of Brierly's suicide, coming at the time it does in the narrative (shortly after Marlow's dissatisfaction with the law courts), indicates a narratorial discontent with the status quo and unimaginative achievement. Gradually, dutiful, correct behaviour is being replaced by a new and analytical centre, Marlow's ambivalence towards romanticism. From this point, Marlow increasingly establishes himself as a Romantic ironist. He is not intent on focusing on Jim's disgrace or finding a point of definitive judgement, as the dispute over Jim's guilt is "impossible of decision if one had to be fair to all the phantoms in possession" (LJ,93). Unlike any other character in the novel, with the exception of Brierly,
he is aware that any judgement is a statement of one's own values rather than an elucidation of another's guilt, and his capacity for self-reflectiveness illustrates that these values themselves are in a constant state of flux: definitive judgement, therefore, is impossible.

The next section concerns Marlow's treatment of the three characters who inform the reader of different ways of looking at Jim's nature: the French Lieutenant, Chester, and Stein.

It is important to note that Marlow's treatment of the French Lieutenant is coloured by his explicit recognition of Jim's romantic ideal as a new and valid way of constructing an identity. Compared with Jim's quixotism, the French Lieutenant's concept of honour is stolidly conventional.

Marlow's recounting of his meeting with the French Lieutenant illustrates his increasing assurance that the conventional code of honour is inadequate. Marlow establishes that the lieutenant is a capable exponent of the maritime code of honour ("'... he looked a reliable officer, no longer very active, and he was seamanlike, too, in a way...'") [LJ,139], but at the same time he is critical of what Muecke would call his entrenchment in a closed ideology ("'... he reminded you of one of those snuffy, quiet village priests...'") [LJ,139]. If the lieutenant is reliable, he is also "as incapable of an emotional display as a sack of meal" (LJ,141). If he has the obligatory scar, he also moves "as a startled ox might scramble up from the grass" (LJ,148).

In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow becomes increasingly ironic about straightforward notions of efficiency, culminating in his abhorrence of the manager's derogation of Kurtz. Similarly, in
Lord Jim, Marlow is intolerant of the lieutenant's extreme efficiency, and his dissatisfaction arises from his recognition that the lieutenant's concept of honour is rigidly defined, and there is no indication of a personal struggle with different formulations of the term. Of the French Lieutenant, Guérard writes:

And Marlow sweeps us ahead more than three years to his meeting with the French lieutenant of Chapters 12 and 13, who is perhaps the most damning witness and reflector of all. ... Marlow the observer professes to be irritated by his stolid assurance. But Conrad obviously finds him both likeable and admirable. ... 19

The irony of the narrative does not accommodate Guérard's first proposition above, unless the reader ignores Marlow's own developing consciousness, which is a key component of his insistent attempt to find a critical distance from the lieutenant. How are we to determine Conrad's opinion of the lieutenant? We have only Marlow's voice, and there does not exist an obtrusive narrator to devalue his treatment.

Marlow's citing of the Bob Stanton episode further highlights his dissatisfaction with old ideas of heroism, and after the court's pronouncement he recalls the lieutenant's nationality; he is sarcastic about his stolidity:

"... individual opinion—international opinion—by Jove! That Frenchman's, for instance. His own country's pronouncement was uttered in the passionless and definite phraseology a machine would use, if machines could speak. ..." (LJ, 159)

After his definite intolerance of the old form of honour, Marlow sets about justifying Jim. He admits, as is obvious,
that Jim is guilty of contravening the maritime code:

"... He was guilty—as I had told myself repeatedly, guilty and done for; nevertheless, I wished to spare him the mere detail of a formal execution. ..." (LJ, 152)

We can recall Watt's contention that Marlow "characteristically judges Jim on the basis of guilt." The above statement seems to confirm that assessment. However, Marlow does not concentrate on the contravention, but on Jim's effect on his own sensibility; then he finds excuses for Jim's selfishness:

(a) "... he had gone to the very fount and origin of that sentiment, he had reached the secret sensibility of my egoism. ..." (LJ, 152)

(b) "... No doubt he was selfish, too, but his selfishness had a higher origin, a more lofty aim. ..." (LJ, 153)

We can see from the above two quotations that Marlow is absorbed by the effect Jim has on his own sensibility. Once he recognises that effect he attempts to justify the selfishness; the "more lofty aim" is not elucidated, but it clearly refers to Jim's idealised notions of heroism. It is that idealisation which claims the greater part of Marlow's attention as he moves away from the type of honour displayed by the French Lieutenant, just as Kurtz's utterances absorbed him more powerfully than the language of the efficient accountant and the mean-spirited brickmaker in Heart of Darkness. Jim is guilty and Marlow acknowledges that fact, but it is not a matter he dwells upon. In the competition between the two systems (the maritime code of honour, romantic individualism), Marlow reveals that he is interested in investigating the claims of the latter.
Chester's ruthless empiricism provides a contrast to Jim's romanticism. Chester's repeated claim that "You must see things exactly as they are" (LJ,162) acts as an ironic contrast to Jim's imaginings in Chapter 3. He offers Jim, through Marlow, a practical outlet, which is turned down, but later Marlow reflects:

"... It occurred to me once or twice that, after all, Chester was, perhaps, the man to deal effectively with such a disaster. That strange idealist had found a practical use for it at once—unerringly, as it were. It was enough to make one suspect that, maybe, he really could see the true aspect of things that appeared mysterious or utterly hopeless to less imaginative persons. ..." (LJ,172)

It is Chester's preparedness to confront the thwarting power and destructiveness of the natural world which impresses Marlow. Chester launches a full attack on the introspection of both Jim and Marlow and advocates that survival and success depend upon seeing things as they are and being practical. His conquering mien is impressive, but he too is a "strange idealist" as Marlow says above. Ironically, we soon learn that Chester himself is defeated by a hurricane ("... Not a vestige of the Argonants ever turned up; not a sound came out of the waste. Finis! ..." [LJ,176]).

Marlow describes the psychologies of three sensibilities, and the way he describes them reminds the reader of Jim, Chester, and the French Lieutenant:

"... There were his fine sensibilities, his fine feelings, his fine longings—a sort of sublimated, idealised selfishness. He was—if you allow me to say so—very fine; very fine—and very unfortunate. A little coarser nature would not have borne the strain; it would have had to come to terms with itself—
In the gallery of characters who comment on Jim, Marlow is most impressed with Chester, who attacks the world with a vigorous ideal of his own, although he criticises both Jim's and Marlow's idealism because it is quixotic, "too much in the clouds." Marlow's interest in Chester is reminiscent of his interest in the "bad company" of Chapter 5, who were "twice as instructive and twenty times more amusing than the usual respectable thief of commerce" (LJ, 41); it also presages his unusual slant on Gentleman Brown later in the novel. It is the will linked to egoism or desire which fascinates Marlow and ignites the quixotic aspect of his own psyche. Conversely, the will linked to duty or social conceptions of honour becomes increasingly uninteresting to him. Accordingly, his ironic treatment of those characters who adhere to the defined codes of honour does not contain the sustained double irony of his treatment of Brierly. Coupled with this double irony are a preparedness to look beyond Jim's guilt and an explicit endorsement of his quixotism.

The rejection of the lieutenant and the gradual, explicit admission of his interest in Jim's quixotism form a preface to Stein's metaphysical system. Stein's formulations depend upon his sensitivity to the idealising capacity of the romantic disposition. He differentiates man from the insect world ("'... 'This magnificent butterfly finds a little heap of dirt and sits still on it; but man will never on his heap of mud keep still ... '") and acknowledges that the pain
occurs through man's not being able to achieve his dreams
("'... "Everybody knows of one or two like that..." and
that is the trouble—the great trouble..."[LJ,217]).

However, his thought does not remain merely metaphysical. The
dream must be actualised ("'... And tomorrow we must do
something practical—practical..."
[LJ,217]).

The Stein episode is the climax to Marlow's own growing
identification with and endorsement of Jim. Here his new found
allegiance is most fully articulated. Guérard, however, has
doubts about this passage:

"... The whisper of his conviction seemed to
open before me a vast and uncertain expanse, as
of a crepuscular horizon on a plain at dawn—
or was it, perchance, at the coming of the night?
One had not the courage to decide; but it was a
charming and deceptive light, throwing the
impalpable poesy of its dimness over pitfalls—
over graves. His life had begun in sacrifice, in
enthusiasm for generous ideas; he had travelled
very far, on various ways, on strange paths, and
whatever he followed it had been without faltering,
and therefore without shame and without regret.
In so far he was right. That was the way, no
doubt. Yet for all that the great plain on which
men wander amongst graves and pitfalls remained
very desolate under the impalpable poesy of its
crepuscular light, overshadowed in the centre,
circled with a bright edge as if surrounded by
an abyss full of flames. When at last I broke
the silence it was to express the opinion that no
one could be more romantic than himself..."
(LJ,215)

Guérard sees this as "deliberate double talk" and contends that
with Marlow's choice of imagery the "half-lights of deception
and menacing illusion" bring Stein down to Jim's level rather
than raise Jim to his. However, Marlow has described the
two elements of a dichotomy in this passage. He unequivocally
endorses Stein's formula ("'... That was the way, no doubt
... '"), which has the effect of giving dignity to Jim's
romantic quest, but in evoking the world's thwarting powers (in the metaphor of "the great plain"), he recognises that the ego-ideal process, attractive as it sounds, is itself doomed. The "abyss" which threatens to swamp the egoist, cited here, is reminiscent of the "abyss" of Chapter 2, which haunts the isolated ship. The imagery evoked does not in this instance threaten the status of romantic individualism, but, rather, illustrates the fragility of the egoistic consciousness in a world intent on destroying it. Marlow recalls that a momentary vision of Jim while at Stein's took him "nearer to absolute Truth, which, like Beauty itself, floats elusive, obscure, half submerged, in the silent still waters of mystery." (LJ, 216). This kind of vague aestheticism recalls his former evocation of the "Inconceivable." Imaginatively, he can conceive of the quest for the "infinite," but, unlike Jim or Stein, at this point of the narrative, he acknowledges the impossibility of attaining it. Stein's consciousness is informed by ambiguity, not irony. He sees the quest as "good" and "bad"; good, because ideals of quixotic honour fulfil heroic aspirations; bad, because the price of dreams is the potential for failure and hence frustration. The above passage illustrates that Marlow can construct an ironic mechanism which is further detached than Stein's ambiguity, for he is able to see the impossibility of ever achieving fulfilment. As the conclusion of the Patusan episode shows, Stein's aphorism, "... man will never on his heap of mud keep still," is tragically true. Guérard's complaint concerning Marlow's double talk unwittingly identifies an important function of the irony at this stage of the narrative--the irony mediates between the extremes of a
zealous commitment to romanticism and sombre recognition of
the destructive forces which seem set to defeat the
implementation of any dream.

The rest of the novel is divided into these sections:

Chapter 21 : Marlow's first meditative overview of
Jim's case.

Chapters 22-35 : Jim's establishing himself as a hero
and leader; his victories and love for
Jewel.

Chapters 36-44 : Marlow's letter, which includes (a) his
second meditative conclusions, and (b)
his account of Jim's confrontations
with Brown.

Chapter 45 : Marlow's ambivalent conclusions.

The most striking aspect of Chapter 21 is that Marlow's
finely wrought irony is absent. Indeed, it is in this chapter
that Hewitt, with his charge of "muddlement," could conceivably
gather his best evidence; for example, it is possible to cite
some of Marlow's ideas as illustrative of a repudiation of
romanticism and an endorsement of social values:

(a) "... Woe to the stragglers! We exist
only in so far as we hang together. ..."
(LJ,223)

(b) "... Even Stein could say no more than
that he was romantic. I only knew he was
one of us. And what business had he to be
romantic? ..." (LJ,224)

But such comments are balanced by others which express the
opposite idea:

(c) "... and there was a totally new set of
conditions for his imaginative faculty to
work upon. Entirely new, entirely
remarkable. And he got hold of them in a
remarkable way. ..." (HD,219)
This sort of apparent contradiction constitutes a critical problem. I will look more closely at Marlow's wavering point of view and show that Chapter 21, which is Marlow's overview of events on Patusan, as far as he knows those events (that is, up to the end of Chapter 35), contains a deep-seated ambivalence about Jim which is well illustrated by the respective extremes of the four quotations above.

Chapter 21 needs to be examined in conjunction with Chapter 35, where Marlow's narration to his fictional audience concludes. After that chapter, the narrative continues with Marlow's letter to the privileged man. The connecting topic between Chapters 21 and 35 concerns Marlow's going home.

In Chapter 21 Marlow's wavering point of view becomes most noticeable at the point of his discussing the idea of home. Marlow speculates with the possibility that he originally conceived of the Patusan episode because he wanted to "dispose" of Jim as he (Marlow) was "about to go home for a time." It is interesting that he describes Jim's predicament with disapproving words, "miserable trouble and his shadowy claim," and claims that Jim had come to him "like a man panting under a burden in a mist" (LJ, 221). However, while the tone is rather derogatory, the image of "mist" seems to incur a doubt in Marlow, for he acknowledges an epistemological difficulty:

"... I cannot say I had ever seen him distinctly—not even to this day, after I had my last view of him; but it seemed to me that the less I understood the more I was bound to him in the name of that
doubt which is the inseparable part of
our knowledge. . . ." (LJ,221)

The last part of this sentence is a repetition of his statement
in Chapter 5, where he admits that it is impossible to lay the
"ghost of doubt" about the value of the fixed standard. As he
says here, the doubt itself became an "inseparable part" of
his knowledge and instilled in him an indestructible paradox.
Marlow is unable to pursue a single-minded rhetoric; the image
of "mist" recalls the previous intellectual difficulty, which
he reveals in Chapter 5 and reminds him of the implications of
Jim's romanticism for his own way of seeing the world. The
effect of the image of "mist" is to generate the ambivalence
common earlier on--although he wants to dispose of Jim, he also
realises that he was "bound to him." We can recall Marlow's
earlier ambivalence (referring to the effect of Jim's
"disgrace"):

"... an incident as completely devoid of
importance as the flooding of an antheap,
and yet the mystery of his attitude got hold
of me as though he had been an individual in
the forefront of his kind. . . ." (LJ,93)

Back in Chapter 21, Marlow returns to his first theme: "'. . .
And then, I repeat, I was going home . . .'" (LJ,221). His
discussion concerning home rests on a simile: "'. . . for each
of us going home must be like going to render an account. We
return to face our superiors, our kindred, our friends—those
whom we obey, and those whom we love . . .'" (LJ,221-22).

Marlow then includes those who have no social ties:

". . . even they have to meet the spirit that
dwells within the land, under its sky, in its
air, in its valleys, and on its rises, in its
fields, in its waters and its trees—a mute
friend, judge, and inspirer. . . ." (LJ,222)

At this point Marlow is trying to generate the notion of bond
--between man and man and man and nature. However, he is not
uncritical of his own rhetoric:

". . . All this may seem to you sheer
sentimentalism; and indeed very few of us have
the will or the capacity to look consciously
under the surface of familiar emotions. . . ." (LJ,222)

The first part of the sentence (before the semi-colon) suggests
that Marlow is well aware of the potential charge of
sentimentalism, but that he is prepared to defend himself.
Nevertheless, he does not provide further defence of his earlier
notions of simple emotions and bonds, but asserts that most
have an emotional life that does not go beyond the sentimental
("... There are the girls we love, the men we look up to,
the tenderness . . ."
[LJ,222]). He then concentrates further
on the "lonely" who return to face the land itself (not to a
dwelling or affection), and he uses the word "severity,"
denoting, of course, a harshness which did not exist in his
earlier rhetoric about the "spirit" of the land. Marlow
deviously and subtly has changed his theme from unity to
alienation. This allows him to introduce Jim more fully into
the discussion and initiates a justification of him on account
of his powerful feeling:

". . . but I know he felt, he felt confusedly
but powerfully, the demand of some such truth
or some such illusion—I don't care how you
call it, there is so little difference, and
the difference means so little. . . ." (LJ,222)
Here Marlow is able to stress the insistency of quixotism in Jim and also that the most important aspect of Jim's quest is that he felt it to be true and it is that feeling which matters. As far as Marlow is concerned, there is now no absolute or fixed truth from which Jim deviates in a reprehensible manner; he says: "... He was romantic, but none the less true ..." (LJ,334) in Chapter 35.

Marlow eventually returns to the difficulty Jim had in coming to terms with the idea of going home ("... he would grow desperately stiff and immovable ..." [LJ,223]). This difficulty is also dramatised in Chapter 35. Jim, as Marlow realises, is isolated, alone with his quixotic dream, and this makes Marlow "concerned as to the way he would go out" (LJ,223) and aware that one of the possible consequences is that he could "disappear, vanish utterly, without provoking a sound of curiosity or sorrow" (LJ,223). It is the threat of that kind of ending which prompts Marlow's conviction: "... We exist only in so far as we hang together ..." (LJ,223).

The apparent allegiance to solidarity continues when he speculates on the possibility of disaster for Jim:

"... You know the awful jaunty bearing of these scarecrows coming to you from a decent past, the rasping careless voice, the half-averted impudent glances—those meetings 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)

However, Marlow then says: "... but I also mistrusted my want of imagination ..." (LJ,224). This in turn produces a sympathetic understanding of Jim's disposition:

"... He wouldn't let me forget how
imaginative he was, and your imaginative people swing farther in any direction, as if given a longer scope of cable in the uneasy anchorage of life. . . ." (LJ,224)

But that indication of sympathy is soon undercut:

". . . Even Stein could say no more than that he was romantic. I only knew he was one of us. And what business had he to be romantic? . . ." (LJ,224)

That derogation of Jim is soon replaced by admiration:

". . . He did not go out, not at all; on the contrary, he came on wonderfully, came on straight as a die and in excellent form, which showed that he could stay as well as spurt. . . ." (LJ,224)

Then that praise is qualified:

". . . I ought to be delighted . . . but I am not so pleased as I would have expected to be. . . ." (LJ,224)

Interestingly, Marlow returns to the important theme of the impossibility of finding final truth through the linguistic medium, recalling his statement in *Heart of Darkness*: "'. . . it is impossible to convey the life-sensation . . .'" (HD,82).

He says in Chapter 21:

". . . Are not our lives too short for that full utterance which through all our stammerings is of course our only and abiding intention? I have given up expecting those last words. . . ." (LJ,225)

He then concludes with an accolade for Jim and criticism of his audience:

". . . I affirm he had achieved greatness; but the thing would be dwarfed in the telling, or
rather in the hearing. . . . I could be eloquent were I not afraid you fellows had starved your imaginations to feed your bodies. I do not mean to be offensive; it is respectable to have no illusions—and safe—and profitable—and dull. Yet you, too, in your time must have known the intensity of life, that light of glamour created in the shock of trifles, as amazing as the glow of sparks struck from a cold stone—and as short-lived, alas!" (LJ, 225)

The last sentence, with its image of "light," is similar to the ending of Chapter 35:

". . . then only a speck, a tiny white speck, that seemed to catch all the light left in a darkened world. . . . And, suddenly, I lost him. . . ." (LJ, 336)

It is a matter of what we make of Marlow's wavering point of view. On the surface it appears as "muddlement," as if Marlow cannot make up his mind. However, I consider that Schlegel's notion of irony provides a better interpretation (remembering that "synthesis" means juxtaposition):

An idea is a concept perfected to the point of irony, an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts. (A, 121)

Marlow oscillates between the values of solidarity (which he explores through the subject of going home) and a fascination with Jim's individualism that arises from his increasing doubt in the fixed standard, which doubt, as he reiterates in Chapter 21, is an inseparable part of his viewpoint. Doubt extends to his own medium, language. The oscillation, which is not "muddlement," but a deliberate intellectual strategy, occurs because he cannot ally unequivocally with either
solidarity or quixotism. Constantly, the only option for Marlow is the "continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts" (A,121), and I see his statement about the impossibility of finding the "full utterance" as confirmation of Paul de Man's argument "that irony engenders a temporal sequence of acts of consciousness which is endless."

The next section exhibits Jim's quixotism in the terms in which Watt and Kirschner define the concept: "as though his faith were more real than any of the negations by which reason and experience alike demonstrate its futility," and "an adventurous and energetic egoist, believing in the effectiveness of his own action." 22

After the two years' separation from Jim, Marlow returns to see that Jim has made much progress in achieving the dream self which he had so long despaired of attaining. His activity is highly egoistic: "... 'I'll tell you. It's the knowledge that had I been wiped out it is this place that would have been the loser'... '" (LJ,245). Marlow comments: "... That is why he seemed to love the land and the people with a sort of fierce egoism, with a contemptuous tenderness'" (LJ,248). After the defeat of Sherif Ali, Marlow concludes that Jim had come "very near at last to mastering his fate" (LJ,274) and on embarking on a discussion of Jim's love episode with Jewel, Marlow reveals the standpoint which has been so significant for our understanding of his ironic perspective:

(a) ". . . To tell this story is by no means so easy as it should be—were the ordinary standpoint adequate. . . ." (LJ,275)
.. He had a conscience, and it was a romantic conscience. . . ." (LJ, 276)

Quotation (a) once again provides evidence of Marlow's recognition of the difficulties he has in constructing a narrative and explicitly acknowledges the eccentric point-of-view. Quotation (b) is a sensitive evocation of the validity of Jim's quest. The two quotations in tandem stand as a succinct formulation of Marlow's Romantic irony: in grappling with romanticism he is self-consciously oscillating between creation and destruction, enthusiasm and scepticism, as he tentatively explores quixotic impulses, following the rejection of an unequivocal absorption in fixed standards of conduct.

The consequences of a romantic conscience are dramatised in Marlow's encounter with Jewel. Her unselfishness and compassion denote the relational mode of reality ("... Women find their inspiration in the stress of moments that for us are merely awful, absurd, or futile . . ." [LJ, 315]). Marlow reveals his middle-aged perspective of the world which "thanks to our unwearied efforts . . . is as sunny an arrangement of small conveniences as the mind of man can conceive" (LJ, 313). Then he announces the tragedy of the romantic's position ("... "Nobody, nobody is good enough" . . ." [LJ, 319]) to a bemused Jewel. The two characters base their conceptions of good on different premises. Jewel's conception of being true or faithful presupposes codes and honour through friendship and hence reflects a kind of medieval romance; Marlow's conception of being true presupposes an ego-ideal which makes Jim obsessed with romantic achievement. Marlow restates his acknowledgement of the "impossible world of romantic
achievements," and it is because the infinite is unobtainable that neither Jim nor anyone else is good enough.

Marlow's interest in both sides of the conflict between Jim's and Jewel's world views reflects his capacity for oscillating between poles; it also illustrates well Gekoski's principle of tension which he sees as characteristic of Conrad's fiction, for Marlow is genuinely sympathetic to both Jewel and Jim. Jewel's tearful tale of her mother's death, amidst Cornelius's attempts to enter the room, leaves Marlow emotionally perturbed:

"... It had the power to drive me out of my conception of existence, out of that shelter each of us makes for himself to creep under in moments of danger, as a tortoise withdraws within its shell. For a moment I had a view of a world that seemed to wear a vast and dismal aspect of disorder, while, in truth, thanks to our unwearied efforts, it is as sunny an arrangement of small conveniences as the mind of man can conceive. But still—it was only a moment: I went back into my shell directly. One must—don't you know?—though I seemed to have lost all my words in the chaos of dark thoughts I had contemplated for a second or two beyond the pale. These came back, too, very soon, for words also belong to the sheltering conception of light and order which is our refuge. ..." (LJ,313)

Marlow's didacticism above provides an explicit elucidation of Romantic irony principles. Order is only an illusion, but it is a necessary illusion, and it is interesting that Marlow concedes that language has its source in a fixed reference (the "sheltering conception of light and order"). Exactly as Paul de Man states, once that order has been shattered, the ironist is bereft of language. However, previously, in Chapter 21, Marlow also claims that his linguistic search takes another path: "... Are not our lives too short for that full
utterance which through all our stammerings is of course our only and abiding intention? I have given up expecting those last words . . . " (LJ,225). The different situations instigate different theories of language. In the scene with Jewel, Marlow searches for words which will comfort Jewel; in Chapter 21, he searches for the "full utterance," which he acknowledges is impossible with regard to romantic individualism. The precedent for the dual use of language exists in Heart of Darkness, where he is simultaneously interested in Kurtz's poetic utterances and able to soothe the Intended on his return to Europe.

Marlow's intimations of chaos and the immediate recourse to his "shell" recall his occasional predilection for the "incidents of the surface" in Heart of Darkness when faced with the obtrusive wilderness. Marlow always recognises the need for system, but he does not unequivocally ally with the status quo (the "refuge"); he acknowledges the psychological distress incurred from wandering outside it, and this is why one must return to the shell.

Jewel's tears and Jim's concept of honour take Marlow out of the shell and reactivate the reflective disjunction. Indeed, Marlow's figurative description of his last view of Jim is an enthusiastic evocation of the romantic ego: Jim is "only a speck, a tiny white speck, that seemed to catch all the light left in a darkened world" (LJ,336). From the romantic point of view, man is a tiny flash of light in a darkened world, but it is a light which Marlow feels obliged to try and comprehend. As Marlow has been at pains to illustrate, the battle for romantic achievement occurs in a vacuum, remote from the world of conventional expectations (the "shell"), the world Marlow
finally returns to; he twice depicts Jim's separateness from this safer world:

(a) "... He was great—invincible—and the world did not want him, it had forgotten him, it would not even know him. ..." (LJ,318)

(b) "Jim, as I've told you, accompanied me on the first stage of my journey back to the world he had renounced. ..." (LJ,331)

Jim becomes a symbol for Marlow, as Kurtz does in *Heart of Darkness* ("... I don't know why he should always have appeared to me symbolic. Perhaps this is the real cause of my interest in his fate ..." [LJ,265]). Jim is a romantic; Marlow is an ironist whose irony depends upon the potentially illusory nature of Jim's adventures and his separation from the conventional world. Marlow holds on to the norms and values of the ordinary world and of the maritime code, but he does not do so unequivocally, and it is his propensity for investigating chaos in its various forms which informs him and eventually the reader of the limitations of an unimaginative social allegiance. Once he has doubted the absolute value of the fixed standard of conduct, he is able to assert that there is such a little difference between "truth" and "illusion" (LJ,222); this idea echoes Jim's own earlier expostulation concerning his guilt: "'... There was not the thickness of a sheet of paper between the right and wrong of this affair' ..." (LJ,130). Truth for Marlow's listeners, the French Lieutenant and Jewel is solidarity; truth for Jim is romantic glory; for Marlow, it is a dialectic between the finite world and the infinite. In order to achieve the imaginative re-creation of the quest for
the infinite, Jim's progress is explored in regions which, far from inhibiting his quixotism, foster it. Marlow's scrutiny (which sees Jim as symbolic of the quest for romantic glory) and consequent narrative exhibit self-restriction as he oscillates between polar responses. This self-restriction is evident in the poised comment, "I affirm nothing" (LJ, 339), of Chapter 36. Previously, he had indulged interrogatively in a survey of the relative values of civilised norms and those of a more spectacularly eccentric quixotism:

"... though I remember well you would not admit he had mastered his fate. You prophesised for him the disaster of weariness and of disgust with acquired honour, with the self-appointed task, with the love sprung from pity and youth. You had said you knew so well 'that kind of thing,' its illusory satisfaction, its unavoidable deception. You said also—I call to mind—that 'giving your life up to them' (them meaning all of mankind with skins brown, yellow, or black in colour) 'was like selling your soul to a brute.' You contended that 'that kind of thing' was only endurable and enduring when based on a firm conviction in the truth of ideas racially our own, in whose name are established the order, the morality of an ethical progress. ... In other words, you maintained that we must fight in the ranks or our lives don't count. Possibly! You ought to know—be it said without malice—you who have rushed into one or two places single-handed and came out cleverly, without singeing your wings. The point, however, is that of all mankind Jim had no dealings but with himself, and the question is whether at the last he had not confessed to a faith mightier than the laws of order and progress. ..." (LJ, 338-39)

This passage is important because it is an explicit discussion of the contradictions and tensions in Marlow's perspective. It bears out my analysis of the covert ironies, which his vision harbours in the earlier parts of the novel. The troublesome oscillation in Chapter 21 is here deliberately
construed into an obvious dialectic ("... you maintained that we must fight in the ranks or our lives don't count. Possibly! ...") in this tract. As at the end of Chapter 21, Marlow's separation from the audience is noticeable, and his forthright tone indicates that much of his irony has been misunderstood by his audience. Friedrich Schlegel interprets the ironic disposition thus: "To a person who hasn't got it, it will remain a riddle even after it is openly confessed" (L,108), and the intransigence of his audience is a frustration which Marlow persistently carries in both Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim. However, it is also clear that Marlow does not endorse Jim's quixotism unequivocally. It prompts in him a question, which he answers ambivalently at the end of the novel.

Marlow's irony, in analysing the status of quixotism, is marked by poise; in dealing with the ordinary world, it is quite specific in intention. His irony against Jim's father, in this chapter, echoes that of the omniscient narrator in Chapter 1: "... The old chap goes on equably trusting Providence and the established order of the universe, but alive to its small dangers and its small mercies ..." (LJ,341). As in the early chapters of the novel, the ordinary world is seen as drab. The function of the irony there and here is to lay the way open for discussion of a more imaginative existence.

Marlow's last strategy is to expose Brown as another Quixote, a piratical version of Jim. It is interesting to note that Brown fascinates Marlow in the same kind of way Jim did. His attitude towards the buccaneer is subtle:

"... Brown was a latter-day buccaneer, sorry enough, like his more celebrated prototypes; but what distinguished him from his contemporary
brother ruffians, like Bully Hayes or the mellifluous Pease, or that perfumed, Dundreary-whiskered, dandified scoundrel known as Dirty Dick, was the arrogant temper of his misdeeds and a vehement scorn for mankind at large and for his victims in particular. The others were merely vulgar and greedy brutes, but he seemed moved by some complex intention. . . ."

(LJ,352-53)

Marlow later describes this complex intention as consisting of "a blind belief in the righteousness of his will against all mankind" (LJ,370).

Jim and Brown possess a similar assertive will, predicated by an ego-ideal, although the latter's will is malevolent. Marlow is not so interested in the immorality implicit in such a will as in the determined quixotic energy, which motivates the character to achieve status and identity. Although Brown's self-expression is antisocial and draws Marlow's reproof in the adjective "senseless," Marlow is more interested in Brown's status as a Quixote. Both Jim's and Brown's success depends on the opportunity or chance as defined by their respective ego-ideals. The penalty for failure in their execution was either de-certification or prison, and it is Brown's inquiry as to whether Jim had "nothing fishy in his life to remember" which establishes the "subtle reference to their common blood, an assumption of common experience; a sickening suggestion of common guilt, of secret knowledge that was like a bond of their minds and of their hearts" (LJ,387).

Tragically, Brown's intrusion and Jim's sympathetic identification bring about Jim's death. His ego-ideal, painstakingly established on Patusen, is irrevocably tarnished at the death of Dain Waris. The judgements on Jim's death are various. Jewel sees him as "false," Stein as "true," and
Marlow remains ambivalent:

"... Now he is no more, there are days when the reality of his existence comes to me with an immense, with an overwhelming force; and yet upon my honour there are moments, too, when he passes from my eyes like a disembodied spirit astray amongst the passions of this earth, ready to surrender himself faithfully to the claims of his own world of shades. ... ." (LJ,416)

This ambivalent conclusion recalls the ambivalence earlier in the novel, where Marlow fluctuates between seeing Jim's existence as being no more significant than the "flooding of an ant-heap" and as having the power to change "mankind's conception of himself." This ambivalence is one symptom of a wavering point-of-view—elsewhere, as I have demonstrated, there is evidence of contradiction, ambivalence, and internal paradox. At the beginning of the novel the irony is specific in intention, as the narratorial focus shifts away from any narrow-minded, legalistic interpretation of Jim's misfortune and seeks to establish quixotism as a valid self-expression. Gradually, Marlow's perspective oscillates between two poles, and through the dialectic he achieves Romantic irony. By detaching himself from what he says and writes, Marlow puts mutually contradictory ideas together; neither affirming nor denying he chooses both and chooses neither. This makes sympathy and criticism possible simultaneously, and because the irony is all-embracing it includes the author within its range. Marlow battles with the problem of finding language to describe the simultaneous consciousness of the improbability of and the necessity for a complete account of Jim's predicament. In irony, Marlow discovers the narrator's most valuable tool. As a purely
critical instrument it is of limited usefulness, for the questions are left unanswered. But its very undecidedness has one important consequence: it clears the way for another, and newer, sort of criticism. The multiplicity of possible perspectives makes a fresh and complex view of things possible, a view more nearly in the round. It does not pinpoint the truth of the matter, but circumscribes the operative area. Irony allows Marlow to criticise what he himself narrates, and to present different points of view with considerable impartiality.

I contend that Marlow's irony in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* is markedly different from that suggested by critics who carry intellectual presuppositions (to their reading of Marlow's bias), which suggest that he upholds the Conway code. His intellectual restlessness attempts to discover what the eccentric behaviour of a Quixote or an anarchist can illustrate about the limitations of conventionally defined notions of identity. The ambivalence towards anarchy and quixotism in the earlier stories becomes the key ingredient of an incorrigible reflective disjunction which increasingly finds inadequate the language associated with entrenched, conservative values. The narratorial process consists of Marlow's foraging for images and perspectives from the past which, in turn, are continuously scrutinised with irony in the narrative present. He is able to see the dual purpose of language. Often the language base is the ordered social world, but the Romantic ironist is prone to dissatisfaction with that illusory order and aware of an indescribable chaos lurking beneath it. In this novel, that chaos is evidenced in Jim's romantic energy. Once he has had
contact with that kind of energy, Marlow realises that a "full utterance" is impossible and that the only remaining intellectual option is to create a dialectic between the opposing tensions of social responsibility and personal autonomy.

Gekoski asks an interesting question: "If Jim has contravened a certain explicit code of ethical standards, if he is thus guilty, what then is all the fuss about?" He answers the question in these terms: Jim, who is "one of us" failed, and he reminds us that we are all potentially guilty, that any of us might jump from some Patna. Gekoski sees the dramatic interest of the novel in its exposure of the precarious stature of the fixed standards, and, as he does in his criticism of *Heart of Darkness*, he uses religious terminology (the word "atonement" and phrase "redemptive experience") in order to stress the salvific nature of the Patusan episode. As I have explored the novel, Marlow's doubt about the fixed standard of conduct means that he doubts the "sovereign power enthroned" in it. Later, in his dialectical discussion in the letter, he writes: "... and the question is whether at the last he had not confessed to a faith mightier than the laws of order and progress ... ." (LJ,339). A definitive answer is impossible. Gekoski puts the emphasis on the fear that anyone might contravene the "laws of order," which are incontrovertible. Marlow doubts the incontrovertibility of the laws themselves. He is at pains to express his different reactions to Jim at different times to an audience, which like that of *Heart of Darkness* is "assured of certain certainties." Initially, he was critical of Jim and
condescending, but gradually he reveals that his view towards romanticism is complex. Brierly's defection through suicide allows Marlow to see the illusory nature of the Conway code, and after he has dealt with his meeting with the French Lieutenant, he is more comfortable with admitting his interest in Jim's egoism and its efficacy for establishing a powerfully idealised notion of identity. In two places in the novel, Chapters 5 and 21, Marlow instigates the kind of critical difficulties which result in the charge of muddlement. But there is an ironic logic connecting his simultaneous commitment to opposing impulses. Marlow is able to acknowledge that Jim is guilty, that living in the "shell" is safer (and that language most often has its source and reference there), and that it is safe to have illusions. This is his commitment to a "system." However, the law courts investigate the "superficial how" not the "fundamental why" of Jim's affair, and it is the centrifugal energy of the quixotic Jim which inspires his journey into the impossible world of romantic achievements. It is the pursuit of the impossible world which leads to death (in Jim's case), and which necessitates the dialectical scrutiny, the language of mediation, as the artist comes to terms with the dilemma of needing a complete account of Jim's reality with the knowledge that such an account is impossible.

In *Nostromo*, the narrator indicates that he possesses Marlow's capacity for paradox. However, the resulting narrative shows that his purposes are different from Marlow's, and the ironic text contains a more sober, albeit less intellectually agile, series of perspectives.

* * * * *
One of the most obvious patterns to emerge from the texts so far is that antisocial behaviour is accorded status by the narrators; the introduction of that kind of energy tends to act as a complement to its opposite, social allegiance. We can see this complementarity in the pairing of Wait with Singleton, Jim with Brierly, Karain's illusions with the unbelief of European civilisation, and Kurtz with the manager. This pairing is an analogue to the juxtaposition of opposing impulses in Marlow's narratorial consciousness and, as I have shown, the full exploration of that dichotomy in Marlow's texts results in Romantic irony.

It can easily be seen from Marlow's narratives that things are not ironic in themselves, but need to be seen to be ironic; the narrator determines the nature of the resulting irony. Thus, it is important to scrutinise the perspective of the narrator of Nostromo, if we are to understand the nature of his irony. Hewitt rather bluntly contends: "There is no commentator in Nostromo and little direct comment from Conrad himself. His method of forcing us to make judgements is normally that of juxtaposition, of allowing one section of the book to reflect implicitly on another. The part played by irony is thus very great." However, the narrator does make condemnatory judgements through direct comments. He uses aphorisms. In one
glaring instance the aphorism embodies an unacknowledged contradiction. On other occasions the aphorisms exhibit an anti-intellectualism or moral exhortation. The characteristic analytical tentativeness of Marlow is absent. Hewitt's second point, concerning juxtaposition, is a useful statement concerning a common practice in Conrad's ironic procedures, but the principle of reflection (allowing one section to reflect on another) is severely influenced by the narrator's repudiation of the quixotic impulse.

The most straightforward function of the narrator is that of historian: he provides a history of the mine, of the revolutions and counter-revolutions in the Republic of Costaguana, as a background to the political events which see Decoud's plan for Separation take effect. Of the historian, we have only two references:

(a) Those of us whom business or curiosity took to Sulaco. . . . (N,95)

(b) To him, as to all of us, the compromises with his conscience. . . . (N,364)

In both these references, he sees himself as part of the collective ("of us"), as does the narrator of The Nigger of the "Narcissus". In that novel, I suggested that the crew-member narrator does not unequivocally endorse the value of solidarity, and that, in his deliberately constructed paradoxes, he is a forerunner to Marlow. However, in Nostromo, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that this narrator admires most the characters who act socially rather than egoistically. His disapproval is noticeably absent when he is dealing with Emilia and Monygham, but he is directly critical of Gould and Decoud.
The narrator is not only an historian but also an ironist. For the first time since *Almayer's Folly* quixotism is not accorded much status. The most deliberately conceived quixotic characters are Viola and Gould, but the narrator satirically denounces the eccentric idealism because of the incongruity of their respective ideals within the immediate social and political environment of Sulaco. Nevertheless, he also exhibits a capacity for contradiction. This occurs in his discussion of Gould, whose action of going to the mine he tacitly endorses, even though he is able to reflect: "It [action] is the enemy of thought and the friend of flattering illusions" (N,66). Unlike Marlow, he does not turn the contradiction, approving and criticising Gould's action, into an indestructible paradox, the source of Romantic irony. Later he intervenes dogmatically and labels Gould "insane" (N,379). This denunciation contrasts markedly with the treatment given to Jim's reveries.

The novel does contain a character who is able to sustain paradoxical vision. Decoud, like Marlow, dichotomises characters into Quixotes and Panzas; he is no admirer of the former type, but sees the designation of South Americans into one or other of the contraries as a "curse of futility" (N,171). Indeed, he reviles Gould's quixotism as belligerently as the narrator, but the curious aspect of his criticism is that he does not identify the idealising impulse in his own nature. He insists to Emilia that he is "practical" (N,218), without acknowledging that he has highly idealised motives for his practicality, and while he is able to provide the necessary juxtaposition of the quixotic and panzaic within his own nature at the beginning of his adventures with Nostromo on the gulf, he is not able to sustain that synthesis--his scepticism is
eventually so corrosive that he deems all effort to be useless.

I have briefly stated above the ingredients of Decoud's complex psychology, which I explore more fully later. The narrator does not see Decoud as a complex character; he simply denounces him as a "dilettante" (N,200). He regards the irony of the repatriated journalist as a "mere barren indifferentism" (N,152). Nevertheless, he admires irony in Emilia, and its lack in Charles Gould he finds deplorable. He abhors the irony of Decoud, because of "the dry light of his scepticism" (N,364), its aloofness from all social reality. On the other hand, he admires Emilia's sense of irony because it allows her to function more wittingly in the pretentious social milieu of Sulaco, and he deplores its absence in Charles because he cannot recognise the obsessive element of his quixotism.

The narrator is intent on using irony to expose human foible. The consequence of using irony of this kind is that the complexities involved with ego idealisation are not subtly scrutinised. Monygham, like Decoud, is a complex portrait. The narrator concedes that Monygham's behaviour, after the torture, is motivated by an idealism, idealised disgrace, but this he sees as "the imaginative exaggeration of a correct feeling" (N,375). That feeling is a stern rule of conduct combined with loyalty, and it is his socially oriented action which the narrator admires. However, Monygham harbours another idealism, an idealised love for Emilia, which motivates his part in the betrayal of Sotillo; in this latter activity, the narrator does not explore the contradiction of a character who is both "loyal" (N,376) and "Machiavellian" (N,432).

The only character in the novel who unequivocally admires idealists is the chief engineer. He single-mindedly endorses
Gould, Viola, and Nostromo. His lauding the idealists occurs in dialogue with Monygham, who calls idealisation "Self-flattery" (N,318). It is the juxtaposition of opposing reactions (provided, in Nostromo, by this dialogue), which forms the basis of Marlow's dialectical irony, the kind of irony which is not present in this novel except in the contradictory Decoud, who in turn is admonished by the narrator. Guérard analyses succinctly the flaws in the narrative's point of view. In discussing Part 3, Chapter 1, Guérard writes: "But it does suggest the kind of difficulty caused by Conrad's refusal to commit himself to a consistently omniscient view, or to a retrospective narrator, or to the limited view of one character only; his narrative is compelled to blunder back and forth among these three points of view and sometimes others. . . . The secret once again is distance, and the authority to indulge an ironic evasiveness." It is precisely the ingredient of distance, provided by the retrospective narration, which establishes the authority and evasiveness of Marlow's narratives, Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim. Guérard's phrase "ironic evasiveness" translates as double irony in Muecke's terminology, and whereas we become used to Marlow's controlled ambivalence, in Nostromo we are confronted with uncontrolled ambiguities. The reader is forced to evaluate Gould's action which the narrator both praises and laments, work out why Decoud is deplorable for his irony and Gould deplorable for a lack of irony, understand why quixotism is ironically undermined as a mode of idealism, when it is also a chief contributor to the establishment of a new state.

I begin the textual analysis of Nostromo with a discussion of the perspective of the narrator in the first chapter of the
novel. Hewitt writes: "He opens with a note of urbane personality, and with a parenthesis in the first sentence as of a man conversing on something on which he knows a great deal, goes on with bland—and at this point probably unrecognised—irony to speak of the sterile promontory of Azuera. . . ." 

Hewitt's adjectives "urbane" and "bland" are useful for determining the early perspective of the narrator; the urbanity and blandness contribute significantly to his air of detachment, which is discernible when he discusses the Azuera promontory and the legends involving the gold hunters:

The poor, associating by an obscure instinct of consolation the ideas of evil and wealth, will tell you that it is deadly because of its forbidden treasures. . . . Tradition has it that many adventurers of olden time had perished in the search. . . .

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,4-5)

The above quotation contains an important anecdote and recalls Marlow's opening of Heart of Darkness, where he provides an historical review of the Roman colonisers. The link between the early adventurers and Kurtz is clear. Similarly, here, the narrator tells of the fate of the early adventurers, and the anecdote foreshadows Gould's search for gold in Sulaco. It is
important to note that the narrator does not disapprove of the treasure hunting but of the notion of the poor that wealth equates with evil and of the superstition which links success with fatality: the theory of "tenacious gringo ghosts suffering in their starved and parched flesh of defiant heretics" is a "strange theory," as the association of wealth with evil is an "obscure instinct."

Gekoski contends that the opening of the novel contains an emphatic moral lesson: "Nostromo begins with a stark anecdote which is a metaphoric analogue to the action that is to follow. . . . Thus we are warned from the start that the desire for material wealth is a lure leading to physical or spiritual death." As I have shown, we are not directed by the narrator to such a declamation against treasure seeking. The narrator's rendering of the anecdote allows us to witness a perspective which is sceptical about religious or superstitious interpretations of the fate of the gold hunters, leaving open the possibility that the desire for material wealth is morally acceptable.

Although the narrator clearly disapproves of the point of view of the poor and religious, he gives sufficient evidence that he approves of the sailors' perspective. In describing their attitude to the Placido, he says:

The eye of God Himself—they add with grim profanity—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 notion of "profanity" couches an irony against a simple-minded religiosity, and significantly the sailors' blasphemy
is not undercut. Earlier, the narrator uses the image of "impenetrable darkness" (N,6), and this squares favourably in sense with the sailors' "blind darkness." The implications are important—in rejecting any divine sanctions on the world, the sailors and the narrator are left with the grim isolation of the "work a man's hand is doing in there." Indeed, the novel scrutinises the various types of work and activity engaged in by idealists, pragmatists, politicians, and householders. This particular setting witnesses the "work" of Nostromo and Decoud; their "work" is heavily motivated by a psychology of idealisation.

The narrator's early tone and preference (for the universe described as a "darkness") reveal the moral and intellectual territory of the novel, and much of the tactic, material, and rendition is similar to Marlow's opening in _Heart of Darkness_. The preoccupation with gloom, darkness, isolation, and adventure is further added to by a tacit identification with the dark universe of the sailors; this identification is reminiscent of Marlow's fascination with the Romans. A reasonable deduction from the above passages is that the narrator is going to investigate how men work within the void.

Conrad's narrators have always been fascinated by the varying imaginative constructions in the void, constantly and vigilantly deciphering the various identities employed for either survival or achievement. Generally speaking, this preoccupation has necessitated the contrasting of the individualistic with the more passive characters. In this novel, that kind of contrast is very obvious. Nostromo, Gould, and Decoud are all assertive, advancing a personal ideal, and
are compared to those characters whom the narrator conceives of as socially minded (Emilia Gould, Avellanos, Antonia, Don Pépé).

The novel's discussion of idealised behaviour begins in Part 1, Chapters 2-4. In these chapters, we are introduced to three characters, each resolute in perspective. They all see Nostromo differently, and thus they recall Marlow's gallery of characters who all had a different bias in their interpretation of Jim's behaviour. Mitchell explicitly endorses Nostromo's charismatic leadership ("a fellow in a thousand" [N,12]) and acknowledges fulsomely his social utility. Giorgio applauds his heroism as "his duty" (N,17); Teresa acknowledges his grandeur, but scorns his self-preoccupation ("He thinks of nobody but himself" [N,20]). Unlike Marlow, however, the narrator does not interpose his own perspective amidst this coterie of biased commentators. Rather, their predilections are exposed and juxtaposed. Ostensibly, they are left with the daunting task of discussing Nostromo's idealisation, later revealed as being based on vanity and reputation. The two male characters see him as courageous--Mitchell stresses his efficiency, and Viola stresses his idealised dutifulness. Both miss the point about his egoism. Teresa's expostulation, with its intended moral reprimand, is closest to the mark. However, the net effect is that each of the three characters projects his or her vision onto the character, without the controlling presence of an ironic and evasive narrator.

This lack of detached scrutiny is corrected in the narrator's depiction of Viola and his marriage, and the irony levelled against Viola has significant associations with the irony levelled against Charles Gould. Viola's conception of
honour and courage is constructed upon a memory of Garibaldi, which consumes his vision, and the narrator's characterisation establishes him as an anachronistic war hero, dedicated to a quixotism lamented by Tanner in his discussion of that mode of idealism in *Lord Jim*. The comic impracticability of his vision, which the narrator calls "fanaticism" (N,21) in Chapter 3, is evident in his aloofness from his family; we see an imagination which flourishes quixotically, outside the demands and needs of the immediate situation. Teresa's domestic world provides the contrast:

When sometimes a frying-pan caught fire during a delicate operation with some shredded onions, and the old man was seen backing out of the doorway, swearing and coughing violently in an acrid cloud of smoke, the name of Cavour—the arch intriguer sold to kings and tyrants—could be heard involved in imprecations against the China girls, cooking in general, and the brute of a country where he was reduced to live for the love of liberty that traitor had strangled. . . .

"Eh, Giorgio! Leave Cavour alone and take care of yourself now we are lost in this country all alone with the two children, because you cannot live under a king." (N,24-25)

The quixotic severance from his family is further exposed by the narrator:

He loved his children, but girls belong more to the mother, and much of his affection had been expended in the worship and service of liberty. (N,29)

It is only at the end of Chapter 4 that the narrator intrudes directly with "He was sad because of his simplicity" (N,32). Then, in a detached, ironic vein, the narrator provides another illustration of Giorgio's divorce from his immediate environment in his speaking to the uninterested Italian emigrants: "... and the
drone of old Giorgio's declamatory narrative seemed to sink behind them into the plain" (N,33).

The narrator's irony against Viola's idealism is specific in intention, as Gekoski notes:

There is a direct suggestion here that altruism (the 'spirit of self-forgetfulness'), with its dedication to 'a vast humanitarian idea' is in itself incapable of producing change. The 'vast humanitarian idea' remains unspecified, as if to suggest that any such idea may represent a lost cause. Not only is Giorgio, the 'Idealist of the old, humanitarian revolutions' (p xix), portrayed with an insistence on his poignant isolation, but his standards are subjected to the same ironic scrutiny as are those of the other idealists of the novel. 

Gekoski's analysis here is accurate. The linking of Giorgio with the other idealists of the novel is pertinent, for the narrator does not discriminate between them, nor subtly analyse the distinctive feature of each idealistic mode. The narrator's irony exposes Viola's vision as a quaint anachronism, highlighting a quixotism which has ineffectual expression in the actual world. This is what Tanner calls a particular "genre of Irony" and aptly illustrates his contention. Teresa possesses a more cogent form of feminine identity than any of the other women in the novels hitherto discussed. In Lord Jim, Jewel's feminine, relational mentality contrasts with Jim's egoistic masculinity, but her perspective does not dampen Marlow's enthusiasm for Jim's adventurousness. In Nostromo, Teresa shows up both Nostromo's and Viola's idealism, and, as the narrative eventually shows, her comments on Nostromo are dramatically significant: he comes to see that he has been betrayed, although he does not resolve his fury in the way that she desires.

Giorgio's quixotism, which causes the severance from his
family, foreshadows the social and marital strife incurred by Gould's idealism. Gradually, Emilia comes to see that her husband is quixotically aloof from her. After the clear-cut exposure of the ineffectualness of Giorgio's ideal, an important critical query arises: will the narrator make distinctions between different types of idealism and explore a different kind of quixotism (namely, that of an ego-ideal) with a more subtle, lenient irony? The opportunity to answer this question comes in a consideration of Chapter 6 of Part 1.

The narrator begins this chapter with portraits of Monygham and Emilia Gould. It is notable for a narratorial imposition of sensibility. With a strongly adjectival depiction, Monygham's speech is "sceptical, bitter" (N,45), and his laugh expresses an "immense mistrust of mankind" (N,44). And yet we are told that this highly individualised character has been humanised by Mrs Gould. We learn of the ignorant, contemptuous young ladies, who mock his gait and coat ("Its deeper meaning was hidden from their simple intelligence" [N,45]). The "deeper meaning" concerns the significance of Emilia's gift of the coat, a symbol of her humanising influence. Interestingly, one of the consequences of Monygham's eccentricity is a wryness of perspective which challenges any simple-minded concept of solidarity: "'Really, it is most unreasonable to demand that a man should think of other people so much better than he is able to think of himself'" (N,44-45). This expostulation concerning the validity of a man's valuing his own ego directly contrasts with Teresa's, which berates Nostromo's egoism on moral grounds. This kind of conflicting response to egoism is evident in both Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim, although in those novels the conflicts become acknowledged contradictions, which are forged
into a dialectical scrutiny; here the relative status of each of the points of view in the mind of the narrator is unknown.

In contrast to Monygham, Emilia is characterised as a highly sociable being ("She was highly gifted in the art of human intercourse . . ." [N,46]). She is deferential in her protestations that she "had done nothing" (N,46) for the men of the surveying camp, and compassionate in her awareness of the men's homesickness. Already the narratorial perspective gives evidence of approval regarding both these characters, separately and relationally, and the irony is directed against the observers, the young girls viewing Monygham. The reason for this approval for each of these characters, initially shown here, becomes obvious later on, as I will show.

Irony levelled against a major character returns in the narrator's depiction of Gould:

With such a family record, no one could be more of a Costaguano than Don Carlos Gould; but his aspect was so characteristic that in the talk of common people he was just the Inglez—the Englishman of Sulaco. He looked more English than a casual tourist, a sort of heretic pilgrim, however, quite unknown in Sulaco. He looked more English than the last arrived batch of young railway engineers, than anybody out of the hunting-field pictures in the numbers of *Punch* reaching his wife's drawing-room two months or so after date. It astonished you to hear him talk Spanish (Castillan, as the natives say) or the Indian dialect of the country-people so naturally. His accent had never been English; but there was something so indelible in all these ancestral Goulds—liberators, explorers, coffee planters, merchants, revolutionists—of Costaguana, that he, the only representative of the third generation in a continent possessing its own style of horsemanship, went on looking thoroughly English even on horseback . . . Charles Gould, to use the suitably lofty phrase, rode like a centaur. Riding for him was not a special form of exercise; it was a natural faculty, as walking straight is to all men sound of mind and limb; but, all the same, when
cantering beside the rutty ox-cart track to
the mine he looked in his English clothes and
with his imported saddlery as though he had
come this moment to Costaguana at his easy
swift pasotrote, straight out of some green
meadow at the other side of the world. (N,47-48)

The irony against Gould at this point is disarmingly overt.
The above passage builds up to the climax of the last sentence.
Physically described as a Quixote, he appears to be grossly out
of touch with the immediate environment, "straight out of some
green meadow at the other side of the world." This alienation
from the demands of his immediate environment is stressed by
reiterative references to his English heritage. Within two
pages, the words "English" or "Englishman" are repeated eight
times. The quixotism is clearly evoked, and the specific irony
is as identifiable as that levelled against Viola's incongruous
idealism. The narrator points out the incongruity explicitly,
in comparing Charles with the equestrian statue of Charles IV:
"... Don Carlos Gould, in his English clothes, looked as
incongruous, but much more at home than the kingly cavalier
..." (N,48-49). Then he stresses Gould's cultural
dislocation: "His mind preserved its steady poise as if
sheltered in the passionless stability of private and public
decencies at home in Europe" (N,49).

Chapter 3 of Lord Jim contains as deliberate a
characterisation of a quixotic identity, but other contexts of
the novel indicate that Jim is in a genuine predicament. Here
the ironic narrator reductively exploits the incongruity of a
quixotic idealism amidst the cultural ethos of Sulaco, as a
sequel to the irony levelled against Giorgio. The narrator
enforces the irony by citing the inadequate views of Emilia and
Don José. She sees him as illustrative of a "perfect
competency" (N,50), and he sees Gould as "English" and "patriotic" (N,50). In the context of the previous narratorial attitude, such assessments are unconsciously ironic.

Following this depiction of Gould, the narrator provides a history of the mine, detailing the effects of political strife on Charles's father. These ravages are then juxtaposed with the boy's dreams and the nurturing of an adolescent fantasy world. Like Jim, he indulges in romantic reverie:

By the time he was twenty Charles Gould had, in his turn, fallen under the spell of the San Tomé mine. But it was another form of enchantment, more suitable to his youth, into whose magic formula there entered hope, vigour, and self-confidence, instead of weary indignation and despair. (N,59)

The quixotic characterisation continues ("spell," "enchantment," "magic formula"), and in juxtaposition with the horrors of Costaguana such egoistic exuberance is incongruous. The focus of the irony is specific; as Hewitt says, one section of the book reflects on another, and here that juxtaposition establishes Charles's naivety. But the surety of ironic focus wavers at the point of Charles's father's death. The narrator's attitude to Gould prior to the embarkation is complex:

This consideration, closely affecting his own identity, filled his breast with a mournful and angry desire for action. In this his instinct was unerring. Action is consolatory. It is the enemy of thought and the friend of flattering illusions. Only in the conduct of our action can we find the sense of mastery over the Fates. (N,66)

The aphorisms reveal the consciousness of the narrator and indicate an internal contradiction. On the point of launching the quixotic character, the narrator appears to approve of his
mission, whereas earlier he characterised him as a "heretic pilgrim" (N,47). The narrator balances antithetical ideas. If "Action is consolatory," it is also "the enemy of thought and the friend of flattering illusions." Commitment to action, counterbalanced by a sustained sceptical scrutiny, is the paradoxical nature of Marlow, and at this point of the narrative seems to be shared by this narrator. However, this narrator cannot sustain the ironic poise, and one of the terms in the conflict between action and meditation is privileged immediately with the aphorism "Only in the conduct of our action can we find the sense of mastery over the Fates." This advocacy of action and the easy resolution of tension, in conjunction with a group allegiance ("we"), foreshadows the perspective of the narrator of Victory. The aphoristic tendency of the narrator and the easy resolution of the tension between action and scepticism compound another problem. The narrator does not scrutinise the meaning of the word action, which for Gould is clearly the inspired action of a Quixote, whereas for Emilia, according to the narrator, action is "of a conquering kind" (N,67) and illustrates her "unselfishness and sympathy" (N,67):

The wisdom of the heart having no concern with the erection or demolition of theories any more than with the defence of prejudices, has no random words at its command. The words it pronounces have the value of acts of integrity, tolerance, and compassion. A woman's true tenderness, like the true virility of man, is expressed in action of a conquering kind. (N,67)

There is an explicit anti-intellectualism here. The narrator flagrantly endorses only one element, action, but no differentiation between Gould's virility and Emilia's tenderness is provided. We can also detect that, as well as action, irony
is important. Emilia's "unmistakeable enthusiasm" is pointed by "a slight flavour of irony" (N,67), and later he berates Charles because he "had no ironic eye" (N,378). In the aphorisms concerning action, it is clear that the narrator has attempted, albeit momentarily, the kind of contradiction which forms the basis of the predicaments in a general irony aesthetic, which at this stage of the narrative seems warranted, but is not sustained.

Guérard writes: "There are times when the distortions of emphasis baffle the reader to no purpose." This is one of those times. While the narrator is able to create the intellectual tension between action and scepticism, he is not able to sustain the debate with ambivalence or poise. This tension, so competently dramatised in Marlow's narrations, breaks down at this point and the narratorial endorsement of the youthful, idealistic Goulds rests uneasily in the foreground of the "enemy of thought" aphorism. The anti-intellectualism predominates in a way that it did not in Marlow's narrations, with one possible exception, Chapter 21 of Lord Jim. But there, as I have pointed out, intellectual process is complicated by the retrospective narration. Although Marlow seems to be uttering incontrovertible convictions, a close scrutiny of that chapter shows that his rhetoric contains opposing points of view, as he battles with conceptions from the past and the narrative present. The balancing of antitheses is further complicated by his relationship with his fictional audience, whose illusions he attempts to protect. There is no such problem here--with either memory or audience. We are left with the unmanaged contradiction that Gould is approved for the action for which he had previously been undermined.
The narrator's treatment of idealists continues with the character Holroyd. Emilia is ironic about his proselytising: "... But it seemed to me that he looked upon his own God as a sort of influential partner, who gets his share of profits in the endowment of churches. That's a sort of idolatry. . . ." (N,71). Holroyd's ambitious speech on the magnitude of American economic imperialism ("... We shall run the world's business whether the world likes it or not. The world can't help it—and neither can we, I guess!" [N,77]) is commented on unfavourably by the narrator: he is "unskilled in the presentation of general ideas" (N,77), and his San Tomé venture is seen as a "caprice" (N,80) and a "hobby" (N,81).

By the end of the chapter the theme of eloquence and the camouflage of language become significant topics. These were major preoccupations of Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*. Gould laments the eloquence of Holroyd, Avellanos (despite Emilia's objection), and his father. All appeal to intangibilities: Holroyd to destiny, Avellanos to political rectitude, his father to God. Gould reviles such expressions of faith. At the rhetorical level he defines order in terms of "material interests." But the speech he makes needs the contexts of the narrator's depictions of his youthful romanticism and later quixotism:

"... What is wanted here is law, good faith, order, security. Any one can declaim about these things, but I pin my faith to material interests. . . . That's how your money-making is justified here in the face of lawlessness and disorder. It is justified because the security which it demands must be shared with an oppressed people. . . ." (N,84)
prosperity is, of course, contrary to the character depicted in the earlier passages, where he is overtly ironised for quixotic self-preoccupation. The reader is left with a critical problem, for it is impossible to decide whether the above speech is that of an aroused social democrat, acutely political, or of a rationalising Quixote. The chapter ends with apparent ironies resonating from Emilia's admiration ("He was competent" [N,84]) and the narrator's description of the "resolute nature of his thoughts" (N,84). Both these statements are ironic, if we can use the earlier depiction (of Gould as quixotic) as a stable base for the irony. From this would follow the recognition that Emilia is blind to his obsession. However, a most puzzling comment by the narrator occurs in the last paragraph: "Charles Gould was competent because he had no illusions" (N,85). This approval is in direct contradiction to the earlier characterisation, the irony of which depends on Gould's illusions. The narrator again reveals an unacknowledged internal contradiction, which makes for ambiguity, not irony.

In Chapter 6, Part 1, the narrator is aware of the contradiction which absorbs Marlow in Heart of Darkness: action is consolatory, but it is also the friend of flattering illusions. We can recall Marlow's control of the contradiction with "What saves us is efficiency—the devotion to efficiency" (HD,50). Marlow is able to fuse antithetical ideas and sustain ambivalence towards efficient action: it is stultifying and salutary for survival. His scrutiny is notable also for its intellectual penetration into other modes of action, discriminating between efficiency and quixotism and holding unequivocal allegiance in abeyance. The narrator of Nostromo does not sustain this kind of meditative scrutiny, nor make
discriminations between various modes of action. Crudely speaking, he seems to change his mind about Gould who is both an acknowledged, foolish Quixote and a competent social benefactor.

Chapters 7 and 8 of Part 1 illustrate the narrator's surety and control of irony, of which the intention is not difficult to discern. He endorses the commitment of both Emilia and Don Pépé. Both of them are intimate with the environment and the people. In contrast to this intimacy, irony is overtly levelled against the pomposity of the Excellency, fatuously implanting an effete culture on the primitive environment like the brickmaker in *Heart of Darkness*, and the masquerading of General Montero, whom he sees as having the "atrocious grotesqueness of some military idol of Aztec conception and European bedecking, awaiting the homage of worshippers" (N,122). In Part 2, Chapters 1 and 2, the narrator resurrects the history of Bento's tyranny, Avellanos's suffering and "undiscouraged belief in regeneration" (N,149), and Antonia's "recognized devotion" (N,150) to her father. The socially committed characters take precedence over the egoists in the last four chapters, but in the next chapter the narrator returns to the neglected world of the egoist.

In Part 2, Chapter 3, the narrator's bias is easily discernible in his discussions of the contentious Decoud. He is strongly condemnatory of Decoud, accusing him of exhibiting a "mere barren indifferentism" (N,150) and of being an "idle boulevardier" (N,152) and a "nondescript dilettante" (N,153). However, this disparagement indicates the narrator's own tentativeness more than it illuminates the character of Decoud. The narrator appears to want to ostracise him before he has been
presented and, as eventuates, the portrait is far more complex than the introductory disapprobation warrants. The narrator's scorn illustrates his desire to find a detached vantage point against the ironist. He implicitly repudiates his scepticism, which sets him apart from the land and the people (except Antonia, as we learn later) and clearly differentiates him from Emilia, Avellanos, and Don Pépé, who are shown to be socially committed and worthy of the narrator's approval. Hence, somewhat unwillingly, the scepticism versus action debate is revived again. In Chapter 3, we witness Decoud's resented satirical imagination, which reduces the local political situation to "une farce macabre" (N, 152). He sees European civilisation and democracy as normative. However, his motives for returning to Costaguana are not those of a political satirist seeking opportunistic journalism; they are revealed through his sister's insight into his love for Antonia, who represents his true motive for repatriation.

It becomes clear that Decoud's facetious detachment is the key ingredient of a powerful scepticism. In the next two chapters, this consciousness is revealed without the initial, excessive disapproval by the narrator until the end of his exchange with Corbelan. In Chapter 4, surrounded by the single-minded Scarfe and Avellanos, he makes his comments on the paradoxical South American character. Scarfe speaks in terms of personal opportunity, of promotion; Avellanos speaks with political optimism of the safety of the republic. Accordingly, they both support Barrios. But it is the conflict of interests of the two characters which prompts Decoud's analysis of the South American character:
"... There is a curse of futility upon our character: Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, chivalry and materialism, high-sounding sentiments and a supine morality, violent efforts for an idea and a sullen acquiescence in every form of corruption. We convulsed a continent for our independence only to become the passive prey of a democratic parody, the helpless victims of scoundrels and cut-throats, our institutions a mockery, our laws a farce—a Guzman Bento our master! And we have sunk so low that when a man like you has awakened our conscience, a stupid barbarian of a Montero—Great Heavens! a Montero!—becomes a deadly danger, and an ignorant, boastful Indio, like Barrios, is our defender." (N,171)

Decoud dichotomises the South Americans into either Quixotes or Panzas. Marlow makes a similar differentiation between types in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, but an important distinction has to be made between the irony of Marlow and Decoud. Although Marlow finds the Panzas limiting, he does not completely reject them, as he appreciates their efficiency and capacity for obeying a predetermined code of conduct. Quixotes provide him with the necessary centrifugal energy, and he finds his creativity in the oscillation between allegiance to both poles. He neither totally rejects nor totally accepts either of the antithetical dispositions. On the other hand, Decoud sees the South American deficiency in irony as a "curse of futility." His scathing insights reject both the Quixotes and the Panzas. Accordingly, we cannot expect Decoud's irony to mediate between the oppositions, because he respects neither disposition. However, Decoud is not only a commentator but also a participant in the action, and this second function establishes the contradiction in his character. As a significant contributor to the action of the novel, he is like the Assistant Commissioner in *The Secret Agent*. Both the
Commissioner and Decoud are ironic, but they are also idealists. Decoud is motivated by idealism (a love for Antonia not simply expressed but heavily idealised), which he does not see as futile, and which instigates his political thought and adventurousness. He is also "practical" (N,218), as he insists to Emilia, but he is not merely practical. In other words, he is-able to harness aspects of both the quixotic and the panzaic, and yet he rejects both Quixotes and Panzas in the above piece.

The contradictory nature of Decoud himself is vividly portrayed in the next chapter. Initially confronted with the perspectives of Avellanos and Emilia's support of the war, Decoud launches into political satire, seeing the present militarism in the context of the history of war, citing it as merely a new example of an old principle of theft, jealousy, and exploitation. However, this satirical impulse is quickly appeased by his recognition of the difference between the political ethos of Costaguana and that of Europe:

Martin Decoud was angry with himself. All he saw and heard going on around him exasperated the preconceived views of European civilization. To contemplate revolutions from the distance of the Parisian Boulevards was quite another matter. Here on the spot it was not possible to dismiss their tragic comedy with the expression, "Quelle farce!" (N,176)

The reason for the softening of Decoud's seemingly inviolable, satirical detachment is soon revealed by the narrator: "His disdain grew like a reaction of his scepticism against the action into which he was forced by his infatuation for Antonia" (N,176). Gradually, Antonia's effect on Decoud illustrates that existence for him is also sensual, and hence relational. This provides further dimension to a character otherwise
discarded as a political sceptic. Twice there are indications of his recognition that irony is not sufficient:

Their comparative isolation, the precious sense of intimacy, the slight contact of their arms, affected him softly; for now and then a tender inflection crept into the flow of his ironic murmurs. (N, 188)

Decoud had often felt his familiar habit of ironic thought fall shattered against Antonia's gravity. She irritated him as if she, too, had suffered from that inexplicable feminine obtuseness which stands so often between a man and a woman of the more ordinary sort. But he overcame his vexation at once. He was very far from thinking Antonia ordinary, whatever verdict his scepticism might have pronounced upon himself. With a touch of penetrating tenderness in his voice he assured her that his only aspiration was to a felicity so high that it seemed almost unrealizable on this earth. (N, 191-92)

In the last sentence, Decoud's character is given a romantic quality. There he appears as an idealist with his own arcadian dream, which, in the context of the political upheaval, appears quixotic. At this point, it is recognisable that Decoud's own motivations are idealised and unashamedly egoistic, which he acknowledges: "...I have no patriotic illusions. I have only the supreme illusion of a lover" (N, 189). Decoud's revelation of romantic illusion occurs in the context of his aphoristic definition of "conviction" which he sees as "a particular view of our personal advantage either practical or emotional" (N, 189). However, he disdains Corbelan, because of the fixed nature of his religious conviction:

By the side of the frail diplomatist—the life and soul of the party—he seemed gigantic, with a gleam of fanaticism in the glance. But the voice of the party, or rather, its mouthpiece, the "son Decoud" from Paris, turned journalist for the sake
of Antonia's eyes, knew very well that it was not so, that he was only a strenuous priest with one idea, feared by the women and execrated by the men of the people. (N,200)

At this point the narrator intrudes:

Martin Decoud, the dilettante in life, imagined himself to derive an artistic pleasure from watching the picturesque extreme of wrong-headedness into which an honest, almost sacred, conviction may drive a man. "It is like madness. It must be— because it's self-destructive," Decoud had said to himself often. It seemed to him that every conviction, as soon as it became effective, turned into that form of dementia the gods send upon those they wish to destroy. . . . Those two men got on well together, as if each had felt respectively that a masterful conviction, as well as utter scepticism, may lead a man very far on the by-paths of political action. (N,200)

It is interesting that the narrator's disapproval of Decoud remains unchanged. He is still the "dilettante." However, much has been revealed about Decoud to make him a vital force in the novel in terms of both his intellect and his part in the action. Decoud's censure against Corbelan rests on the fixedness of the latter's religious conviction, newly designated "fanaticism." However, Decoud himself is motivated by a conviction, not of religion, but of romance; he is not merely a character of "utter scepticism" as the narrator suggests. Already we have seen two passages where irony is subordinate to sensuality, intimacy, and Antonia's gravity. Accordingly, the irony is complex: Decoud enjoys the ironic delight of forecasting the potential disaster to be incurred by Corbelan's conviction, but is unwitting about his own rapidly developing conviction, which, as is revealed later in
the narrative, does indeed initiate disaster for Decoud himself. By being sceptical about Corbelan's religious commitment and by his description of the egoistic element of conviction, he defines himself as an emerging ego-idealist, who finds the inspiration for his dream in love for Antonia. This chapter illustrates the contradiction in the character of Decoud with the gradual revelation that he too has a dream. The follow-up to his scepticism about conviction ("... every conviction, as soon as it became effective, turned into that form of dementia the gods send upon those they wish to destroy") occurs in the next chapter, where he converses with Emilia about Gould's idealism.

The scene is set by the obvious strain between Emilia and Charles. No longer do they co-exist in the mutual rapture of requited love. Their relationship is beginning to disintegrate: Emilia remains devoted, but Charles's fanaticism is burgeoning. This chapter illustrates the scathing, but penetrative, insights of Decoud in his role of commentator. He is frequently derogatory about Gould's idealising tendencies:

(a) "Don't you see, he's such an idealist." (N,214)

(b) "Simply that he cannot act or exist without idealizing every simple feeling, desire, or achievement. He could not believe his own motives if he did not make them first a part of some fairy tale. The earth is not quite good enough for him, I fear. ..." (N,214-15)

(c) "I think he can be drawn into it, like all idealists, when he once sees a sentimental basis for his action. ..." (N,216)

(d) "... I am not a sentimentalist, I cannot endow my personal desires with a shining robe of silk and jewels. Life is not for me a moral romance derived from the tradition of a pretty fairy tale. No, Mrs. Gould; I am practical. ... ." (N,218)
With frank explicitness he rejects the quixotic imagination. His criticism of Gould is consistent with his earlier statements about the "curse of futility" on the South American character and the dementia of conviction. Conversely, Decoud states his own plan, which is predicated by an idealised love for Antonia. In so doing, he stresses to Emilia that he is "practical," but he omits any deference to the idealism which is a powerful motivational ingredient. Indeed, when Decoud combines with Nostromo on the Gulf, it is his capacity for idealising his activity which temporarily sustains him. Curiously, in the above passages, his abhorrence of Gould rests on that character's persistent need to find some idealised motive for action. His lucid, ironic mind appeals to Emilia. Gould's quixotism is destroying their marriage—we have not only the strength of Decoud's intellect but also Emilia's despondent emotions as the means of gauging the accuracy of his penetrating insight.

However, the curious element about Decoud's derogation of Gould's quixotism, as with Corbelan's conviction, is that he fails to see that he too has a "fairy tale" ("There is nothing I would not do for the sake of Antonia. There is nothing I am not prepared to undertake. There is no risk I am not ready to run") [N,213]). In decrying Gould, he defines a large aspect of his own sensibility. We cannot simply endorse his scathing criticism of the idealising impulse, because he too exploits it. Decoud's irony here is the intellectual correlative to the narrator's impressionistic account of Gould's quixotism. But, in this instance, if we take the irony of Decoud, specific in intention, as the final focus on idealism, we are forced into the critically difficult position of watching a character motivate his own behaviour by the tendency he deplores.
When Decoud becomes a participant in the action rather than merely a commentator, he has a closer affinity to the Assistant Commissioner of The Secret Agent than to Marlow. The transfer from one role to the other occurs at the point where he undertakes his plan with Nostromo. However, unlike the Commissioner, he is not able to sustain his commitment to his romantic ideal. One of the beneficial aspects of a quixotic psychology is that its adherents attempt to express their dreams, despite the crippling onslaughts of forces in the actual world. This is true for the original Quixote as it is in Lord Jim and the Russian in Heart of Darkness. Their enthusiasm for their dream is insatiable. But Decoud's sensibility is complex, and because of his intellectual scepticism he cannot simply and blindly act quixotically. Nostromo can. It is the very fact that Nostromo is able to live out his "fairy tale" with relish and confirm his own ego-ideal that allows him to survive on the Gulf, while Decoud perishes. I will now explore the plight of the two characters.

Part 2, Chapter 7, shows the wry, ironic voice of Decoud, who, in a letter to his sister, expresses a satirical denunciation of the riot. We get a replay of his insight into the Gould's marriage and his abhorrence of Gould's idealising tendencies. But, at the same time, he remains fascinated by Nostromo's attempts to vindicate his behaviour through the ego-ideal of reputation:

"... The only thing he seems to care for, as far as I have been able to discover, is to be well spoken of. ... Exceptional individualities always interest me, because they are true to the general formula expressing the moral state of humanity. ..." (N,246)
"... And it is curious to have met a man for whom the value of life seems to consist in personal prestige. ..." (N,248)

His specific irony also shows up the limp politicians ready to concede to Montero, but more importantly this letter reveals again his own internal contradiction in his decrying of the idealising function of the imagination and yet his speculative fascination with it, through Nostromo.

The tension between the idealising ego and a socialised formulation of behaviour is dramatised by the narrator through the interaction of Nostromo and Teresa:

"... Did you think you could put a collar and chain on me as if I were one of the watch-dogs they keep over there in the railway yards? ... I am no longer an insignificant youth. A good name, Giorgio says, is a treasure, Padrona." (N,257)

Teresa's answer is prophetic:

"They have turned your head with their praises," gasped the sick woman. "They have been paying you with words. Your folly shall betray you into poverty, misery, starvation. The very leperos shall laugh at you—the great Capataz." (N,257)

The significance of Teresa's perspective becomes evident later in the narrative. For the first time in Conrad's fiction the feminine vision with its abhorrence of masculine ego-idealisation is given an unchallenged status by the narrator, who does not intrude to qualify her remarks. Indeed, the later events bear out the truth of her contention. Marlow confronts a similar problem with Jewel in Lord Jim, but he sees her remarks only as an interesting diversion.

The Gulf scene dramatises the interaction of the two
characters, Decoud and Nostromo. Both of them have idealising tendencies, and it is this disposition which inspires their commitment to action. As the narrator points out, idealisation is critically important:

Don Martin's soft hands suffered cruelly, tugging at the thick handle of the enormous oar. He stuck to it manfully, setting his teeth. He, too, was in the toils of an imaginative existence, and that strange work of pulling a lighter seemed to belong naturally to the inception of a new state, acquired an ideal meaning from his love for Antonia. (N,265-66)

This passage elucidates the juxtaposition of the idealistic and practical impulses, wherein Decoud is able to unite his sense of "an ideal meaning" with the "strange work of pulling a lighter." But he is unable to sustain this synthesis, for eventually his scepticism causes the disintegration of his ideal:

Decoud lay on the silver boxes panting. All his active sensations and feelings from as far back as he could remember seemed to him the maddest of dreams. Even his passionate devotion to Antonia into which he had worked himself up out of the depths of his scepticism had lost all appearance of reality. (N,267)

It is precisely because he now associates dreams with madness that he can no longer sustain a belief in his love for Antonia. All the while, Nostromo remains unassailably committed to his dream of reputation, and his belief in his own "fairy tale" allows him to work and survive courageously. The juxtaposition of Hirsch with Nostromo further highlights the latter's capacity for overcoming fear by the zeal for a valorous reputation. When Decoud's own capacity for action breaks down completely, he acknowledges the power of the idealising impulse:
Decoud, incorrigible in his scepticism, reflected, not cynically, but with general satisfaction, that this man was made incorruptible by his enormous vanity, that finest form of egoism which can take on the aspect of very virtue. (N,300)

Here was a man, Decoud reflected, that seemed as though he would have preferred to die rather than deface the perfect form of his egoism. Such a man was safe. (N,301)

We can recall the sailor's profanity in Chapter 1, where, as I have discussed, the narrator evokes the void of the Gulf. Here we do find out "what work a man's hand is doing in there" (N,7) and the reason for Nostromo's survival and Decoud's demise. Later we learn in more detail of Decoud's crippling sensitivity to the "immense indifference of things" (N,501), whereas Nostromo's unreflective vanity allows him to function according to the dictates of his ideal. I will deal with the later narratorial description of Decoud's despair and eventual suicide at a later stage.

Part 3, Chapter 1, introduces the dialogue between Dr Monygham and the chief engineer concerning idealisation. The engineer begins by admiring Gould's surety of himself with the rejoinder from the doctor that that is "the last thing a man ought to be sure of" (N,310). The engineer, however, "could not quite conceal his contempt for that sort of paradox" (N,310). He is the only character in the novel who unequivocally admires idealists. He appreciates "the moral influence of the old Garibaldino upon his countrymen" (N,313), whereas the doctor sees him as "a rugged and dreamy character, living in the republicanism of his young days as if in a cloud" (N,319). The engineer quotes with approval Mitchell's contention that "Nostromo is the sort of seaman to make the best
of his opportunities" (N,315-16), while the doctor mutters sourly: "'His prestige is his fortune!'" (N,320). The engineer summarises: "'... Upon my word, doctor, things seem to be worth nothing by what they are in themselves. I begin to believe that the only solid thing about them is the spiritual value which everyone discovers in his own form of activity—'" (N,318). However, the doctor resents his enthusiasm. Even though he regards Decoud as a "plump dandy" (N,316), he articulates a similar point of view towards idealisation: "'... I put no spiritual value into my desires, or my opinions, or my actions. They have not enough vastness to give me room for self-flattery..."' (N,318). Instead of stressing the ego's capacity to effect heroic action, he stresses the thwarting power of fate and circumstances which he terms "the impossible": "'... Have you met the impossible face to face—or have you, the Napoleon of railways, no such word in your dictionary?'" (N,318). Monygham is like Stein at the end of *Lord Jim* where he appears resigned about the defeat of Jim's romantic questing. Earlier, of course, Stein had advocated continual striving in order to follow the dream, in spite of the onslauts, which seem set to defeat its implementation. But the doctor has only Stein's later resignation in this dialogue. His own experience of betrayal has embittered him against idealised behaviour.

When the narrator's irony is discernible again, he focuses on the obsessional element of Gould's quixotism. Although Gould has an understanding of the suffering incurred by the success of the mine ("... the cruel futility of lives and of deaths thrown away in the vain endeavour to attain an enduring solution of the problem" [N,364]), the narrator spends more time
on describing the consequences of quixotic obsession than on the trials of Gould's conscience. Gould's quixotism is vividly described in a way reminiscent of the passage in Chapter 6, Part 1:

After all, with his English parentage and English upbringing, he perceived that he was an adventurer in Costaguana, the descendant of adventurers enlisted in a foreign legion, of men who had sought fortune in a revolutionary war, who had planned revolutions, who had believed in revolutions. For all the uprightness of his character, he had something of an adventurer's easy morality, which takes count of personal risk in the ethical appraising of his action. He was prepared, if need be, to blow up the whole San Tomé mountain sky high out of the territory of the Republic. This resolution expressed the tenacity of his character, the remorse of that subtle conjugal infidelity through which his wife was no longer the sole mistress of his thoughts, something of his father's imaginative weakness, and something, too, of the spirit of the buccaneer throwing a lighted match into the magazine rather than surrender his ship. (N,365-66)

The above analysis of the quixotic psychology concentrates on the obsessional element, which, according to the narrator, so totally absorbs Gould that destruction of the mine is preferable to surrender. The irony depends initially on a technique used earlier, the repetition of the word "English." As the narrator explains, his foreign origins confirm his status as "adventurer" in an alien land, but this adventurer is guilty of self-absorption, which is well captured in the image of the reckless "buccaneer." It is not until Chance that we again see such an unequivocal focus on the destructive folly of quixotic energy. The narrator is happier with Monygham, bound "indissolubly to the land of Costaguana, involving him deep in the national life, far deeper than any amount of success and honour could have
done" (N,375). Although Monygham's rule of conduct is severe, because he has made "an ideal conception of his disgrace" (N,375), the narrator sees this as the "imaginative exaggeration of a correct feeling" (N,375). Conversely, Gould is depicted pejoratively as possessing a "will haunted by a fixed idea" (N,379), and a man "haunted by a fixed idea is insane" (N,379). This notion of the folly of a "fixed idea" becomes important again in *The Secret Agent*, where the narrator detachedly advises the reader that Winnie's demise is inevitable given her deluded notion of freedom.

The narrator then begins a series of characterisations of which the net effect is a denunciation of idealisation: (a) Pedrito Montero is described satirically as a Duc de Morny aspirant, inspired by books to achieve an idealised success; (b) Gould's puppets, Pópó and Roman, are prepared to blow up the mine; (c) Nostromo comes to realise the fallacy of his ego-ideal, realising that Teresa's notion of "betrayal" (N,419) is correct: "A man betrayed is a man destroyed" (N,420). Quixotism is reviled. It is the social values of Monygham and Emilia which the narrator applauds. However, there is a new twist. Monygham is revealed to have a different motive than can be adequately described by the notion of "loyalty." He has his own illusion:

It presented itself to his fifty-years' old eyes in the shape of a little woman in a soft dress with a long train, with a head attractively overweighted by a great mass of fair hair. . . . As the dangers thickened round the San Tomé mine this illusion acquired force, permanency, and authority. It claimed him at last! (N,431)

The narrator points out, as he has done elsewhere with Gould, the dangers of this kind of idealised motive:
This claim, exalted by a spiritual detachment from the usual sanctions of hope and reward, made Dr Monygham's thinking, acting, individuality extremely dangerous to himself and to others, all his scruples vanishing in the proud feeling that his devotion was the only thing that stood between an admirable woman and a frightful disaster. (N,431)

Consequently, Monygham is "Machiavellian" (N,432) and "on a desperate adventure of his own" (N,434). He is able to appeal to Nostromo's self-conceit, after recognising that Nostromo is "indispensable" (N,461), and his own success with Sotillo is predicated by an idealised devotion for Emilia Gould. Thus, the action of the novel concludes with idealised behaviour, and yet the narrator neither scrutinises nor endorses the effectiveness of such motivation. Rather, he returns to the demise of Decoud, and repudiates scepticism as an inadequate antidote to "the immense indifference of things" (N,501). Decoud's death generates another aphorism by the narrator: "In our activity alone do we find the sustaining illusion of an independent existence as against the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part" (N,497). This is reminiscent of the narrator's earlier aphorism, "Action is consolatory" (N,66). Again, the rhetoric is too vague, for what are we to make of "our activity"? Quixotes act. However, we can be sure in this novel that quixotic action does not receive narratorial approval. Of course, that kind of action is often, in this novel and in Conrad's fiction in general, juxtaposed with characters who act loyally, steadfastly, and within social conventions. In Nostromo, that approval seems to be extended to Emilia and to Monygham, although the complexities of neither character are explored. Conversely, in Decoud's suicide, Nostromo's death, and the obsession of Gould we see the strong
moral disapproval of the narrator. And yet the state is resurrected as Part 3, Chapter 10 shows. The idealists' contribution to that development is not accorded the status and complex, ironic analysis which it deserves. Rather, the irony of that chapter is specifically levelled against the sycophantic Mitchell who ingeniously lauds material progress.

The historian narrator refuses to concede that the new Sulaco relies on the energy of the idealists for its reformulation, and accordingly we do not get a full analysis of the complexities of behaviour motivated by an ego-ideal. Rather we are asked to witness the moral damage incurred. Amidst Emilia's musing on Gould's obsession there occurs an aphorism which encapsulates succinctly the narratorial attitude: "There was something inherent in the necessities of successful action which carried with it the moral degradation of the idea" (N,521). This presents a predicament worthy of general irony, but that kind of scrutiny is not given.

The irony of Nostromo has been generated predominantly by the narrator and Decoud. The former uses irony as a satirical weapon with which he exposes quixotic self-absorption. Irony has a corrective function and, as I have said, he admires a similar quality of irony in Emilia and deplores its absence in Charles. Decoud is admonished for his irony which springs from an untenable scepticism, "a mere barren indifferentism" (N,152). However, as I have suggested, Decoud's character warrants a far closer scrutiny than the narrator's moral declamations against him suggest. Indeed, with his range of imaginative and intellectual responses, he possesses much of the insight into contradictions which characterises the Romantic ironist, with one important exception: he is not able to remain detached and
restrained. A crucial irony in the novel is that Decoud rails at the contradictory South Americans while his own psyche contains aspects of each of the quixotic and panzaic impulses he laments in his compatriots. There is a range of contradictions in Decoud himself: with his journalistic detachment he speaks of political activity in Costaguana as a farce, but this is coupled with an intense commitment to domestic affairs; he denounces the contradictory South Americans, but exploits both the impulses he deplores; he ridicules Gould's idealising imagination, but he is fascinated by Nostromo's, eventually recognising that it is precisely that idealisation which sustains Nostromo, and the lack of persistence with his own ideal which causes his death; he is not only a sceptical commentator but also a participant in the action.

At Decoud's demise the narrator takes the opportunity to expose the detriments of scepticism:

The brilliant Costaguanero of the boulevards had died from solitude and want of faith in himself and others. (N,496)

Solitude from mere outward condition of existence becomes very swiftly a state of soul in which the affectations of irony and scepticism have no place. (N,497)

In our activity alone do we find the sustaining illusion of an independent existence as against the whole scheme of things of which we form a helpless part. (N,497)

His sadness was the sadness of a sceptical mind. He beheld the universe as a succession of incomprehensible images. (N,498)

A victim of the disillusioned weariness which is the retribution meted out to intellectual audacity, the brilliant Don Martin Decoud, weighted by the bars of San Tomé silver, disappeared without a trace, swallowed up in the immense indifference of things. (N,501)
It is interesting that the narrator stresses that Decoud's intellectual audacity is a handicap, while activity alone provides the "sustaining illusion." Marlow generates a double irony when discussing the intellectual audacity of the Russian and the sustaining activity of the manager's efficiency in *Heart of Darkness*, but that kind of scrutiny is not forthcoming in *Nostromo*. The demolition of Decoud depends on a stable set of assumptions: the need for faith in oneself and others, the need for a sustaining activity, and the sadness of scepticism. The narrator does not choose to establish a dialectical tension between action and sceptical meditation, even though he indicates in his early discussion of Gould's quixotism that he understands that tension. He privileges one element of the dichotomy--action, that is, social action--and the result is a lack of thorough scrutiny of the psychology of idealisation. Decoud, at the point of death, gives in to his morose, sceptical meditation, at the expense of action, idealised action, the quality he abhorred but unwittingly and temporarily exploited. As I have argued in the introduction to this thesis, there are two possible outcomes for paradoxical formulations: either one of the terms is privileged or they are fused into an indestructible paradox. In *Nostromo*, the paradox is not indestructible, even though it is temporarily created and expressed through the perspective of the narrator and the action of Decoud. Eventually, we are left with an advocate of social action berating the despairing sceptic without a Romantic ironist to synthesise the terms. The narrator's final denunciation of Decoud is similar to that of Kierkegaard regarding Romantic irony. Kierkegaard repudiated Romantic irony on the grounds that "all historical actuality was negated to
make room for a self-created actuality." The consequence of Decoud's self-created actuality is that he sees "the universe as a succession of incomprehensible images" (N,498) amidst which "all exertion seemed useless" (N,498). However, even in his final and persistent repudiation of Decoud, the narrator is contradictory, as Guérard notices:

And he died a 'victim of the disillusioned weariness which is the retribution meted out to intellectual audacity'; he 'disappeared without a trace, swallowed up in the immense indifference of things.' Some of the force of Conrad's 'repudiation of skepticism' may be taken away by that last phrase. If Decoud experiences a total cosmic skepticism, the surviving narrator here certainly shares it!

In the next novel I examine, The Secret Agent, the sceptical narrator owns up to his paradoxical perspective more directly, and there we do not have the problem of deciphering an inconsistent point of view which creates unacknowledged contradictions and unwitting ambiguities. The status of quixotic energy is once again revived by a narrator who looks for an alternative energy to the passive acceptance of social norms, and, in his sceptical evaluation of those alternatives, relocates irony in the mediating position between extremes, which characterises Marlow's narratives, Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim.
CHAPTER 6

THE SECRET AGENT

This novel is ostensibly about a political intrigue. The hapless Stevie is blown to bits in the service of his step-father, who in turn is in the service of a political power. In the course of the unfolding of the macabre events, characters belonging to three distinct sections of society (political, legal, domestic) mingle. The ironic narrator does not subject any or all of these sectors of society to a minute scrutiny, but, rather, through the vehicle of a transparent detective story, investigates how various characters organise and motivate their lives.

One of the most important questions for a study of irony in The Secret Agent concerns the narrator's attitude to anarchism, and to achieve a clear picture of that we need to know his attitude to society. Previous stories, most notably "An Outpost of Progress" and Heart of Darkness, possessed narrators who indulged in antisocial rhetoric. In this novel there is little overt rhetoric of that kind, but there are strong indications of narratorial sympathy for characters who are determinedly antisocial. In particular, the Professor and the Assistant Commissioner revile the confinements and restrictions of the physical and social environment, and the narrator indicates that he approves of their undisguised disaffection from established societal structures.
Lord Jim illustrates Marlow's gradual dissatisfaction with elements of the legal and social status quo which he finds too confining. The narrator of this novel is similarly dissatisfied, and, like Marlow, he applauds a more invigorating response than the dutiful or passive. In Marlow's narrative, Lord Jim, that movement away from the status quo is provided by Jim's quixotism. In this novel, it occurs through the quixotism of the Assistant Commissioner who is not an anarchist but an individualist. There is also a difference in the narratorial treatment of the Commissioner from Marlow's ambivalent attitude to Jim--the narrator of The Secret Agent unequivocally applauds the Commissioner. He is the first Quixote in the Conrad canon who can express his personal vision while remaining politically, intellectually, socially expeditious. In that capacity he is closer to Decoud and Marlow than to Jim, even though he is characterised as a Quixote. He does not wilfully flout norms; he works skilfully within them.

Several other characters cannot tolerate the antagonistic social environment, and they too are admired in some measure if they remain aloof from it. The other main Quixote is the Professor. His aggressive attitude earns him the accolade of "genius" (SA,75), but his relentless defiance and bitterness are less admired than the Assistant Commissioner's, because, unlike the latter character, the Professor does not think dialectically.

In the Author's Note to The Secret Agent, Conrad says that "ironic treatment alone would enable me to say all I felt I would have to say in scorn as well as in pity" (SA,xiii). The
relationship between "scorn" and "irony" is easy enough to
discern. The narrator scorns characters who are stodgily
passive. However, the relationship between "pity" and "irony"
is a little more difficult to define. It needs to be established
first of all that "pity" in this context does not mean "emotional
sympathy"; indeed, characters like Winnie early on, her mother,
and Stevie, who seem to be most worthy of emotional sympathy,
do not receive it. Rather, the narrator is derogatory about
them. In attempting a defence of that irony, Conrad is at pains
to suggest in his preface that he did not intend to "commit a
gratuitous outrage on the feelings of mankind" (SA,xv).

At times the irony does show a marked lessening of scorn,
and pity becomes an intellectual commodity. At this point
the irony is not corrective but general. The narrator
juxtaposes two opposing responses to the environment: the
passive, as represented by both the Verlocs early on, and the
assertive, as represented by the defiant Professor. Early on,
the irony against the Verlocs is specific, but they are both
shown pity when they are forced into assertiveness, for each
character is then in a predicament, and the irony is general.

Scorn and irony necessitate a specific irony mechanism; pity
and irony necessitate the general irony mechanism once both
these characters see their marital or physical or social
environment as abhorrent.

In Marlow's narratives and that of the narrator of
Nostromo, the textual discovery of contradictions became an
important ingredient of the nature and mode of irony. The
narrator's sense of contradiction is explicitly recognisable
in The Secret Agent, in his description of Heat:
But Chief Inspector Heat was not very wise—at least not truly so. True wisdom, which is not certain of anything in this world of contradictions, would have prevented him from attaining his present position. It would have alarmed his superiors, and done away with his chances of promotion. His promotion had been very rapid. (SA,84)

The irony here satirises Heat's single-minded vision. The last line—is reminiscent of Marlow's sentence, "He committed suicide very soon after" (LJ,58), in his tract on Brierly. This passage on Heat also shows explicitly the intellectual allegiance of the narrator. He sees paradoxically. This sense of contradiction is the axis from which the general irony originates, for the narrator is contradictory in a major area: he derides many of the anarchists, and yet he admits that the Professor had genius.

As a corollary to the narrator's contradictions, conflict is generated by the juxtaposition of characters who hold allegiances to the opposing ideas of personal vision and social responsibility. Vladimir wants to awaken the middle classes for political ends; Ethelred's bureaucratic solicitude wants to preserve the status quo. The Assistant Commissioner wants to try new methods of investigation; Heat wants to work within the established legal machinery. Winnie wants, initially, the security of the domestic routine rather than its destruction; Verloc is forced into the latter but eventually wants the former.

In the Introduction, I stressed the importance of the juxtaposition of contradictory thoughts. Schlegel's aphorism ("It's equally fatal for the mind to have a system and to have none. It will simply have to decide to combine the two" [A,53]),
is important to an understanding of the ironic treatment of The Secret Agent. The narrator admires the notion of "no system" in the form of quixotic energy. But its best exemplar, the Assistant Commissioner, is also conscious of the need for "system." Indeed, he depends upon it, primarily that of the Lady Patroness's salon. He is not gratuitously individualistic. When the narrator depicts Winnie's discovery of apparent freedom, he reminds the reader of her delusion: It is "not sound" (SA,249); it is fanciful and her lack of "system" leads to her suicide. The narrator's dialectic between opposite modes of being reveals his own ironic poise, and the greater the extent to which his characters can achieve a synthesis (in the sense of juxtaposition) of the opposite poles, the lesser is his irony scornful.

In this chapter, I will analyse the two types of irony which are used to generate scorn and pity. The scornful irony attacks those who are unwittingly society's slaves or those who advocate anarchism, but are merely theoretical or hypocritical. Pity and irony depend on the general irony: how can one be assertive and yet retain social allegiances? This irony depends on the gradual education of the Verlocs, who are then subject to both "pity" and "scorn." But it is not always a matter of simple replacement of "scorn" for "pity." While increasing pity is built up for Winnie as her predicament intensifies, the conclusion of her demise is treated with both "pity" and "scorn," as the narrator balances his reactions. On occasions, however, the narrator finds her immoderate expression of emotions a target for condemnation. This is even more evident in his treatment of Stevie. The narrator is a
sceptic, and he imposes this scepticism on the emotionally frenzied Winnie and Stevie. The novel does not show evidence of a Romantic irony which acknowledges its own fictive patterning, but there is an important tract on Stevie's mad art of drawing circles which is remarkably similar to Schlegel's own statements on the limits of art.

Critical opinion has been diverse on the matter of narrator and irony in this tale. I will discuss various critics and show the usefulness and limitations of their critiques for my discussion of this novel. Spector defines the irony of The Secret Agent as classical irony and cites the definition of West and Stallman:

Irony is based on contrast—between what seems to be intended and what is actually meant, between the apparent situation and the real one. In dramatic or tragic irony the spectator is aware of the ironic intent, of which the actor is ignorant.

Spector comments:

Such is the classical irony of The Secret Agent. Conrad's characters, certain in their knowledge of each other, actually are totally ignorant of the designs, plans, and thoughts of the people with whom they must deal, and of the way in which events must shape themselves.

Muecke calls this kind of irony, the "Irony of Things": "The term Irony of Things seems also to suggest that 'things' have their own purposes and that these more or less designedly frustrate or at least completely ignore the purposes of men." The irony of things or events does have a part to play in the dramatic spectacle of The Secret Agent because the reader, early in the narrative, is aware of Stevie's death. The
manipulation of the time sequence has the effect of creating a dramatic irony sequence, where the reader is aware of the final consequence of Verloc's scheming. However, irony as the irony of a merciless Fate which dictates the way "events must shape themselves" is not an important part of this novel. Indeed, the opposite impulse, personal assertiveness, is revealed to be the most significant ingredient for shaping one's individual destiny. The quixotic will can determine events, and the ironic poise and control of the narrator represent the victory of scepticism over the workings of malevolent external forces. It is the failure to harness the will with restraint and perceptiveness which causes Winnie's suicide; it is the capacity of the Commissioner to do so which marks him as heroic.

In writing about *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes*, Guérard notes the control of the irony, but implicitly only deals with irony as scornful:

For already much of the personal rhythm, audacity of rhetoric, and strangeness of perspective have been lost. . . . It is obvious that Conrad made a conscious effort to chasten and simplify style, to subdue his temperamental evasiveness and control digressive fantasy. . . . In a word, they show, *The Secret Agent* especially, control. 3

Irony which is simplified leads to irony which is necessarily specific in intention, leading to the denunciation of Verloc and the anarchists. Hewitt, in fact, sees the irony in exactly this way:

We quickly accept the comic note as applied to Mr Verloc; the first few pages establish it by such phrases as 'He breakfasted in bed and remained wallowing there with an air of quiet
enjoyment till noon every day. . . .
We move without effort to a similar
treatment of the other conspirators. . . .
But the irony does not stop short at the
revolutionaries, the obvious villains; it
is extended to their opponents.4

However, Stewart is less sure about this narrative control:

But it is where the main burden of the irony
is carried that the chief hazard lies. The method
here is closely akin to that of mock-heroic. The
meanness of mean things is pointed, or their moral
bearing seemingly obscured, by exhibiting them in
language, or amid images and illusions, of
incongruous associations. The writer thus gives
himself the air of going astray in his judgements;
we are all the time silently putting him right as
we read; and this involvement of ours as from a
plane of superior perceptiveness constitutes part
of our pleasure. At the same time we know that
it is all a game, and that the writer is playing
it with a dexterity which sets him, rather than
ourselves, in a magistral and dispassionate
station above his comedy. But this, of course,
need not be all. We may realize that there is
yet a further deception at work, and that the
writer is, in a sense, guarding some privacy of
his own by simulating an impassivity, a neutrality,
which he is far from feeling. . . . One cannot
open the book at any page without being made aware
of the pervasive irony as at work—now muted and
now commanding, now striking in this direction and
now in that.5

Stewart's analysis implicitly refers to various types and modes
of irony, but he does not differentiate between them. His
initial sentences indicate that he sees the irony as specific
irony, and, specifically, his claim for the mock-heroic points
to irony as parody. There is one reference to Winnie's attitude
to Verloc on his return from the continent which substantiates
this idea:

And across the length of the table covered with
brown oilcloth Winnie, his wife, talked evenly
at him the wifely talk, as artfully adopted, no
doubt, to the circumstances of this return as
the talk of Penelope to the return of the
However, as I will illustrate, the irony-pity mechanism does not rely on the deflationary method of the mock-heroic. Stewart contradicts Guérard by suggesting that the narrator gives the air "of going astray in his judgements." He notes, therefore, a continuing deviousness of perspective. I investigate this aspect in my discussion of the characterisation of Verloc in Chapter 2. In suggesting that the reader is "putting the narrator right," he hints at an ingénue narrator. However, this possibility is undermined quickly ("At the same time we know that it is all a game . . ."), and the emphasis falls back on the narrator's dissembling powers, not on his fallibility. The failure to understand this notion of "game," in Marlow's narratives *Lord Jim* and *Heart of Darkness*, leads Hewitt to call Marlow muddled. The consequence of Marlow's uncertainty is the double speech of paradox and ambivalence. The oscillation works in this novel also, for the narrator acknowledges the difficulty of making definitive judgements. Stewart's phrase "magistral and dispassionate station" succinctly describes the stance of a general ironist, but he seems to imply a distinction between this kind of irony and that which is "commanding." What he identifies as "dispassionate," I call general irony; what he calls "commanding," I call specific irony. Each type fulfils a different purpose, but Stewart does not distinguish between the two types. Later he again links them indiscriminately:

But irony . . . means something more than ignorance; it means the feigning of ignorance for a rhetorical or dialectic purpose.6
This sentence is a good illustration of the danger of not making the necessary distinctions between the types of irony and discriminatingly following up the consequences of that different usage. The irony of rhetoric is totally different from the irony of dialectic. This kind of obfuscation of the issue bedevilled the accounts of irony in *Heart of Darkness*. Critics of that novel tend to see the irony as specific and operating from a secure premise, and, accordingly, much of Marlow's intellectual scope is missed. Stewart similarly ignores the scope of this narrator.

In order to explore more fully the notion of dialectical irony in *The Secret Agent*, I will examine the perspectives of several other critics who focus not on irony as satire, but on irony as detached from any discernible moral allegiance. Garnett makes a distinction between Conrad and other English novelists:

> And our English novelists, unlike the Slav, are apt to work too assiduously on the side of the angels, and hold, avowedly or in secret, an ethical brief.7

This sentence bears a marked similarity to Conrad's own admonishment (of Galsworthy's novels), which I have already quoted. There he advocated scepticism as the prime quality of the novelist and claimed that Galsworthy's novels needed "more air." The next critic I will examine, Howe, is interesting, for he contrasts directly with Garnett:

> What one misses in *The Secret Agent* is some dramatic principle of contradiction, some force of resistance; in a word, a moral positive to serve literary ends. Conrad's ironic tone suffuses every sentence, nagging at our attention to the point where one yearns for the relief of
direct statement almost as if it were an ethical good.\(^8\)

Howe is correct in perceiving the absence of any directly ethical statement, but wrong in insisting on a moral positive for literary ends, given the dialectical function of Conrad's irony, which is characterised by an impartiality, a capacity to oscillate between opposing impulses and to sustain that poise. Garnett also cites this capacity as a major ingredient of Conrad's art:

But Mr Conrad's superiority, over nearly all contemporary English novelists is shown in his discriminating impartiality which, facing imperturbably all the conflicting impulses of human nature, refuses to be biassed in favour of one species of man rather than another.\(^9\)

However, it is Conrad's capacity for unbiased analysis which infuriates Howe:

\[ \ldots \] his irony has turned in upon itself, becoming facile through its pervasiveness and lack of grading. The qualifications required by irony are present in abundance, but it is difficult to determine what is being qualified, which standard of behaviour is being singled out for attack or defense.\(^10\)

Howe's insistence that a moral differentiation should be part of the ironic intention is a corollary to his demand for an ethical brief. The narrator oscillates between opposite poles, insistent in his attempt to portray the vagaries of both structures of experience. This oscillation is the chief function of the general irony. We cannot even be sure of his scorn--for with both the Verlocs his intellectual sympathy increases. The narrator's primary focus intellectually is on the principle of
contradiction, which he correlates with "true wisdom," not on moral grading. Ironically, Howe, in lamenting the lack of grading, has identified the very function of the irony.

Miller notes the principle of contradiction within the novel:

The theme of *The Secret Agent* seems to be the disjunction between matter and spirit. Matter is solid and resists change. It never dies. Spirit, on the other hand, dwells in time. It moves across matter without being bound by it. Spirit is free. Man lives in both realms. He is incarnated in a body and is therefore part of matter which never dies. He also has a mind. The two dimensions of his existence are incompatible. He can neither incarnate spirit in matter, nor can he immaterialize matter until it takes on the quality of spirit. The gross weight of earth lies untouched behind the façade of the city, and the human mind which created that façade is as fleeting as ever. Man always dies in the end. Conrad's vision seems to culminate in the recognition of an irreconcilable dualism. Man is the meeting place of matter and spirit, and he is riven apart by their contradictions.11

Garnett also writes of the contradiction between the "animal instincts" and "spiritual necessities" which becomes evident in the evocations of Stevie as a dog or a cat and Verloc as a beast, while the Assistant Commissioner is a Don Quixote.12

Miller's notion of the free spirit is described by Galsworthy as the "cosmic spirit":

The irony of things is a nightmare weighing on man's life, because he has so little of this cosmic spirit; the little that he has he frequently distrusts, for it seems to him destructive of the temples that he builds, the gardens he lays out, the coins he circulates from hand to hand. . . . If, at the bottom of our hearts, below our network of defences, we did not feel uncertainty, we should expire—suffocated in the swaddling bands of safety—we could not breathe the stagnant air with which
we try to fill our houses. It is the essence of this writer to let in the wind with its wild, mysterious savour. 13

While many of the critics I have examined admit to the pervasiveness of the irony in the novel and provide different classifications of it, they implicitly formulate modes of specific irony, which create but rapidly release psychic tension. Irony of that kind does exist in the novel, but it works in the service of a more difficult irony based on contradiction. It is the latter two critics who point out that feature of Conrad's irony in The Secret Agent. The claims of Miller and Galsworthy need attention, for both these critics' claims are restatements of some aspects of Friedrich Schlegel's principles of irony. Galsworthy makes a clear distinction between the "cosmic spirit" and the suffocating "bands of safety." This is similar to Schlegel's dichotomy between the "infinite" and the "finite." As I have discussed, irony needs to mediate between the extremes. This principle of mediation is embodied in Miller's criticism. He provides exactly the dialectical principle between the divisions of "matter" and "spirit." This contradiction is vividly portrayed in the account of Verloc's walk to the Embassy:

And Mr. Verloc, steady like a rock—a soft kind of rock—marched now along a street which could with every propriety be described as private. In its breadth, emptiness, and extent it had the majesty of inorganic nature, of matter that never dies. The only reminder of mortality was a doctor's brougham arrested in august solitude close to the curbstone. The polished knockers of the doors gleamed as far as the eye could reach, the clean windows shone with a dark opaque lustre. And all was still. But a milk cart rattled noisily across the distant perspective; a butcher boy, driving with the noble recklessness of a charioteer at Olympic Games, dashed around
the corner sitting high above a pair of red wheels. A guilty-looking cat issuing from under the stones ran for a while in front of Mr. Verloc, then dived into another basement; and a thick police constable, looking a stranger to every emotion, as if he, too, were a part of inorganic nature, surging apparently out of a lamp-post took not the slightest notice of Mr. Verloc. (SA,13-14)

Fleishman writes persuasively of the dichotomy (between matter and spirit) in the passage:

The street is broad, empty, extensive, even majestic—and it is alien to man. It is stone—'matter that never dies'. Incapable of death, the world of inorganic nature is equally incapable of life, and the doctor's brougham enforces the associations of sickness and death. . . .

'And all was still.' With this masterly sentence, Conrad changes the pace of his prose and concludes the depiction of inorganic nature with its silence and immobility. At the same time he prepares for the eruption of vitality which will disturb the trance-like stillness of the street. For the butcher boy who next appears has a symbolic significance far beyond his peripheral place in the novel . . . [and] he introduces the absent world of the vital and the human. The language of the sentence gives the mundane boy an heroic stature by its allusion to classical scenes of athletic glory. . . . The other living beings in the street have, however, assimilated themselves to inorganic nature.14

The division between the lifeless and the vital remains the central dichotomy of the novel. There are many instances which correlate with the butcher boy's vitality. Vladimir desires a shocking act, which will hasten the need for repressive measures. His political motive stings Verloc out of his domestic sloth into the ill-fated bombing episode. The Assistant Commissioner willingly finds himself "unplaced" in his quixotic quest for fulfilment beyond the stultifying legal routine. The anarchists, for various motives, require a clean
sweep of the social routine. Winnie conceives of a deluded concept of freedom.

It is a function of the irony to insist on the importance of elements of the finite which necessarily confine and restrict endeavour. Vladimir is a very favourite of the society he abhors; the Assistant Commissioner depends upon the favours and kindness of the Lady Patroness; the anarchists depend upon women; Verloc comes to see the necessity of the domestic scene he is forced out of; Winnie's conception of freedom leads to suicide.

There are strong elements of stultification in the novel. Necessarily, as in the two early Marlow narratives, there is endorsement for the energy which attempts to impose its own will on the environment. But the characters who exploit a centrifugal energy are shown to be dependent upon the very milieu they abhor or are forced out of. In this way, the irony is dialectical. The narrator juxtaposes the opposing impulses of assertiveness and submission and shows their inextricable link.

The first chapter certainly confirms the narrator's aloofness and gives every appearance of irony as mere satire. In describing the domestic scene of the Verlocs, the narrator exhibits a clear, sardonic detachment. In this chapter, the narrator highlights the domestic sloth and a concomitant familial oppression. Verloc's physical form and lifestyle are portrayed, without apology, as grotesque. (The irony in the novel constantly derogates from many characters' dignity with barbed references to physical form.) A significant feature of the initial description of Verloc is that he is placed amidst
and seen as inferior to lively inanimate objects:

The bell, hung on the door by means of a curved ribbon of steel, was difficult to circumvent. It was hopelessly cracked . . . [and] it clattered behind the customer with impudent virulence. . . . His eyes were naturally heavy; he had an air of having wallowed, fully dressed, all day on an unmade bed. . . . Now and then it happened that one of the faded, yellow dancing girls would get sold to an amateur, as though she had been alive and young. (SA,4-5)

This kind of incongruity—the juxtaposing of the image of a wallowing Verloc amidst pornography that seems vital—is soon wrought into a full verbal irony:

. . . Mr. Verloc carried on his business of a seller of shady wares, exercised his vocation of a protector of society, and cultivated his domestic virtues. These last were pronounced. He was thoroughly domesticated. Neither his spiritual, nor his mental, nor his physical needs were of the kind to take him much abroad. He found at home the ease of his body and the peace of his conscience, together with Mrs. Verloc's wifely attentions and Mrs. Verloc's mother's deferential regard. (SA,5-6)

It is ironic that a "wallower," with "pronounced" domestic virtues should have a vocation, be cultivated, have spiritual needs, and be treated with deference. The irony is straightforwardly satirical. The family members oppress each other. In the first paragraph, we are told that Verloc's wife "was in charge of his brother-in-law" (SA,3). Later we learn that Winnie's mother is taken over by the Verlocs "with the furniture" (SA,8) and that Stevie "helped his sister with blind love and docility" (SA,10).

The focus of the irony in its early usage is quite clear. However, it is the treatment of Stevie (in this chapter and at
several other places in the novel) which shifts the irony into a different type. At the end of the first chapter, the narrator describes Stevie's histrionics with the fireworks after the tales of injustice had "wrought his compassion to the pitch of that frenzy" (SA, 9-10). Stevie's behaviour, in this instance and others which I will discuss later, betokens a highly suppressed energy, which issues in ineffectual assertiveness through the induced act of violence. Even at this point of the narrative, the narrator has evoked two psychologically opposite impulses—submission and assertion. Both represent extremes. If the initial domestic sloth and oppression are lifeless, it is also true that, in the eyes of the narrator, their opposite, frenzied assertiveness, can have no fruitful expression.

Once the narrator changes the focus of the irony to a more general level, a more subtle question arises: how does the individual assert himself in an oppressive physical and social environment? In Chapter 2, we learn that the members of the larger society are slothful and idle ("... the whole social order favourable to their hygienic idleness had to be protected against the shallow enviousness of unhygienic labour" [SA, 12]). At the natural level, even the sun is lifeless ("And a peculiarly London sun—against which nothing could be said except that it looked bloodshot—glorified all this by its stare" [SA, 11]). This is the atmosphere in which Verloc walks to the Embassy.

It is also clear that in the early part of Chapter 2 the narrative does not issue from Verloc's consciousness, but is the supposition of the narrator concerning Verloc's predilections. Verloc, at this point, is a puppet to the
narrator's imaginative whimsy, dallied with speculatively. He is described as lazy:

He was too lazy even for a mere demagogue, for a workman orator, for a leader of labour. It was too much trouble. He required a more perfect form of ease; or it might have been that he was the victim of a philosophical unbelief in the effectiveness of every human effort. (SA,12)

This kind of criticism would work in a straightforward manner, if we could assume that it was satire, a moral admonishment.

A satirical piece would depend on the word "victim" in the same way that Muecke's propositions for the elements of irony depend on the notion of victim. A confident superior would exploit his greater perceptiveness: accordingly, the satirical piece would denounce Verloc for his sloth and indicate that he should improve his character through effective human effort. But the narrator deviously announces that "Such a form of indolence requires, implies, a certain amount of intelligence. Mr. Verloc was not devoid of intelligence . . ." (SA,12). The problematical element for the reader involves the possibility that this narrator may be advocating a philosophy of non-action.

Indeed, a serious scrutiny of non-action is given through Heyst's character in Victory. Here the characterisation is evasive, or contrary to Guérard's claim, there is evidence of a "strangeness of perspective." The perspective on Verloc's idleness is equally morally ambiguous in this sentence: "He was in a manner devoted to it with a sort of inert fanaticism, or perhaps rather with a fanatical inertness" (SA,12). The last phrase, "fanatical inertness," is a succinct depiction of a Heyst-like characteristic.
The evasiveness regarding Verloc's characterisation continues, for the moral ambiguity regarding his idleness is compounded with allusions to a series of hypothetical careers:

... and his general get-up was that of a well-to-do mechanic in business for himself. He might have been anything from a picture-frame maker to a locksmith; an employer of labour in a small way. (SA,13)

However, the narrator does isolate one quality which he is certain exists in Verloc: "the air of moral nihilism" (SA,13), but it is interesting that the narrator's isolation of this phrase is equally applicable to himself, for there is little evidence of a discernible moral treatment in his portrayal of Verloc. Indeed, as I have already said, it is the lack of an ethical brief in this novel that distresses Howe. This kind of narratorial facetiousness and scepticism, which mitigates against a clear, ethical brief, is already evident in the intellectual play with the potential for respectability in the notion of indolence.

Gekoski concludes that Verloc's beliefs are mocked as unbeliefs and that his scepticism is that of a man simply slothful and inadequate. But the irony in the early part of Chapter 2 is not so specific in intention, nor is the ethical brief assumed by Gekoski as a critical base so prevalent in the narrator's own perspective. Given the narrator's ambiguity about Verloc's laziness, the issue of non-action is raised to the level of the predicament in a general irony, for there is a certain intelligence about Verloc's attitude to work. The novel portends an eerie fact about those who do become assertive. Already, Stevie's behaviour has been seen as
farcical, and, when Verloc takes up his anarchic mission, he begins a train of events which eventually ends in murder and suicide. Action leads to destruction. This is a common irony in *Nostromo*; it continues later in *Victory*. However, in the passage describing Verloc's walk through the "private" street, the butcher boy achieves a laudable form of action; he is given the idealised mantle of "the noble recklessness of a charioteer at Olympic Games." This possibility for an idealised venturesomeness is developed later in the novel through the antics of the quixotic Assistant Commissioner, and he becomes the one character whom the narrator applauds unequivocally.

When Verloc enters the Embassy, he ceases to be the puppet of the narrator's whimsy, but he becomes the subject of bitter criticism by Vladimir. The result of Verloc's visit is that his passivity is stirred up to the point where he is forced to accept his role in Vladimir's proposed anarchic mission. The first shock comes when the bureaucrat announces that the vigilance of the police should be stimulated; Verloc's passivity is obvious when he says that he has "no means of action upon the police here" (SA,17). Verloc soon confronts Vladimir, who is conspicuous initially for an ironic hauteur, but it is also made clear that he is entrenched socially ("something of a favourite in society" [SA,19]). Much of the specific irony directed against him relies on the narrator's revealing the incongruity of a man berating the social mechanism upon which he relies. This is reinforced by the narrator's reminder that he was "such a favourite in the very highest of society" (SA,24) and the "favourite of intelligent societywomen" (SA,34).

Working for his country, he requires a universal repressive
legislation, and yet he is thoroughly westernised in behaviour.
Thus, an obvious ironic gap opens up between his speech and
behaviour, a gap which the narrator exploits satirically.
Vladimir's suggestions that Verloc is lax, an informer rather
than an agent provocateur, and fat, begin the secret agent's
traumatic education in the assertive impulse. After he is
burdened with the mission of having a go at Science, (in
particular, astronomy), Verloc is left in a state of imaginative
chaos, like a "domestic dog having a nightmare on the hearthrug"
(SA,34); this image effectively evokes the drastic effect of
Vladimir's speech on Verloc, who is initiated into unsolicited
assertiveness.

Much of the focus of Marlow's two narratives is on the
imaginative character who finds himself divorced from the social
routines that other characters take for granted. The narrator
of this novel describes Verloc as being in the same position as
the dreamers in Marlow's narratives: "... Mr. Verloc retraced
the path of his morning's pilgrimage as if in a dream—an angry
dream. This detachment from the material world was so
complete ..." (SA,37). At this point Verloc exists in the
dangerous state of an "excited imagination." His previous
conception of himself as a successful informer is gratuitously
shattered, and the combination of a wounded vanity and the
recognition that he has been charged with attacking the social
edifice drives him to the perilous condition of "detachment
from the material world." This last phrase is a succinct
depiction of quixotism. Verloc does not attain the idealised
status of a Quixote, but he has been educated into a conflict
of allegiances, for, although he is naturally indolent, he has
been charged with a provocative mission. The narrator has revealed a capacity for ironic control of the contradictory impulses of assertion and submission, but Verloc shows no evidence of such control, and it is his lack of control over the two impulses which activates the novel's drama: Verloc, initially a wallower, begins the events which eventually destroy the domesticity he had previously relied upon. The narrator has illustrated that he functions dialectically. Accordingly, the narrative has this similarity to Marlow's narratives, *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*: the narrator provides the dialectic while the protagonist provides the imaginative momentum, etched between the opposite poles.

When Verloc's vanity is wounded, he can no longer be complacent. Indeed, he finds the physical environment repugnant:

> Then after slipping his braces off his shoulders he pulled up violently the venetian blind, and leaned his forehead against the cold window-pane—a fragile film of glass stretched between him and the enormity of cold, black, wet, muddy, inhospitable accumulation of bricks, slates, and stones, things in themselves unlovely and unfriendly to man. (SA,56)

Disaffection from the immediate physical and social environment is common with other characters in this novel. Most notably, the Assistant Commissioner and the Professor loathe their environments, and the narrator depicts their responses with an equal bleakness. Verloc can no longer find repose within his surroundings, and he experiences an increasing sense of alienation:

> There is no occupation that fails a man more
completely than that of a secret agent of police. It's like your horse suddenly falling dead under you in the midst of an uninhabited and thirsty plain. (SA, 56-57)

Verloc is in a dilemma for which the narrator apportions intellectual sympathy. No longer is he merely the object of the narrator's satire, which is the predominant ironic mode in the scornful attack on Verloc in Chapter 1. His growth out of the initial passivity and sloth is signalled by this comparison with his wife, who remains secure with her domestic routines:

... he beheld his wife re-enter the room and get into bed in a calm, businesslike manner which made him feel hopelessly lonely in the world. Mrs. Verloc expressed her surprise at seeing him up yet.
"I don't feel very well," he muttered, passing his hands over his moist brow.
"Giddiness?"
"Yes. Not at all well."
Mrs. Verloc, with all the placidity of an experienced wife, expressed a confident opinion as to the cause, and suggested the usual remedies; but her husband, rooted in the middle of the room, shook his lowered head sadly. (SA, 57)

Here the narrator differentiates between the two characters, whereas in Chapter 1 they are both seen as merely passive. This education of Verloc is rarely commented on, but it is as important as Winnie's later change from the assumption that "things do not stand much looking into" (SA, 177) to a determined belief that "She had her freedom" (SA, 251). Verloc, at this point in the narrative, finds himself in a position where he is alienated from the environment that his wife continues to take for granted.

In the section of Chapter 3 preceding this marital scene,
the narrator exposes the sham of the anarchists' stances; there is no discernible narratorial ideological identification with their sentiments. The meeting of the anarchists occurs in Verloc's house. This setting is important because the narrator explores not only the anarchists' belligerent rhetoric but also the reactions of Stevie and Winnie towards the terrorists. Both Winnie and Stevie make attempts at some kind of integration with their environment, representing the opposite force of the anarchists: Winnie attempts familial solicitude and Stevie primitive art.

Michaelis is a proponent of revolutionary theory, which was formulated during fifteen years of imprisonment. In his opening sentence, he is reminiscent of Decoud in Nostromo:

"... All idealization makes life poorer. . . ." (SA,41).

This is similar to Decoud's derogatory remarks to Emilia Gould concerning her husband's idealism, but, like Decoud, Michaelis is unaware of his own idealising tendencies:

Michaelis pursued his idea—the idea of his solitary reclusion—the thought vouchsafed to his captivity and growing like a faith revealed in visions. (SA,44)

His idealism generates a grotesque self-absorption, which the narrator savagely satirises:

Round like a distended balloon, he opened his short, thick arms, as if in a pathetically hopeless attempt to embrace and hug to his breast a self-regenerated universe. He gasped with ardour. (SA,50)

Ossipon rejects Michaelis's revolutionary theory on the grounds of its lack of emotion, but the narrator sees him merely as an opportunist, with the "aspect of a Norwegian sailor bored with
the world after a thundering spree" (SA, 52). Yundt advocates total terroristic destruction, but "had never in his life raised personally as much as his little finger against the social edifice" (SA, 48).

While the anarchists argue, Stevie draws:

... circles, circles, circles; innumerable circles, concentric, eccentric; a coruscating whirl of circles that by their tangled multitude of repeated curves, uniformity of form, and confusion of intersecting lines suggested a rendering of cosmic chaos, the symbolism of a mad art attempting the inconceivable. (SA, 45)

This quotation contains a sophisticated idea, which is the property of the narrator, not the inarticulate Stevie, whose frenzy recurs--this time not with fireworks but with a pencil. The narrator's appropriation of Stevie's activity generates an important symbol, for the depiction of the youth's frenetic drawing bears a remarkable resemblance to Friedrich Schlegel's depiction of the frustrations of the ironist. A highly romanticised energy must find form amidst the "chaos" (a key word of Schlegel's) with the concomitant recognition that it is impossible to achieve final or perfect form. The contradiction in Stevie's drawings (between "uniformity of form" and "confusion of intersecting lines") precisely mirrors the contradiction in Schlegel's own formulations of artistic irony, but it is salutary to recall Paul de Man's notions of "madness" and "irony," for Stevie lacks the mediating capacity of the latter. Ossipon sees the drawing as a "form of degeneracy" (SA, 46), and the narrator echoes that idea, for he sees the art as "mad." In both instances, with the fireworks and the drawing, Stevie is seen as immoderately passionate and
frenzied; the narrator describes the frenetic expressions and then ironically undercuts their efficacy as modes of personal expression.

Verloc reviles the revolutionists visiting his house, and specifically he dwells on their dependence on women (Yundt depends on "a bleary-eyed old woman" (SA,52), Michaelis on a "wealthy old lady" (SA,52). Ossipon chases "silly girls with savings-bank books" [SA,53]). Verloc depends on Winnie for his domestic comfort. As the narrator points out, they have a strong instinct for conventional respectability, and it is not the advantages of a given social state that they despise but the "price which must be paid . . . in the coin of accepted morality, self-restraint, and toil" (SA,53). This repudiation of the anarchists on the grounds of lack of restraint and sloth is followed by a seemingly definitive denunciation of revolutionists:

The majority of revolutionists are the enemies of discipline and fatigue mostly. There are natures, too, to whose sense of justice the price exacted looms up monstrously enormous, odious, oppressive, worrying, humiliating, extortionate, intolerable. Those are the fanatics. The remaining portion of social rebels is accounted for by vanity, the mother of all noble and vile illusions, the companion of poets, reformers, charlatans, prophets, and incendiaries. (SA,53)

There is evidence here of an apparently contradictory narrator. Earlier, as I have indicated, he gives hints of a kind of moral nihilism, but in the first sentence above he seems to assume some values, notably that of discipline. However, the first sentence needs to be seen in the context of the rest of the passage, which does not carry anything like the same clear
moral overtones. The remaining sentences are descriptive of rather than derogatory about two other modes of anarchy—those of the fanatics and the visionaries. Even though the narrator does not explicate the point, it seems that he differentiates between revolutionists. After all, it is the "majority" whom he finds repugnant. There is a minority, of which the Professor is clearly a member, for whom the narrator has a fair measure of respect, because, like the Professor, he abhors bourgeois entrenchment. The rhetoric of the last sentence above is undiscriminating—illusions are both "vile" and "noble," and no distinction is made between "reformers" and "charlatans"—but there are sufficient clues in the choice of such words as "noble . . . illusions" and "reformers" that he applauds a certain kind of revolutionist. There is no evidence that the narrator simply replaces an admonishment of the revolutionary mien with a socially minded notion of "discipline," thereby reversing his earlier flirtation with moral nihilism. The first sentence indicates that he finds repugnant characters like Ossipon, a mean-spirited, failed medical student; the Professor and his kind are accorded a different status, as we see later.

At the end of Chapter 3, which concludes with the bedroom scene, we learn that Verloc recognises the need for human relationship: "He appreciated this woman, and the sentiment of this appreciation, stirred by a display of something resembling emotion, only added another pang to his mental anguish" (SA,59). Verloc can no longer wallow in the comfortable domesticity, for the image of Vladimir haunts him, and anxiety prevents him from "attaching any sense" (SA,58) to his wife's speech. Chapter 3
provides a subtle analysis of the various means by which the characters organise and motivate their lives. The extremes are there again: at one end of the continuum are the anarchists who advocate destruction; at the other end is the domesticated Winnie. The dramatized irony exposes the anarchists as either merely theoretical or opportunistic, but Verloc is singled out for more lenient treatment, caught in the tension generated by his contemplation of the political mission with the concomitant reaction of growing appreciation for the domestic arrangement.

The anarchistic principle is given more sympathetic and thorough scrutiny by the narrator through the character of the Professor. Where irony is levelled against the other mean-spirited anarchists, because their loathing does not account for their own hypocritical dependence on the structures they despise, the Professor is immune from such attack on account of his sincerity in advocating the abolition of existing social structures. His voice is genuinely quixotic; it stands for the ideal of death rather than of life. Marlow's reaction to Kurtz acts as a precedent for finding megalomania respectable. His claim about Kurtz ("... He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man! he had kicked the very earth to pieces ..."

[HD,144]) applies equally well to the Professor. His rhetoric consistently and unwaveringly demands a clean sweep of the social edifice, and he resents the other anarchists because their characters are built upon conventional morality.

Ossipon refers to the Professor's conviction as "transcendental" (SA,68); the narrator describes him as "secularly holy" (SA,81); and the Professor sees himself as a "moral agent" (SA,81). In effect, these descriptions, in
combination with his own rhetoric, attribute to him a quixotic imagination. The narrator allows this character a full expression of megalomania, and the Professor's rhetoric is not savagely undercut. There are references to his physically grotesque characteristics, but this concentration on a grotesqueness of outward form is not manipulated for satirical purposes, as is the irony directed against other anarchists. However, the narrator does achieve an ironic detachment from the Professor. He remains aloof from him on similar grounds to Marlow's aloofness from Kurtz: neither character's vision is formulated dialectically. The narrator clearly signals that detachment: "The Professor had genius, but lacked the great social virtue of resignation" (SA, 75). Without this discretionary element of dialectic from the narrator, the Professor's destructive impulse would remain an untenable self-absorption. Nevertheless, the Professor's zeal provides the necessary energy for the narrator's speculative discussion on the means of moving away from domestic stultification. Like Stevie's hysteria, his zeal is extreme, but the Professor's advocacy of destruction is treated more sympathetically than Stevie's antics with fireworks and pencil. Even so, the narrator's wry observation concerning the Professor's lack of "resignation" implicitly highlights a need for self-restriction and scepticism (key principles of Schlegel's formulations on irony)--and here the narrator obliges.

Instead of satirically denouncing the Professor, the narrator provides background information on the Professor's early life, his father, his initial career ambition, and he indicates how the quixotism evolved. His present revolutionary
ambition is a "frenzied puritanism of ambition" (SA,81), nurtured in a zealous home environment; his father was a "rousing preacher of some obscure but rigid Christian sect" (SA,80). Religious fanaticism was transformed into revolutionary fervour in a son who eventually found himself to be the victim of an injustice by his early employers. This early set-back and the translation of his father's moral attitude combine to activate his passion for total demolition of existing social structures.

Like Verloc, the Professor is alienated from his immediate social and physical environment:

He was in a long, straight street, peopled by a mere fraction of an immense multitude; but all round him, on and on, even to the limits of the horizon hidden by the enormous piles of bricks, he felt the mass of mankind mighty in its numbers. They swarmed numerous like locusts, industrious like ants, thoughtless like a natural force, pushing on blind and orderly and absorbed, impervious to sentiment, to logic, to terror, too, perhaps. (SA,81-82)

This is similar to Marlow's reaction to the Europeans on his return from the wilderness, at which point he admits that his imagination "wanted soothing" (HD,152). The narrator depicts the anti-bourgeois sentiments without irony, and there is no clear differentiation between the Professor's thought and his own.

The Professor's quixotism is thrown into relief by his contact with the Chief Inspector in much the same way that Jim's is by Marlow's contact with the French lieutenant. Heat, "armed with the defensive mandate of a menaced society" (SA,83), knows only routine. He is dismissive of
individualistic behaviour, and the contrast between his passivity and the quixotic vision comes out clearly in Chapter 5, where descriptions of his character are sandwiched between those of the Professor and the Assistant Commissioner. Both Heat and the Professor agree that the worlds of crime and law are curiously linked by a similar psychology:

... he could understand the mind of a burglar, because, as a matter of fact, the mind and the instincts of a burglar are of the same kind as the mind and the instincts of a police officer. (SA,92)

"... The terrorist and the policeman both come from the same basket. Revolution, legality—counter moves in the same game; forms of idleness at bottom identical. ..." (SA,69)

Although they both see a similar pattern in the relationship between the law and outlaw, their attitudes to that relationship are antithetical. The Professor sees the link as another example of futility ("forms of idleness"), while Heat sees it as part of the social structure that he seeks to master with the full weight of the law behind him. The Professor is inconsolably pessimistic, while the Inspector is the only character in the novel who finds an easy accommodation in the world:

The murmur of town life, the subdued rumble of wheels in the two invisible streets to the right and left, came through the curve of the sordid lane to his ears with a precious familiarity and an appealing sweetness. (SA,94)

As I have already shown, several characters are described as sensing the opposite of this kind of "precious familiarity"—Verloc is educated into alienation, and the Professor is bent
on total destruction, in stark contrast to this delight in the world's ordinary sounds.

The Assistant Commissioner is the next character to add to the list of the alienated. His nature is "not easily accessible to illusions" (SA,99). Guérard claims that there is an authorial identification with the Assistant Commissioner that is "rational" and "without uneasiness." Indeed, there is little discernible irony directed against him, and the chief reason is that he operates skilfully with the quixotic persona. There is a significant pattern of quixotic imagery used in evoking his character, for he is not only described as being on a "crusade" (SA,222) but also twice explicitly referred to as a Don Quixote:

He raised his head, and turned towards his subordinate a long, meagre face with the accentuated features of an energetic Don Quixote. (SA,115)

He stepped back into the full light of the room, looking like the vision of a cool, reflective Don Quixote, with the sunken eyes of a dark enthusiast and a very deliberate manner. (SA,147)

In comparison, Heat is described as "not quixotic" (SA,204).

The Assistant Commissioner's quixotism arises from his frustration with the conventional routines of police work and his desire to express his own insight into the nature of the crime. In pursuit of this desire, he unravels the truth concerning the anarchic offence and preserves his all-important relationship with the Lady Patroness. His frustration with conventional living produces a response that might easily be attributed to Marlow:
And the lofty pretensions of a mankind oppressed by the miserable indignities of the weather appeared as a colossal and hopeless vanity deserving of scorn, wonder, and compassion. (SA,100)

An important issue arises out of the last quotation. "Scorn" and "compassion" are seen as complementary reactions in this character. This complementarity of opposing impulses is similar to Conrad's stated intention in the Author's Note that he writes "in scorn as well as in pity." The Assistant Commissioner's compassion has a similar quality to the narrator's pity—that is, it has an intellectual quality. (I discuss this aspect of pity later on.) His scorn is evident in his attitude to the frequenters of a restaurant, and it is reminiscent of Marlow's response to the globetrotters in *Lord Jim*:

But these people were as denationalized as the dishes set before them with every circumstance of unstamped respectability. Neither was their personality stamped in any way, professionally, socially, or racially. . . . And he himself had become unplaced. (SA,149)

His immersion in this unattractive world is described as a "descent into a slimy aquarium from which the water had been run off" (SA,147). The atmosphere in the restaurant is seen as "immoral" (SA,148) by the narrator, confirming that his and the Assistant Commissioner's attitude are similar. The character differentiates himself from the social environment:

In this immoral atmosphere the Assistant Commissioner, reflecting upon his enterprise, seemed to lose some more of his identity. He had a sense of loneliness, of evil freedom. It was rather pleasant. When, after paying for his short meal, he stood up and waited for his change, he saw himself in the sheet of glass, and was struck by his foreign appearance. (SA,148-49)
His delight in the mirror image confirms his fascination with his new-found identity, and his sense of "evil freedom" makes him aloof from the social world and establishes itself as the key element of his quixotism. As I have stated, this kind of disaffection from the physical and social environment is common in the novel, but the Assistant Commissioner is the most effective Quixote in *The Secret Agent* and the most obviously admired by the narrator, because he is not only able to express his personal vision but also able to do so without the bizarre severance from social reality observable in the Professor's behaviour and speech.

The Assistant Commissioner is not a deluded chivalric Quixote, but he is "cool" and "reflective" (SA,147). Even though he is scornful of the social world, he is aware of his reliance on societal conventions (he shows respect for Sir Ethelred and depends upon the Lady Patroness), just as Marlow respects routines and his maritime craft. It is through this character that the narrator is able to explore the possibility of an egoistic vision within the confines of ordinary living, for, while he is involved with his job and wife, he remains dissatisfied with them. His capacity for detachment is evident when Sir Ethelred makes a plea for lucidity. Initially, he is able to justify his stance to Sir Ethelred as an intolerance of secret agents, but when he is asked for a description of his immediate motives, he replies:

"... A new man's antagonism to old methods. A desire to know something at first hand. Some impatience. It's my old work, but the harness is different. It has been chafing me a little in one or two tender places." (SA,144)
The narrator describes this chafing a little more fully:

His real abilities, which were mainly of an administrative order, were combined with an adventurous disposition. Chained to a desk in the thick of four millions of men, he considered himself the victim of an ironic fate—the same, no doubt, which had brought about his marriage with a woman exceptionally sensitive in the matter of colonial climate. . . . (SA, 113)

This aversion to the enslavement to administration and his reliance on the Lady Patroness are the motives for his quixotic quest, which contains the possibility of victory for the personal dream over events or people or their attempts to thwart that dream. The Assistant Commissioner's sense that he is a victim of an ironic fate does not lead him to feeble submission, but rather motivates his energetic exploitation of the means available to him to achieve personal success: the Lady Patroness's attachment to Michaelis ensures that Heat's investigations need to be thwarted. The Assistant Commissioner's reaction to her is a "complex sentiment," which depends "a little on her prestige, on her personality, but most of all on the instinct of flattered gratitude. He felt himself really liked in her house. She was kindness personified. . . . She made his married life much easier . . ." (SA, 111).

The Assistant Commissioner's detachment is used to portray a clinical, unemotionally succinct description of Verloc's circumstances and milieu to Sir Ethelred, and I quote these passages because they illustrate the range of responses of which he is capable. They bear a close relationship to the Lady Patroness's style of showing both pity and scorn. I will look at her capacities after this examination of the Assistant
Commissioner's speech and then extend the discussion to a more
general scrutiny of pity and scorn in the novel:

"All this seems very fantastic."
"Doesn't it? One would think a ferocious
joke. But our man took it seriously, it appears.
He felt himself threatened. Formerly, you know,
he was in direct communication with old Stott-
Wartenheim himself, and had come to regard his
services as indispensable. It was an extremely
rude awakening. I imagine that he lost his
head. He became angry and frightened. (SA,219)

"A genuine wife and a genuinely, respectably,
marital relation. He told me that after his
interview at the Embassy he would have thrown
everything up, would have tried to sell his
shop, and leave the country, only he felt certain
that his wife would not even hear of going
abroad. Nothing could be more characteristic of
the respectable bond than that," went on, with a
touch of grimness, the Assistant Commissioner,
whose own wife, too, had refused to hear of
going abroad.
"Yes, a genuine wife. And the victim was a
genuine brother-in-law. From a certain point of
view we are here in the presence of a domestic
drama." (SA,221-22)

The first paragraph is a remarkably succinct description of what
happens to Verloc. It covers not only the matter of Verloc's
demise but also the comic tone of the narrator towards Verloc
early on ("ferocious joke"). This resemblance between the
Assistant Commissioner's speech and the narrator's own coverage
bears out Guérard's claim about the relationship between the
two. However, the Assistant Commissioner is not only scornful.
The second paragraph shows pity, for there he does not respond
jocularly but with a "touch of grimness." The description of
the marriage indicates that he recognises similarities between
the hapless Verloc and himself: both are forced to express
personal visions, both attempt it, and both are shackled by the
nagging bonds of a wife. The Assistant Commissioner's pity and
scorn are indicative of an ironic perspective which is not only detached but also generously disposed to seeing Verloc's state as representative of a more general predicament, of a kind that he has faced in his own life.

The capacity for expressing pity and scorn simultaneously is shared by the Lady Patroness. She too lives with a disregard for convention:

Old now in the number of her years, she had that sort of exceptional temperament which defies time with scornful disregard, as if it were a rather vulgar convention submitted to by the mass of inferior mankind. Many other conventions easier to set aside, alas! failed to obtain her recognition, also on temperamental grounds—either because they bored her, or else because they stood in the way of her scorns and sympathies. (SA,104)

She is detached ("In her own words, she liked to watch what the world was coming to" [SA,105]), and from this vantage point she confers her own peculiar brand of pity:

And she had a great capacity of pity for the more obvious forms of common human miseries, precisely because she was such a complete stranger to them that she had to translate her conception into terms of mental suffering before she could grasp the notion of their cruelty. (SA,108)

Like the narrator and the Assistant Commissioner, she is scornful of the common miseries of ordinary humanity, and her pity arises from an aloofness. She is deemed to be "a perfect woman" (SA,112), and it is significant that there is a noticeable lack of irony levelled against both the Lady Patroness and the Assistant Commissioner. Through these two characters the narrator explores the notion of pity—it is an intellectual commodity which shows controlled sympathy after
intelligent scrutiny.

Gekoski finds little evidence of pity in this novel:

There is plenty of scorn in *The Secret Agent*, but surely little pity—and it may be that the two are scarcely compatible. The effect of Conrad's irony (which is brilliantly sustained) seems to militate against whatever pity one might humanly expect to feel, given the situation. Aristotle tells us that pity is caused by the observation of undeserved misfortune, but the personages who meet the misfortune are, in his understanding, necessarily of an 'intermediate' type—not pre-eminently good, but fundamentally so, and certainly not contemptible.

Though there may be a tragic situation in *The Secret Agent*, there is certainly no tragedy. The novel, as most critics have rightly pointed out, is in effect, comic. In Aristotelian terms, we see a bad man moving from a happy situation to a miserable one. Such a spectacle may appropriately occasion scorn, never pity.18

If Aristotelian terms were used as a model for arousing pity, then, as Gekoski says, we could not expect much pity to be generated by Verloc's demise. However, it is too simplistic to suggest that Verloc is a bad man, for the particular focus of this narrator does not allow for any easy moral differentiation between good and evil. (We saw earlier that the narrator concedes that Verloc's indolence may have indicated a certain degree of intelligence.) We can also see that the narrator has sympathy for a character like the Professor who is genuinely disenchanted with social conventions, while, conversely, Heat, who accepts too easily his surroundings and routine, is seen as "not very wise." The narrator's intention is not to generate pity through an Aristotelian structure. He dichotomises behaviour into opposite poles, the assertive and the submissive. Specific irony is less noticeable in the
narrator's treatment of assertive characters, particularly the Professor and the Assistant Commissioner, because he is prepared to accept that these characters face a predicament concerning the establishment of identity. Pity becomes an intellectual sympathy towards those characters who assert a quixotic ego amidst a constricting social milieu.

The establishment of opposite poles and the ironic, narratorial mediation between those poles constitute the three structures of experience that have been the major ingredients of the irony in Marlow's two narratives, *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. Said argues that there are two dominant structures in Conrad's work:

It is important, therefore, to distinguish the dominant mode of Conrad's structures of experience: quite simply, it can be called their radical either/or posture. By this I mean a habitual view of experience that allows either a surrender to chaos or a comparably frightful surrender to egoistic order. There is no middle way, and there is no other way of putting the issues. Either one allows that meaningless chaos is the hopeless restriction upon human behaviour, or one must admit that order and significance depend upon man's will to live at all costs.19

Said's contention that there is no "middle way" is inadequate, for a major achievement of Marlow's two early narratives and of *The Secret Agent* is the sustained ironic poise of the narratorial perspective. The two narrators involved neither surrender meekly to "chaos" nor engage the egoistic wills of Quixotes or anarchists. Irony becomes the pre-eminent means of control. Nevertheless, the concept of an either/or posture provides a more useful analytical framework than Gekoski's Aristotelian structure, although Said's argument allows for neither change nor the oscillation between opposing structures.
of experience. Verloc, for example, becomes something more than a wallower. At that point, the narrator is prepared to portray the intimidating experiences of alienation from his domestic environment and the haunting recollection of Vladimir's image cajoling him into an anarchic act. This movement from the submissive pole (which instigates the change in irony and the development of pity) becomes an important aspect of Winnie's characterisation later, as we will see.

The cab scene illustrates well the narrator's irony and scorn, but it also illustrates the means by which pity can be shown. Chapter 8 evaluates the lives of the oppressed characters and focuses on a world which is the direct antithesis of the Lady Patroness's milieu. Stewart sees the irony of this part of the novel thus:

The technique is obtrusive, and its steady march through shabby scenes and amid malignant passions seems bookish and chilly... The ironic mode is not a grace or an embellishment; it has the essential function of creating an aesthetic distance between Conrad and the raw spectacle which he is contemplating.20

Stewart is correct in describing the irony as an obtrusive technique that generates a formidable aesthetic distance between the narrator and the spectacle of helpless characters, but it is because those characters are either immoderately passionate or deluded that the narrator is so detached and scornfully ironic.

In this chapter the narrator portrays the delusions of Winnie's mother, the illusions of Winnie, and the emotional frenzy of Stevie; he investigates how the imaginatively impoverished or emotionally frenzied survive by living in necessary illusions. The irony levelled initially against
Winnie's mother concentrates on her as a physical grotesque--
in a similar manner to the irony levelled against Michaelis:

But she did not allow her inward apprehensions
to rob her of the advantage of venerable
placidity conferred upon her outward person by
her triple chin, the floating ampleness of her
ancient form, and the impotent condition of
her legs. (SA, 153)

She is deluded about the effect of her departure and Verloc's
attitude to Stevie:

She took the cold and reasonable view that the
less strain put on Mr. Verloc's kindness the
longer its effects were likely to last. (SA, 162)

Winnie's mother's conviction that her departure would improve
Stevie's chances in the household results in one of the few
generous acts in the novel, but the narrator does not applaud
her generosity, even though her defection springs from a
sympathy and self-sacrifice unmatched by any other character
except Stevie.

Stevie's compassion is rendered as farcical. It extends
to the general mass of poor people and to the beaten horse and
results in the boy's macabre desire to take the horse to bed
with him. This desire occasions scorn:

To be taken into a bed of compassion was
the supreme remedy, with the only one
disadvantage of being difficult of
application on a large scale. (SA, 168)

Stevie's indignant passions are furiously aroused, but the
narrator is condemnatory:

A magnanimous indignation swelled his frail
chest to bursting, and caused his candid eyes
to squint. Supremely wise in knowing his own
powerlessness, Stevie was not wise enough to restrain his passions. (SA,169)

This is a key statement by the narrator, and his advocacy of restraint mirrors Marlow's preoccupation with that quality. The narrator privileges sceptical intelligence over simple-minded morality and acknowledges his preference for the former quality over the latter in his criticism of Stevie's righteousness: "Being no sceptic, but a moral creature, he was in a manner at the mercy of his righteous passions" (SA,172). This sentence contains an explicit refutation of Howe, who seeks an ethical brief in this novel. The narrator is derogatory about the bizarre manifestation of Stevie's morality, but he applauds scepticism as a function of restraint. Stevie, his indignation roused to the point of frenzy, had previously found desperate expression through fireworks and the drawing of circles; now he wants to take a horse to bed. He has no control over chaotic emotions, and hence the narrator points out the need for restraining immoderate passions. In contrast, it becomes clear that the narrator's sympathies lie with the cool and reflective Don Quixote figure of the Assistant Commissioner.

With regard to Winnie, the narrator builds up a scornful series of references to her myopic, domestic passivity. Several times he insists that she does not bother searching for "fundamental information" (SA,169); she is "Guiltless of all irony" (SA,173); for her "things do not stand much looking into" (SA,177). Her survival in the world depends on a consoling trust: trust in the police, in Verloc, and in "the organized powers of the earth" (SA,172). It becomes obvious, however, that Winnie receives more generous treatment by the narrator
after her knowledge of Stevie's death, when her complacency is shattered.

The irony of the Death scene is not marked by the astringency of the Cab scene. The unsuccessful bombing has induced such chaos that ironic poise is desperately needed, but, given the emotional circumstances, is unattainable by either of the characters. Verloc obviously lacks emotional sensitivity towards Winnie's reaction to Stevie's death, but his behaviour contains a remarkable mixture of stolid insensitivity and evidence of a curious insight into the necessity of maintaining the domestic structure. He conveys no understanding of Winnie's emotional distress, and, as she becomes increasingly incensed, he becomes practical and organisational. He makes constant references to the new marriage that will evolve and stresses the importance of tidying up affairs while he is in jail:

(a) "Come, Winnie, we've got to think of tomorrow. You'll want all your wits about you after I am taken away." (SA,232)

(b) The narrator reports Verloc's contention that "urgent practical matters must be talked over if they had to sit up all night." (SA,233-34)

(c) "... Look here, Winnie, what you must do is to keep this business going for two years. You know enough for that... I'll send you word when it's time to go about trying to sell. ..." (SA,247)

Ironically, the marital relation is more honest and vital after the sacrifice of Stevie, but, because of its emotional sterility, Verloc's insistence on restoking the domestic arrangement appears incongruous, given the macabre circumstances. The narratorial focus is on that incongruity, but it is not condemnatory, for Verloc wants the old domestic order and a sense
of order is necessary in crisis. (We can remember Marlow's fussy preoccupation with rivets when the wilderness intrudes as a threatening force.)

More futile than Verloc's tactic is Winnie's defiant murder, which leaves her marooned with a deluded notion of freedom and eventually searching desperately for a new domesticity. After her realisation that she has been blindly servile to her husband, the narrator begins a refrain and its variants ("She had her freedom" [SA,251]). The narrator makes it quite clear that he considers that her conception of freedom is "not sound" (SA,249) and "governed too much by a fixed idea" (SA,249). He is a sceptical, unsentimental spectator who is uneasy about a character changing one illusion for another uncritically. Nevertheless, the irony at this point of the novel is not merely scornful; it recognises that Winnie is in a genuine predicament:

For she did not exactly know what use to make of her freedom. Her personality seemed to have been torn into two pieces, whose mental operations did not adjust themselves very well to each other. (SA,254)

As we have already seen, psychological duality is an important consideration in a study of Marlow's irony and a major element of Paul de Man's theory of irony. Marlow successfully mediates between the "two pieces" of personality, and Paul de Man contends that unsuccessful mediation results in unappeased madness. Winnie's consciousness is aroused, of course, to a frenzied state in which she no longer trusts in "the organized powers of the earth" (SA,172), but she does not have the mental resources to control the duality.
Winnie's rebellion against her previous domestic incarceration leads paradoxically to a desperate search for a new relationship, and so she turns to the opportunist, Ossipon ("... I've no one in the world. ... Who would look at me if you don't!"). At the point of her final despair, the narrator amalgamates the opposing reactions of pity and scorn:

"Oh, Tom! How could I fear to die after he was taken away from me so cruelly! How could I! How could I be such a coward!"

She lamented aloud her love of life, that life without grace or charm, and almost without decency, but of an exalted faithfulness of purpose, even unto murder. And, as often happens in the lament of poor humanity rich in suffering but indigent in words, the truth—the very cry of truth—was found in a worn and artificial shape picked up somewhere among the phrases of sham sentiment. (SA,298)

In a series of antitheses, the narrator balances his reactions: "love of life"—"life without grace"; "without decency"—"exalted faithfulness"; "faithfulness . . . unto murder"; "poor . . . rich"; "rich . . . indigent"; "truth"—"sham sentiment."

This capacity for a balanced reaction provides further evidence of his dialectical powers and contrasts strongly with the Professor, who single-mindedly abhors weakness.

In the last chapter, Michaelis and the Professor have opposing reactions to weakness. The Professor's rhetoric is a stronger version of Marlow's declamations against the Europeans on his return from the wilderness. That anarchic voice is given a full expression, but the last paragraph maintains the poise of the narrator's ironic control: "He walked frail, insignificant, shabby, miserable—and terrible in the simplicity of his idea calling madness and despair to the regeneration of the world"
The tension in the last chapter is generated by the conflict between the Professor's idea of elimination of the weak and Michaelis's idea of a world in which "the strong are to devote themselves to the nursing of the weak" (SA,303). Ossipon is seriously affected by the memory of the journalistic phrases ("'An impenetrable mystery. . . .'"); "'This act of madness or despair'" [SA,310]). The phrases that haunt Ossipon and the antisocial rhetoric of the Professor ensure that this novel concludes with madness triumphant. The narrator does not set out to merely scorn the Professor, but he is detached from the ultimately destructive point of view (the Professor is "terrible in the simplicity of his idea" [SA,311]). Accordingly, the Professor's self-absorption and passionate despair are counter-balanced by the ironic mediation of the narrator.

The novel begins with the slothful domesticity of the Verloc's; it ends with the Professor's plea for destruction. The narrator explores the twin impulses of submission and assertion and the contradiction of needing to be simultaneously assertive and accommodating of social conventions. However, Gekoski sees this book as a relative failure:

It has none of the tensions that make Lord Jim or Nostromo so compelling—it fails to suggest either the attractiveness, the clarity, or the necessity, of a vision based on the honesty of egoism. . . . It is because the only egoism in The Secret Agent is 'mean and obtuse'—because none of its characters has the audacity of Kurtz, the romantic dreams of Jim, or the astonishing clarity of Decoud—that the work achieves its special status as probably the most perfectly sustained yet also the thinnest of Conrad's major novels. It creates a group of unworthy and contemptible characters—and then brilliantly castigates them for their unworthiness and contemptibility.22
The energy of egoism certainly exists in this novel, most dramatically in the Professor and the Assistant Commissioner. Their egoism is neither characterised as merely "'mean and obtuse,'" nor subject to a brilliantly sustained castigation. The narrator shows each character's revulsion at constricting social conventions, and Gekoski's unawareness of the narrator's admiration of the centrifugal energy of their egoism leads him to write later: ". . . Conrad sides himself completely with man's legal and moral obligations, and is unable to accept in anarchism a possibly valuable extension of his vision of personal autonomy." This sort of criticism harbours an unwarranted moral presupposition, for, as I have shown, there is little evidence to suggest that the narrator operates with an unequivocal moral base. Indeed, I have placed the narrator of The Secret Agent in the tradition of Marlow, who admires egoistic departure from conventional understanding of man's legal and moral obligations, and it is salutary to remember that Conrad himself says in the Author's Note that "there had been moments during the writing of the book when I was an extreme revolutionist" (SA,xiv).

Gekoski's claim suggests that this narrator sides uncritically with Heat, but the narrator makes it clear that he considers that character to be "not very wise." Nevertheless, Guérard agrees with Gekoski:

The novel does have its genuine seriousness of theme; it does express certain strong and austere convictions, recognizably the author's. But it neither explores these convictions for subtle ramification and nuance, nor ever seriously challenges them. Instead, the convictions are simply and forcefully affirmed.
Careful examination of the narrator's language confirms that he does not simply affirm convictions. He examines and undercuts the convictions of most characters and establishes his irony as alternatively scornful and pitying. The nuance is discernible in the change from specific to general irony. He is persistently interested in unravelling how characters sustain their particular imaginative visions or illusions, from Winnie's stance of not looking too deeply into things to the Assistant Commissioner's relentless quixotism. Hewitt contradicts both Gekoski and Guérard:

(a) This has usually been judged to be different from the majority of Conrad's work, but the difference is on the surface—it is a difference of presentation rather than of the preoccupations which lie at the back of it.25

(b) The irony of The Secret Agent, and of the other early works in which it is less pervasive, is offensive; it is a weapon to undermine comfortable assumptions and to make us scrutinize more deeply our beliefs and values.26

This criticism is far more satisfactory, for it concedes that the tensions of the other novels exist here, and in insisting on irony as offensive Hewitt is close to Muecke's contention about irony: "... irony is properly to be regarded as more an intellectual than a moral activity. That is to say, the morality of irony, like the morality of science, philosophy, and art, is a morality of intelligence."27

I have shown that the irony is offensive. It is used for both pity and scorn, as Conrad prescribes in the Author's Note to the novel, and for a full understanding of its dual purposes we need to come to terms with similar dichotomies, conflicts, and contradictions of the two earlier narratives of Marlow.
I have maintained my method of deducing the narratorial perspective from textual evaluation, because this is the only means of deciding which of the critics, Guérard or Hewitt, is correct, for they make opposing contentions about the ironic narrator. Examination of the text shows that there are three significant places where the narrator's bias is discernibly akin to that of Marlow: the narrator's criticism of Heat, who is described as being "not very wise" because he does not see the "world of contradictions" (SA, 84); his endorsement of scepticism which is used as an irony against Stevie ("Being no sceptic, but a moral creature, he was in a manner at the mercy of his righteous passions" [SA, 172]); his contention that Stevie's "mad art" attempts the inconceivable, "a rendering of cosmic chaos" (SA, 45). These three aspects of the narrator's thought confirm that he is close to Schlegel's concepts of irony. The world is seen as "chaos" and consequently full of conflicts and contradictions. The ironist must explore and expose these conflicts and contradictions and work dialectically between opposites. That is a major function of the narrator of The Secret Agent. Accordingly, an irony-scorn mechanism predominates when characters are submissive to illusory social allegiances. It changes to an irony-pity mechanism when characters are in positions of conflict. The best method of watching the change from the first mechanism to the second is to evaluate the change in irony directed towards the Verlocs, as each in turn is educated out of the passivity of former routines.

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CHAPTER 7

THE LATER NOVELS

Of central interest in the later novels is what happens to paradoxes established textually. In *Nostromo*, it is noticeable that the narrator eventually privileges one element of the contradictory allegiances to action and scepticism, but the tension between opposing impulses is sustained through the character Decoud. In the later novels that I examine, paradox is also an important intellectual element. Razumov finds himself asserting his independence while eventually acknowledging his entry into community allegiances through his love for Natalia. Heyst renounces any commitment to action through the inherited philosophy of his father, but assists the hapless Morrison and Lena. Both Razumov and Heyst are caught in the dilemma, cited by Gekoski, of whether to act through allegiances to notions of personal vision or of social responsibility.

The narrators of *Under Western Eyes* and *Victory* do not scrutinise the characters from a perspective of persistent paradoxical vision. The Professor in *Under Western Eyes* reveals the incongruity of the youthful, idealistic Razumov amidst the volatile, antagonistic, Genevan revolutionaries. In terms of ironic mode, Razumov's disguise establishes a series of dramatic ironies. Unlike Marlow's, the Professor's own viewpoint concerning Razumov is not altered sufficiently for him to engage in a revaluation of his own outlook and the double talk of
irony. In *Victory*, the narrator does not merely parody Heyst's character. He builds up the narrative to the point where Heyst is seen to be in a genuine predicament, but the kind of ironic scrutiny that seems warranted is not sustained, for, like the Professor in *Under Western Eyes*, the narrator does not internalise a paradoxical vision. Like the narrator of *Nostromo*, he privileges an ill-defined notion of action. In *Chance*, Marlow differs from his previous enthusiasm; he is no longer vitally interested in quixotic idealism, and his ironic intention is eventually signalled to be a deriding of Anthony's chivalry.

The process of resolution, of privileging one element of dual formulations, begins, in its later phase, in "The Secret Sharer." The retrospective narrator of that story explores his identity in terms of a "dual nature" through his contact with Leggatt. Throughout the story there are constant references to the psychological duality he experiences in his alliance with the outlaw, who upsets the young captain's traditional ideal of seamanship. The story dramatises the effect of Leggatt on the young captain and the process by which the captain puts a personal loyalty over a public duty, even to the extent of risking the lives of those aboard, in order that the outlaw may have a better chance of surviving. However, the narrator's recounting of the events does not contain the same ironic ingredients of Marlow's narratives, *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*. Marlow's irony springs from the doubt in the fixed standard, a doubt which is never laid to rest and instigates the consequent oscillation in the narratorial perspective. But, as I have pointed out in the Introduction, the act of narrating
provides an opportunity for the young captain in "The Secret Sharer" to exorcise the threat the secret sharer holds against the maintenance of the maritime code. At the beginning of the story, he expresses his sense of unity with the natural setting, and at the end he expresses his delight in "the perfect communion of a seaman with his first command" (SS,143). The paradoxical tension is easily resolved.

The study of Under Western Eyes is bedevilled by restricting critical frameworks in much the same way that Lord Jim is. Guérard notices the structural similarities of the two novels, but he imposes a narrow grid on both of them, seeing them as chronicles of guilt and atonement. Gekoski corroborates such a view; he contends that Razumov finds himself eventually to be guilty of betraying a fellow human being and suffers from remorse until his final confession and redemption. Guérard concludes that Razumov's "disastrous thoughts" (UWE,183) are those "prompted by fear and guilt." Hewitt endorses this claim by suggesting that the novel dramatises "the strange torments of the Russian conscience and the Russian guilt." But the novel explores two structures of experience. The diary entries confirm that Razumov associated fear with dream, not guilt. His dream of success within the autocratic establishment is all consuming and fear is aroused at the prospect of not fulfilling that ambition. Conversely, there is the final disclosure, especially in his conversation with Natalia, that he feels remorse for his betrayal and that the girl's trustful eyes have brought him back into the community. The paradoxical position of Razumov is confirmed by the opposing allegiances of his commitment to a dream of personal success (a commitment
that inevitably causes Haldin's execution) and the latterly discovered love bond with Natalia. There is no easy transition from one structure of experience to another. Razumov, on eventually feeling remorse, does not rescind his earlier ambitions and identity. His early, youthful optimism about his personal quest undergoes a metamorphosis until the final realisation of a tragic outcome: "'... I am independent—and therefore perdition is my lot'" (UWE, 362).

The information pertaining to Razumov's love for Natalia is only revealed late in the novel. The previous text depicts a youthful idealist who is intent on personal success within the Russian autocracy. The novel comprises Razumov's own diary with the Professor's elderly interpositions and editing. The novel, therefore, is predominantly an edited diary. In considering the irony of the novel, the most important question is this: what does the Professor make of his contact with Razumov and the perusal of the diary? The most common adjective associated with the narrator is "obtuse," in much the same way as Marlow is called muddled. Both Guérard and Gekoski see him as an obtuse participant. Hewitt contends that a "mild" irony is directed against him. Irony in this sense is inevitably specific irony. But two questions arise from this claim. Who is directing the irony? Who possesses the deeper knowledge against which to measure his lack of perceptiveness? Hewitt's claim about the irony is valid when considering a character like Mitchell, in *Nostromo*, whose fatuous complacency exposes his naiveté, but, in *Under Western Eyes*, the narrator eschews any simple-minded allegiance to Swiss democracy and keeps on insisting on the difference between the East and West. Indeed,
critics are by no means unanimous concerning the Professor's obtuseness. Kirschner sees his vision as "unusually penetrating" and "complex," which puts him in Marlow's league, as he is enchanted with neither the hopes of the Russians nor the hypocritical respectability of Geneva. 8 Schwarz sees a character who is initially self-deprecating, but gradually establishes his perceptiveness to become "a barometer of morality, sanity and civilisation." 9

As the nature of the irony is determined by the function of the narrator, it is important to establish his position in the text. These elements are significant to the narrator's function: (a) he participates in the story, but his active involvement with the protagonist is much less vital than Marlow's with Jim; (b) he consistently upholds certain standards of decency and values like loyalty and friendship; (c) like Marlow, he is a retrospective narrator, but he is more limited in intellectual scope, for he does not suggest that Razumov's dilemma radically affects his own position; and (d) he does show evidence of change: "The Westerner in me was discomposed" (UWE, 317).

As item (d) indicates, the Professor is affected by his contact with events hitherto inconceivable to him, and the discomposure generates a sympathy for the protagonist that leads to his insistence on the difference between Russians and Westerners. Hence, the story is told from "under western eyes" with the narratorial recognition of the potentiality for incomprehension of the Russian's dilemma.

Item (c) above, concerning the retrospective element of the narration, illustrates that, like Marlow, the narrator is
afforded detachment from the events and the opportunity for philosophical reflection. With a similar opportunity, Marlow creates an indestructible paradox. Strikingly, like Marlow, the Professor admits to the difficulties for the imagination in constructing a story. He admits to having "no talent" (UWE,100) and that he senses the difficulty of the task of composition. At the beginning, he disclaims "the possession of those high gifts of imagination" (UWE,3). The anxieties the story-teller himself has about the craft of narrating help to dissipate any attempts to read the novel in a singular way. The narrator's tentativeness towards his own capacities for the construction of fiction is matched by his doubt about words, which he suggests "are the great foes of reality" (UWE,3). There is enough potential in the narrator's confusion and doubt for Romantic irony, but, unlike Marlow, he does not weave the strands of thought into a text containing that kind of sophisticated irony. Instead of pursuing the doubt he has about language, he later insists on finding a word which may "hold truth enough to help the moral discovery which should be the object of every tale" (UWE,67). The desire for a "moral discovery" is potentially unsubtle in that the narrator inevitably leads his text towards allegory if he seeks unmitigated moral truth. The unacknowledged contradiction of purpose puts the reader in a similar intellectual position as that encountered in Nostromo, because the incipient scepticism is quickly muted by a desire for a simple morality. This is further compounded by his eventual positing of the word "cynicism" (UWE,67) as a key to the moral discovery, but this word is clearly inadequate for the text is largely a
dramatisation of the opposite, idealism.

The narrator concedes to the enigma of Razumov in attributing to him an inscrutability ("an inscrutable listener" (UWE,5). The word "inscrutable" is Marlovian, but the effect of this enigmatical characterisation is spoilt by the Professor, who, in seeking to establish why Razumov writes the diary, offers a flaccid aphorism: "... I take it that what all men are really after is some form or perhaps only some formula of peace" (UWE,5). I see this aphorism as an example of what Schwarz calls "tendentious generalisations." Here, the novel's tension is rather reduced by the confident opinion of the narrator and recalls the narrator of *Nostromo* and his confidence in an ill-defined notion of action. In contrast to both these later narrators, we can recall the vigour with which Marlow scrutinises contradictory attitudes not to peace or action, but to work. Here, there is no such scrutiny.

The Professor goes on to characterise Razumov in similar social terms to Marlow's initial depiction of Jim. He stresses Razumov's amiability, generosity and accessibility. But then he stresses the more individualistic tendencies of Razumov--his concern for the silver medal, the prize money and the solitariness. This simultaneous stress given to contradictory attributes in Razumov's character is potential for general irony and, in the hands of a sophisticated narrator, Romantic irony. Marlow, in depicting Jim with opposing images, establishes and sustains a dialectic: should Jim be a Conway boy or a chivalric hero? Here, there is no such dialectic.

The first of the many dramatic irony sequences occurs at Haldin's intrusion. Like the Professor, he attributes to
Razumov the social virtues of solidity of character and reliability. Ironically, Razumov announces: "'There goes my silver medal!'" (UWE, 16). It is this expostulation which gives rise to Guérard's accusation of "selfish aims." This moral reprimand assumes that Razumov has gratuitously contravened a moral code and that the betrayal is unambiguously reprehensible. Schwarz tacitly agrees with Guérard in that he sees Razumov as obsessed with personal success and lacking a "fundamental moral identity." Schwarz uses the adjectives "frenzied," "self-absorbed," and "psychotic" to describe Razumov. But, as I have already stated, Razumov associates fear with dream, not guilt, and in Part 1 he is adamant that he does not have a conventional conscience. The problem is similar to that encountered in Lord Jim. In order for a character to sense guilt, it is necessary for him to have a code, for the contravention of which he feels remorseful and seeks atonement. As I have pointed out, in Lord Jim, Jim identifies more with the claims of the chivalric code than the seaman's. Jim lapses from heroic status, but he is not as mortified by his contravention of the established maritime code as he is by not being able to live up to his dream, and, hence, the theory which deciphers Lord Jim as a chronicle of guilt is not as sound as has been commonly supposed. Similarly, with regard to Under Western Eyes, it is my contention that Razumov's diary and the narrator's editing up to the point of the confession do not constitute a chronicle of guilt. Rather, the text explores the dreams of a youthful and ambitious Russian with the resulting frustrations of not being able to achieve his goal of personal success within the autocracy. This
egoistic structure of experience is explored in several ways. Obviously, Razumov himself creates his own identity through the journal. I will explore this aspect of character conception later.

For the present, I will continue with the narrator's conception of Razumov's character. It is interesting to recall Schwarz's adjectives, "psychotic," "frenzied," and "self-absorbed," for they can be construed as pejorative synonyms for quixotic. Indeed, I contend that the Professor himself strongly suggests that he sees the Russians as quixotic with the phrase, "In Russia, the land of spectral ideas and disembodied aspirations . . ." (UWE,34). The phrase "disembodied aspirations" is a useful description of quixotism; it prefaces Razumov's espousal of his political ideals. Razumov is frenzied, and because of the psychological trauma of Haldin's intrusion, with its associated threats, Razumov defiantly justifies his own stance, which is a powerful allegiance to autocracy. We learn that he hopes for "the great autocrat of the future" (UWE,35). Later, he elaborates on his own personal ambitions:

Was it possible that he no longer belonged to himself? This was damnable. But why not simply keep on as before? Study. Advance. Work hard as if nothing had happened (and first of all win the Silver Medal), acquire distinction, become a great reforming servant of the greatest of States. Servant, too, of the mightiest homogeneous mass of mankind with a capability for logical, guided development in a brotherly solidarity of force and aim such as the world had never dreamt of . . . the Russian nation! . . . (UWE,301-2)

Razumov constructs his identity in terms of a political ideal, a dream of a strongly led and unified Russia. He aspires to
a position within government so that he can participate in the reform. Not only is the dream the antithesis of Haldin's vision but also, given the reader's later insight into the determination of the revolutionists, is an example of wishful thinking. His depiction of the "homogeneous mass of mankind with a capability for logical, guided development in a brotherly solidarity of force and aim . . ." is nothing other than the impossible dream, and yet such an ideal defines Razumov's commitment.

The wishful thinking is expressed earlier in figurative terms:

(a) "... The seed germinates in the night. Out of the dark soil springs the perfect plant. . . ." (UWE,34)

(b) "What is this Haldin? And what am I? Only two grains of sand. But a great mountain is made up of just two such insignificant grains. . . ." (UWE,36)

The metaphors of "perfect plant" and "great mountain" become the controlling metaphors of his idealistic frame of mind. Because Haldin obviously represents a threat to Razumov's dream, he becomes "the withered member which must be cut off" (UWE,36).

The Professor notes Razumov's effusiveness and accounts for it with an identifiable irony: "Some superior power had inspired him with a flow of masterly argument as certain converted sinners become overwhelmingly loquacious" (UWE,35).

Razumov's metaphorical formulations for the great Russian nation are, of course, quite different from political shrewdness. He is not involved in the establishment; he remains a youthful aspirant. His ideas are immature and represent wishful thinking --the Professor's attitude and the diary entries illustrate the
mentality of a character who has stepped out of the actual world into the fantasy of a dreamer. While frenzied, Razumov calls Ziemanitch a "vile beast" (UWE,30), recalling the Assistant Commissioner of The Secret Agent, who has a strong distaste for ordinary people in an ordinary world, and I contend that it is because his idealistic metaphors for the new State are so deeply embedded in his imagination that he is able to rationalise his beating the peasant as "a sign of intimate union, a pathetically severe necessity of brotherly love" (UWE,35). I am suggesting that Under Western Eyes contains the idealising element common in the previous novels. The Professor notes the idealising tendencies of several of the Russians: he is lenient on Razumov and Natalia, but critical of Peter Ivanovitch. He also makes it quite clear that he recognises the "disembodied" and "inspired" aspects of Razumov's political ideals. His lenience towards Razumov relies on his recognition of the youth's dependence on his natural abilities for a place in the world, whereas his intolerance of Peter Ivanovitch springs from his recognition of the hypocrisy in that character's feminist ideology.

Razumov holds a "discourse with himself" (UWE,35) and this, in turn, illustrates his private notion of conscience:

"Betray. A great word. What is betrayal? They talk of a man betraying his country, his friends, his sweetheart. There must be a moral bond first. All a man can betray is his conscience. And how is my conscience engaged here; by what bond of common faith, of common conviction, am I obliged to let that fanatical idiot drag me down with him? On the contrary—every obligation of true courage is the other way." (UWE,37-38)

The notion of conscience has proved to be an important discussion
point in previous stories and novels. We can remember the birth of a "new conscience" in "The Return," where Hervey transfers from his previous social code to his own private and potentially anarchic notion. The above passage from Razumov's diary resembles Marlow's discussion of Jim's conscience: "... He had a conscience, and it was a romantic conscience..." (LJ,276). Razumov does not accept an inherited code of values that he can be found guilty of contravening; his conscience in the above passage is informed by his personal vision. He searches for a name and, accordingly, is mortified by Haldin's intrusion: "'I want to guide my conduct by reasonable convictions, but what security have I against something—some destructive horror—walking in upon me as I sit here? ...'" (UWE,78). Razumov makes persistent references to his intelligence and the need for reason. As I have shown, his "reasonable convictions" concern his belief in the great autocrat of the future who will unite Russia. Haldin, the threat to that dream is the "destructive horror," the representative of the outer world who thwarts the idealist's quest for the silver medal and a place in the new autocracy.

Razumov's more permanent entry into the revolutionary world he loathes is arranged by Mikulin. The initial interview between Razumov and Mikulin bears some resemblance to the initial contact between Jim and Marlow. In both cases, the older practitioner confronts the youthful idealist. Marlow, initially, is condescending towards Jim ("'Did you expect us all to sit with downcast eyes out of regard for your susceptibilities?'" [LJ,71]). Mikulin also, with his "Socratic forehead" (UWE,90), acts as a counterfoil to Razumov's
enthusiasms with the ironically understated comment, "Listening is a great art" (UWE,92). Razumov dogmatically asserts that "Visionaries work everlasting evil on earth" because of their "disgust of reality" (UWE,95). But, as my previous discussion has shown, Razumov's own version of reality is idealised and conceived metaphorically. It is the inveterate politician's recognition of Razumov's idealised expectations which makes all the more poignant the question ("Where to?" [UWE,99]) at the end of Part 1. The major problem for the idealists in previous novels is that they need a locale, an actual territory, in which to express themselves. Gould has Sulaco, Jim Patusan, but Razumov has only Geneva at the behest of a political expedient.

The text does not allow the reader to designate Razumov as guilty, for there is no stable moral code which he has wittingly and remorsefully violated. Simultaneously, he obeys the law and follows the dictates of his conscience. Even the Professor does not ridicule him, but, on the contrary, gives evidence of sympathy with Razumov's plight through his insistence that this is not the story of Western Europe. Given his isolation and his youthful ideal, Razumov cannot have an "authentic self" at this stage of the novel as Schwarz laments accusingly. In Lord Jim, Jim's authenticity is increased when he has the opportunity to express his ideal, and in that novel and in The Secret Agent, conforming characters are seen to be limited by the narrators. Thus, there is a clear narratorial preference for Jim over Brierly and the Assistant Commissioner over Heat: the idealised self is seen as more invigorating than its more conventional counterpart. Razumov has idealised
ambitions like Gould, Jim, and the Assistant Commissioner, but unlike them he does not have an environment in which he can express his idealised identity. Instead, Mikulin takes advantage of the political opportunity to send the youth into the uncongenial world of Russian exiles, who are intent on destroying the very mechanism which Razumov has hitherto relied upon for the fulfilment of his dreams. That experience provides the many dramatic irony sequences.

In Part 2, 1, the Professor provides an interesting perspective on Russian mysticism. We can recall the narrator of "Karain," who uses theatrical imagery to denote Karain's quixotism. Similarly here, the narrator highlights the theatrical element of Russian mysticism:

(a) I had a very bad time of it till the morning, wakeful with nervous worry and night-marish with the feeling of being mixed up with something theatrical and morbidly affected. (UWE,110)

(b) To us Europeans of the West, all ideas of political plots and conspiracies seem childish, crude inventions for the theatre or a novel. (UWE,109)

He also makes a very important statement about idealism:

"... The most idealistic conceptions of love and forbearance must be clothed in flesh as it were before they can be made understandable" (UWE,106). The Russians' incapacity to "clothe in flesh" their dreams leads to those dreams remaining "disembodied," which, from the Professor's perspective, instigates the theatricality. Accordingly, in a digression, the Professor cites a dichotomy between Eastern and Western mentalities:
I think sometimes that the psychological secret of the profound difference of that people consists in this, that they detest life, the irremediable life of the earth as it is, whereas we westerners cherish it with perhaps an equal exaggeration of its sentimental value. (UWE,104)

There is an implied sympathy in the above passage for Razumov. It works in a similar way to Marlow's sympathy towards Jim in the scene with the globetrotters (Lord Jim, Chapter 7). If Jim is romantic, are not the globetrotters sentimental? Similarly, in "Karain," the narrator at the end of the story, implies that even if Karain is quixotic, the ordinary European lifestyle is dull. However, unlike Marlow, the Professor does not cohere his insights into a consciously ironic strategy. While he has dialectical powers and is tentative about language, he does not construct a deliberately conceived rhetoric of irony. He is more intent on deflecting definitive judgement by the reader on Razumov.

In Part 2, the Professor is overtly critical of Peter Ivanovitch and later of Madame de S—. He is derogatory about Peter Ivanovitch and finds no sympathy for his mystical recounting of the escape; he cuts the story short: "The rest of his escape does not lend itself to mystic treatment and symbolic interpretation" (UWE,125). He is equally dismissive of the carriage trip which "might have possessed a mystic significance, but to the corrupt frivolity of a western mind, like my own, it seemed hardly decent" (UWE,126). The urgency with which Peter Ivanovitch sees feminine sacrifice in noble, idealised terms is decidedly quixotic ("sacred, redeeming tears" (UWE,124), "the sacredness of self-sacrifice and womanly love" [UWE,121]). The narrator finds this perspective
repugnant, knowledgeable about the incongruity between the symbolic terminology and his actual treatment of the dame de compagnie. Madame de S— is no more favoured: she is "avaricious, greedy, and unscrupulous" (UWE, 161).

It is significant that the Professor's disdain for the revolutionaries does not lead him to shelter in the security of Swiss democracy. Indeed, he is as stridently critical of the Swiss couple as Marlow is of the globetrotters in *Lord Jim*.

A comparison is useful:

... I observed a solitary Swiss couple, whose fate was made secure from the cradle to the grave by the perfected mechanism of democratic institutions in a republic that could almost be held in the palm of one's hand. The man, colourlessly uncouth, was drinking beer out of a glittering glass; the woman, rustic and placid, leaning back in the rough chair, gazed idly around. (UWE, 175)

"... There were married couples looking domesticated and bored with each other in the midst of their travels; there were small parties and large parties, and lone individuals dining solemnly or feasting boisterously, but all thinking, conversing, joking, or scowling as was their wont at home; and just as intelligently receptive of new impressions as their trunks upstairs. Henceforth they would be labelled as having passed through this and that place, and so would be their luggage. ..." (LJ, 77)

The irony in the Professor's perspective is specific in intention—he scorns the placidity and idleness induced by security within Swiss democracy. Such a disaffection from the political status quo mirrors Marlow's dissatisfaction with the law courts and heralds a new interest in Razumov, who makes a definite but undefinable impression on the Professor:

I could almost feel on me the weight of his unrefreshed, motionless stare, the stare of
a man who lies unwinking in the dark, angrily passive in the foils of disastrous thoughts. Now, when I know how true it was, I can honestly affirm that this was the effect produced on me. It was painful in a curiously indefinite way. . . . (UWE, 183)

By the end of Part 2, he is definitely Marlovian in his sympathy for Razumov: "The way he had behaved to me could not be put down to mere boorishness. There was something else under his scorn and impatience" (UWE, 197). The Professor's specific irony is directed against the Genevan revolutionaries (with the exception of Sophia Antonovna), who he sees as charlatans, and Swiss democracy; conversely, he reveals a growing albeit ill-defined sympathy for Razumov.

Part 3 continues the sustained dramatic irony sequence incurred by Razumov's presence in Geneva. There is no dramatization of his guilt. Rather, the keynote is his anger. His distemper is described as "a sort of apprehension as if for another, for someone he knew without being able to put a name to the personality" (UWE, 199). It is this kind of disequilibrium which holds the key dramatic interest of this section of the novel and refutes the challenge from Schwarz decrying Razumov's lack of an "authentic self." The self as authentic, in Razumov's terms, cannot flourish in the milieu of the Genevan revolutionaries, and Razumov is thwarted from achieving his ego-ideal. Lord Jim experiences similar anguish as the menial ship's chandler. Razumov's anger, mirroring the Professor's, is directed against the rhetoric of the two verbose revolutionaries. Their mysticism incites his angry curiosity and mental disgust and prompts his sarcastic reply: "'I really have no mind to turn into a dilettante spiritualist."
... Or spend my time in spiritual ecstasies or sublime meditations upon the gospel of feminism" (UWE,226). His contact with Sophia Antonovna is interesting in a similar way to the confrontation between Marlow and Chester in *Lord Jim*. She uses a pattern of imagery which characterises Razumov unfavourably as a self-centred idealist. She accuses him of being "full of self-love" (UWE,243), of cherishing "childish illusions" (UWE,246), of being a "moody egotist" (UWE,269), of flinging himself at "something which does not exist" (UWE,270). She herself is "Stripped of rhetoric, mysticism and theories..." (UWE,261) and finds abhorrent his dream-like state. Significantly, however, she makes no ameliorative impact on Razumov.

The information of the peasant's death does not enhance his sense of guilt, but, on the contrary, makes him relieved that his own position is made more secure ("... An incredible chance has served me. No more need of lies. I shall have only to listen and to keep my scorn from getting the upper hand of my caution" [UWE,284]). The contact with Laspara and the exhortation to write prompt in him a question, "Is it possible that I have a conventional conscience?" (UWE,286). But he rejects "that hypothesis with scorn" (UWE,288). Having asserted his independence, he is solitary. It is significant that, as at the end of Part 2, here at the end of Part 3, the Professor is emphatically sympathetic towards the isolated youth: "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,292).

Part 4, 2 - 4, provides difficult interpretative problems,
given the preceding narrative. The early part of Part 4 confirms Razumov's despair. He is swamped by a sense of futility and lack of reality in his mission. Whereas, previously, Razumov had found no difficulty in accounting for the beating of Ziemanitch in idealised terms, he now lacks the capability of idealising his behaviour: "The futility of all this overcame him like a curse. Even then he could not believe in the reality of his mission. He looked round despairingly, as if for some way to redeem his existence from that unconquerable feeling" (UWE, 316). His idealised vision of political success can no longer be nurtured, and the Professor notes this figuratively: "... he had the expression of a somnambulist struggling with the very dream which drives him forth to wander in dangerous places" (UWE, 317).

The effect of Razumov's untenable idealism is not only to render him incapable of sustaining his vision but also to unsettle the narrator: "The Westerner in me was discomposed" (UWE, 317). This is the sort of understanding given to Jim by Marlow, who confesses to a doubt in the fixed standard of conduct after his contact with Jim. However, for this narrator, the effect of discomposure remains intuitive and not also incorrigibly intellectual. The deliberately stated ambivalence towards quixotism is made part of a consciously dialectical scrutiny in Lord Jim and in The Secret Agent, but here the sporadic flashes of identification and discomposure do not lead to further thorough scrutiny but only to tentative theorising about the difference between East and West or to apologetic digressions. Nevertheless, the effect of the narrator's disclosure is that sympathy is generously extended to the young
Russian not only at this late stage but also right throughout the retrospective account, as I have illustrated.

Razumov's confession has two phases--his conversation with Natalia and his diary entry. In both instances, it is the first time in the novel that there has been any indication that he has felt guilty. But, in both the conversation and the diary, he stresses the notion of a man pursuing an "idea":

(a) "... There is a staircase in it, and even phantoms, but that does not matter if a man always serves something greater than himself—the idea. . . ." (UWE,353)

(b) "... I, too, had my guiding idea. . . ." (UWE,358)

The notion of following the idea has been a significant element of the novels hitherto discussed. Most significantly, we can recall Marlow's lauding the Roman imperialism because there was "An idea at the back of it . . . something you can set up, and bow down before and offer a sacrifice to . . ." (HD,51).

Idealised venturesomeness has, of course, been the predominant component of quixotism studied in this thesis. Here Razumov explicitly reveals a major aspect of his own psychology—the "idea" of personal success in an idealised, reforming autocracy of the future.

It is important to stress the idealising aspect of Razumov's psychology, for he is no mere political aspirant like General T—, whom Razumov recognises as a mean-spirited bureaucrat. But his personal quest and commitment to a vision have been thwarted by his contact with Natalia and her "trustful eyes" (UWE,349), and we cannot underestimate the effect on Razumov of love, hitherto unexplored in the narrative.
He tells her: "... Of you he said that you had trustful
eyes. And why I have not been able to forget that phrase I
don't know ..." (UWE, 349). He writes in the diary:

"... And your pure forehead! ...
It was as if your pure brow bore a light
which fell on me, searched my heart and
saved me from ignominy, from ultimate
undoing. ... Your light! your truth!
I felt that I must tell you that I had
ended by loving you. ..." (UWE, 361)

After this diary entry he concedes to a guilt for his betrayal
of Haldin ("betrayed most basely" [UWE, 361]), but this
confession does not signal a straightforward change of
allegiance from a commitment to his personal vision to a
conventional regret at his betrayal, for at the end of the diary
he writes: "... Only don't be deceived, Natalia Victorovna,
I am not converted. Have I then the soul of a slave? No!
I am independent—and therefore perdition is my lot"
(UWE, 361-62). After the confession, he reiterates this
independence: "... To-day of all days since I came amongst
you, I was made safe, and to-day I made myself free from
falsehood, from remorse—independent of every single human
being on this earth" (UWE, 368).

The notions of independence and guilt are mutually
exclusive elements from different frames of reference.
Independence is at the heart of his personal quest. Guilt is
the latterly introduced aftermath of the betrayal, discovered
in himself through his affection for Natalia. The confession
does not arise easily out of the preceding narrative, for, as
I have indicated, the actual text illustrates that the novel
deals with the frustrated quest of an ambitious Russian youth.
Only in the final pages does the other drama surface—a covert love bond which brings Razumov out of his isolation into a recognition of his betrayal and the accompanying moral alarm. However, a straightforward transition from one structure of experience to another does not occur—he remains unashamedly independent. The novel educates Razumov into paradox—the kind of indestructible paradox that has been introduced much earlier in previous Conradian novels and then established as the basis of dialectical thinking. Nevertheless, the irresolution of some of the previous novels remains—the reader witnesses the torture of a self-conceived idealist, stubbornly holding on to his prized independence, but submitting to confession. Unlike Marlow's two early narratives or that of The Secret Agent, the Professor does not begin with paradox and then indulge in the dialectical processes by which the polar elements are diagnosed and then subject to debate, but, as an elderly, retrospective narrator, his narratorial ambitions are less pretentious: he admits ignorance of Russian idealism and affords opportunities for the reader to be lenient on Razumov's quest for personal identity.

It needs to be stressed that in this novel Razumov does have idealised expectations about his identity. This idealism arises explicitly out of his belief in the "great autocrat of the future" who will lead a governing body in which he (Razumov) will play a part. He shares an obsessional psychology with Jim or Almayer or Gould and because of his "excited imagination" he loathes the representatives of the ordinary world. Because his psychology is controlled by the ideal of the perfect state he sees Ziemianitch as a "vile beast" and Haldin as a "withered
member." The destructive world of the revolutionaries makes assaults on his political vision, but it does not undermine that vision. In *Lord Jim*, Jim's romantic morale is not irrevocably dampened by the collision or later by the political factions on Patusan; in *Nostromo*, Gould holds on to his dream of the mine's success to the point where he is prepared to destroy it rather than surrender it. These two novels explore the tenacious, obsessional psychology of Quixotes who strive to reach the goals of their ego-ideal.

In *Under Western Eyes*, Razumov never gets the opportunity to begin reaching his goal, because he finds himself in the very opposite milieu to that which he desired and is left confronting the absurdity of his position.

The critics who are morally aghast at Razumov's behaviour do not consider sufficiently the dilemmas faced by the idealist, for, as he explains, he had his guiding idea. But the novel progresses to the point where he finds himself in a contradictory psychological state. He realises through his love for Natalia that he is bound to the group, and yet he insists on his independence. The function of the irony is not to explore existence in terms of contradictory perspectives or paradoxical vision, but to forestall presumptuous criticism of Razumov and show the intelligent, youthful, political aspirant's discovery of the polarities with which Marlow began.

*Chance* is interesting in the context of this thesis because it contains two of the significant ingredients of the irony in Conrad's fiction: quixotism and Marlow. The novel is subdivided into two parts by the chivalric images of "The
Damsel" and "The Knight," which are, as Hewitt says, "fairly obviously, ironic titles; this, we are to infer, is how Anthony sees the situation; we have been told that he inherited an excessive tendency towards the conception of chivalry from his father."13 Chance has the same narrator as Lord Jim, but there are important differences between the irony of each narration. Moser writes: "What Marlow's irony shows most conspicuously is his lack of rapport with the story he is hearing and recounting. . . . In Lord Jim, Marlow helps Jim actively throughout the novel. . . . Marlow's role in Chance is much simpler: he never even sees the hero, Captain Anthony; he talks with the heroine once, briefly. . . . In short, Marlow is neither personally involved nor morally threatened by the subject."14 It is indeed Marlow's lack of involvement with the major characters which ensures a change in the irony. As I have pointed out, Marlow's contact with Jim instils in him a doubt about commitment to a fixed standard of conduct. That doubt sustains the double irony. In Chance the characteristic self-reflectiveness of the early novel disappears, and, finally, Marlow is ironically reductive of Anthony's chivalry.

The novel begins with the kind of anti-bourgeois invective that is frequently evident in Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness. The frame narrator, an unidentified third party to the conversation between Powell and Marlow, recounts Powell's criticism of the "shore gang":

This universal inefficiency of what he called "the shore gang" he ascribed in general to the want of responsibility and to a sense of security.

"They see," he went on, "that no matter
what they do this tight little island won't turn turtle with them or spring a leak and go to the bottom with their wives and children." (C,4)

The frame narrator also records the "lively exchange of reminiscences" (C,4) between Marlow and Powell, in which, in a manner recalling the nostalgia of Youth, the two agree "that the happiest time in their lives was as youngsters in good ships... They agreed also as to the proudest moment they had known in that calling which is never embraced on rational and practical grounds, because of the glamour of its romantic associations" (C,4). It is a similar criticism of the "shore gang" in Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness, in conjunction with the "romantic associations" of the quests of Jim and Kurtz, which instigates the dialectical irony in these early narratives. We are also told in Part 1, Chapter 1, of Chance that Marlow "had the habit of pursuing general ideas in a peculiar manner, between jest and earnest" (C,23). (However, in this novel, several critics find overbearing Marlow's penchant for generalisations.15) Powell comments on Marlow: "'He's the sort that's always chasing some notion or other round and round his head just for the fun of the thing!'" (C,33).

In colloquial terms, Powell describes the chief characteristic of an ironist who is acutely aware of the reflective disjunction, and who persistently attempts to achieve a dialectical irony. However, the novel does not contain the intellectual agility of Marlow's previous narrations. There is a disillusion in his perspective not noted earlier:

(a) "In a general way it's very difficult for one to become remarkable. People won't take sufficient notice of one, don't you know. . . ." (C,7-8)
(b) "... Mediocrity is our mark..." (C,23)

Although it is also "very difficult for one to become remarkable" in Heart of Darkness, Marlow persistently attempts to persuade his audience that Kurtz was "remarkable," and there is no indication that he accepts mediocrity to be an unchangeable characteristic.

Some intellectual subtlety is lost by Marlow's recurring references to the influence of chance in human affairs. By stressing that chance events represent the major determinants of an individual's destiny, Marlow effectively does away with the possibility of the quixotic will being a major determinant in the formation of an identity. By way of contrast, we can recall Jim's use of the word chance in Lord Jim, where he several times refers to his missed chance as the loss of opportunity for heroism. Another difference between the Marlow of Chance and of the other two novels is his concentration on feminine characters in the later novel. In Part 1, particularly, his contact with Flora, Flora's governess, and Mrs Fyne generates the frequent generalisations concerning women and feminine psychology. His comments are not solely those of a misogynist. As Hewitt says, "He frequently combines a rather obvious irony—'The pluck of women! The optimism of the dear creatures'—with a tone of rapt adoration." Hewitt also concludes that Marlow's generalisations "are not ones which can lay bare any profound moral or psychological or spiritual issues; they exist rather to cast a haze of romance and mystery over certain aspects of his theme." Nevertheless, Marlow's revelations about Mrs Fyne's feminist doctrine do more than "cast a haze of romance and mystery" over his thoughts on
women. Her conviction that "no scruples should stand in the way of a woman . . . from taking the shortest cut towards securing for herself the easiest possible existence" (C,59) provides Flora with a rationale for marrying Anthony, and the conviction stands in ironic contrast to Anthony's chivalry.

Marlow's intransigence concerning certain convictions is another contributor to the change in irony. When he introduces the subject of Flora's governess, he generalises about the difference between men and women:

"... For if we men try to put the spaciousness of all experiences into our reasoning and would fain put the Infinite itself into our love, it isn't, as some writer has remarked, 'It isn't women's doing.' Oh, no. They don't care for these things. . . ." (C,93)

Soon after, the frame narrator intervenes inquisitively:

"Do you really believe what you have said?"
I asked, meaning no offence, because with Marlow one never could be sure. (C,94)

Marlow replies:

"Only on certain days of the year," said Marlow with a malicious smile. "To-day I have been simply trying to be spacious and I perceive I've managed to hurt your susceptibilities which are consecrated to women. . . ." (C,94)

Marlow's reply hints at the oscillation prevalent in his early narratives; it also recalls his tendency to challenge the illusions, the "susceptibilities" of his audience, in this case the frame narrator. As we noted in the discussion of Heart of Darkness, Marlow's challenge to his audience foreshadows the flourishing of a dialectical irony, but that kind of irony does
not eventuate here. Marlow speaks of the feminine capacity for preserving "illusions":

"... I will point out again that an Irrelevant world would be very amusing, if the women would take care to make it as charming as they alone can, by preserving for us certain well-known, well-established, I'll almost say hackneyed, illusions, without which the average male creature cannot get on..." (C,94)

We can recall the discussion of illusions in Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim, where the efficacy of such illusions for preservation of personal and social stability is acknowledged, but in the two early narratives Marlow's extolling the virtues of such illusions represents only one aspect of a complex psyche which constantly seeks to shatter the veneer, the "fine tissue" (C,94) of social stability. In Chance, Marlow does not persist with the intellectual challenge provided by the reflective disjunction. Indeed, when the challenge occurs, he strongly rejects it. In discussing the distraught Flora's loss of security, he says:

"... Luckily, people, whether mature or not mature (and who really is ever mature?), are for the most part quite incapable of understanding what is happening to them: a merciful provision of nature to preserve an average amount of sanity for working purposes in this world..." (C,117)

The frame narrator intrudes in order to ask what those with understanding can use that commodity for:

"But we, my dear Marlow, have the inestimable advantage of understanding what is happening to others," I struck in. "Or at least some of us seem to. Is that too a provision of nature? And what is it for? Is it that we
may amuse ourselves gossiping about each other's affairs? You, for instance, seem—" (C,117)

Marlow replies:

"I don't know what I seem . . . and surely life must be amused somehow. It would be still a very respectable provision if it were only for that end. But from that same provision of understanding, there springs in us compassion, charity, indignation, the sense of solidarity; and in minds of any largeness an inclination to that indulgence which is next to affection. . . ." (C,117-18)

We can see from Marlow's interaction with the frame narrator in the above piece that his use of the word sanity is similar to Paul de Man's usage. Marlow's reply to the question concerning the use of understanding confirms that from his point of view it has the function of providing the amusement of gossip and the social value of a "sense of solidarity." As we have seen in the earlier narratives, it also has the function of generating an incorrigible reflective disjunction, but that option is not discussed here. On the contrary, Marlow had earlier postulated that "A well-stocked intelligence weakens the impulse to action; an overstocked one leads gently to idiocy" (C,62). Such an aphorism has the effect of corroborating the ill-defined advocacy of action by the narrator of Nostromo.

Nevertheless, Marlow's focus does not remain entirely univocal. When considering Flora's governess he does not concentrate solely on her evil, but sees her behaviour in terms of repressed emotion:

"... Why shouldn't a governess have passions, all the passions, even that of libertinage, and
even ungovernable passions; yet suppressed by the very same means which keep the rest of us in order: early training—necessity—circumstances—fear of consequences; till there comes an age, a time when the restraint of years becomes intolerable—and infatuation irresistible . . ." (C,103)

". . . No! I will say the years, the passionate, bitter years, of restraint, the iron, admirably mannered restraint at every moment, in a never-failing correctness of speech, glances, movements, smiles, gestures, establishing for her a high reputation, an impressive record of success in her sphere. It had been like living half strangled for years. . . ." (C,120)

We are well used to Marlow's criticism of restrained living in the early novels and his recognition that such restraint is stifling. His preparedness to be sympathetic to her following her passions indicates that he still has the capacity to evaluate behaviour in terms of Gekoski's tension between notions of personal vision and social responsibility. The vengeful governess is a rare woman in Conrad's fiction, for, as Marlow depicts her, she is "a woman uncommon enough to live without illusions" (C,104). She breaks the news to Flora of de Barral's disgrace in a brutal fashion, which gives her "an atrocious satisfaction" (C,121):

"And all this torture for nothing, in the end! What looked at last like a possible prize (oh, without illusions! but still a prize) broken in her hands, fallen in the dust, the bitter dust, of disappointment, she revelled in the miserable revenge. . . ." (C,120)

Loss of restraint culminates in suicide for Brierly of Lord Jim and death for Fresleven in Heart of Darkness. For the governess, the loss of restraint ends in the brutal treatment of Flora. Marlow's interest in the psychology of the governess
reveals that he is still able to evaluate in terms other than those relating to moral admonishment (in a manner reminiscent of his preparedness to see Brown as a complex figure in *Lord Jim*), but such an unusual perspective occurs only sporadically in *Chance*.

Marlow had earlier said that understanding breeds compassion or a sense of solidarity, but he is directly critical of the people in Part 1, Chapter 7, who file past Flora and him on the pavement:

"Every moment people were passing close by us singly, in twos and threes; the inhabitants of that end of the town where life goes on unadorned by grace or splendour; they passed us in their shabby garments, with sallow faces, haggard, anxious or weary, or simply without expression, in an unsmiling sombre stream not made up of lives but of mere unconsidered existences whose joys, struggles, thoughts, sorrows and their very hopes were miserable, glamourless, and of no account in the world. And when one thought of their reality to themselves one's heart became oppressed. . . ."

(C,208)

Amidst his speculations on the drabness of most of the people's lives, he contends: "'... in the presence of a young girl I always become convinced that the dreams of sentiment—like the consoling mysteries of Faith—are invincible; that it is never, never reason which governs men and women'" (C,206). Then, after having discussed the "Magic Signs" of love between a man and a woman, he argues that men, "whose generations have evolved an ideal woman, are often very timid. Who wouldn't be before the ideal?" (C,217). There is evidence in these citations that Marlow accords the notions of dreams and ideals a genuine status, and the prospect of his endorsing Anthony's dream offers the possibility of a sequel to his endorsement of
Jim's. Indeed, he provides explicit endorsement through acknowledging his understanding of Anthony's desire for love:

"'And for a moment I understood the desire of that man to whom the sea and sky of his solitary life had appeared suddenly incomplete without that glance which seemed to belong to them both . . . ." (C,231). Romantic love remains a possible means of overcoming the characteristic isolation of the individual, and Marlow sees Anthony's burgeoning relationship with Flora in quixotic terms: Anthony is "the rescuer of the most forlorn damsel of modern times" (C,238).

Part 2 of Chance contains the accounts of the unconsummated marriage, the attempt at poisoning, the reconciliatory embrace, and the accidental drowning. Constantly in this part of the novel, Marlow uses quixotic imagery. He frequently refers to Anthony's chivalry, and his use of quixotic references contains a mixture of sentimental support and critical repudiation. Marlow says that Anthony "could only have an ideal conception of his position. An ideal is often but a flaming vision of reality" (C,262). But, although this comment shows little sympathy for the idealising imagination, he later says: "... We are the creatures of our light literature much more than is generally suspected . . . [and] the captain of a ship at sea is a remote, inaccessible creature, something like a prince of a fairy-tail . . . ." (C,288). At this stage of the novel we can agree with Guérard's claim that "The critical and ironic spirit is thus undermined by another and more sentimental one, prepared to take Captain Anthony very seriously."¹⁸ Marlow's metaphorical characterisation of the captain as "something like
a prince of a fairy-tale" is offered without irony or any other indication of criticism.

Eventually, however, that criticism occurs:

"... And I know also that a passion, dominating or tyrannical, invading the whole man and subjugating all his faculties to its own unique end, may conduct him whom it spurs and drives, into all sorts of adventures, to the brink of unfathomable dangers, to the limits of folly, and madness, and death. . . ."
(C,329)

Marlow has argued this point before, but here he uses the words "folly," "madness," and "death," pejoratively and in terms of the inevitably dire consequences of aroused passion. He has already used these ideas in Heart of Darkness: folly, concerning the Russian; madness, concerning Kurtz; death, concerning Fresleven. But there the irony contains the complex response of double irony, with which he scrutinises the salutary, as well as the pernicious, aspects of passionate expression. His final view of Anthony confirms his repudiation of the quixotic lover:

"... My view is that the utter falseness of his, I may say, aspirations, the vanity of grasping the empty air, had come to him with an overwhelming force, leaving him disarmed before the other's mad and sinister sincerity. . . ." (C,429)

This ending stands in marked contrast to Marlow's final assessment of Jim, which is clearly ambivalent. That ending also provides a significant contribution to a discussion of the differences between the Marlow of Lord Jim and the Marlow of Chance. Although Marlow claims at the end of Lord Jim that Jim is only "a disembodied spirit astray amongst the passions
of this earth," he also says: "'... there are days when the reality of his existence comes to me with an immense, with an overwhelming force ...'" (LJ,416). Anthony does not make anything like the same impact on Marlow in Chance: we can recall that Marlow had never met him. His comments on Anthony occur as reflections on what others have told him. There are indications that Marlow harbours some sympathy for the idealistic Anthony and understands his romantic impulses, but eventually his rhetoric points out the destructiveness and futility of the idealising imagination. The sustained double irony of Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness disappears. This difference in irony occurs because Marlow is not prepared to develop the subtle techniques of scrutiny into idealism. In Chance he affirms that understanding should issue in the "sense of solidarity" (C,117), whereas, in Lord Jim, the whole novel reverberates with Marlow's "doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct" (LJ,50), and the eager search for invigorating modes of personal expression establishes the dialectical irony. Here only sporadic sympathy is offered towards Anthony until, finally, the futility of his quest is exposed.

As I have shown, the contradictions and apparent inconsistencies of the Marlovian perspective recur in Chance, but they do not cohere into a deliberately constructed paradox, as they do in the two early narratives. He advocates a sense of solidarity, but is prepared to see Flora's governess in complex terms; he suggests that understanding should lead to compassion, but is condemnatory of the shore people; he admits to sympathising with Anthony's romantic urges, but eventually
savagely berates him. Marlow is not able to amalgamate his
capacity for dual responses into a deliberately conceived
rhetoric of irony because, as Moser argues, he is neither
personally involved nor morally threatened by the subject of
the novel.

Secor's discussion of *Victory* in quixotic terms provides
an obvious starting point for a scrutiny of that novel:

In its parodied form, romance merges with
the quixotic phase of satire, whose central
theme "is the setting of ideas and
generalizations and theories and dogmas
over against the life they are supposed to
explain" (Frye, 235). The quixotic phase
of satire, then, like the demonic use of
parody, finds real life mocking the purely
conceptual. . . . Heyst physically
resembles Quixote, rescues damsels in
distress, and turns reality into his own
distorted conception of it. He is a romantic
figure, as Hewitt and Guérard complain, but
only in the ironic sense that Quixote is
romantic. Both Heyst and Quixote are
therefore made to renounce their romantic
misconceptions, and Heyst's final cry of
realization has its analogue in Quixote's
renunciation on his deathbed.19

This analysis explicitly states that quixotic irony is solely
parodic. However, as I will show, Heyst is a more complex
figure than a simple romantic, and the treatment given him by
the narrator accords him at least temporary status. The
single-minded attitude by Secor towards the quixotic imagination
is reminiscent of Tanner's, in his discussion of *Lord Jim*. The
reason for Secor's privileging parody as the predominant ironic
mode is evident elsewhere. He agrees with Leavis's assumption
that reality for Conrad was, above all, social:
Heyst thus chooses to be "shut up in a world of his own" (232) on an insulated island of self. Denying all humanity outside himself, Heyst loses the sense of reality established by social involvement. As Leavis says, Conrad was "deeply aware of the sense in which reality is social, something established and sustained in a kind of collaboration."20

Obviously, if this disapprobation towards solitariness is held by the critic, Heyst is inevitably the target for specific irony. Indeed, the interpretative bias of Secor is further revealed in his discussion of Lena, who he says has "immersed herself in the destructive element of her dream, and she never awakens from it."21 Secor's bias sees the dream itself as an aberration, and it is this interpretation, which, given the actual narratorial perspective, I see as erroneous.

It is always necessary, in regard to irony, as I have stressed throughout this thesis, to come to terms with the narratorial perspective. The narrator of this novel is unidentified, but, in his collusion with Davidson, he seems to be a kind of merchant. The narrator does not unequivocally dismiss Heyst as a romantic fop, although, initially, Heyst is described in quixotic terms. But he is more than a dreamer; he is also a sceptic, and in his capacity for dreaming and scepticism he resembles Decoud. Initially, Heyst is described as "inert" (V,3), but, an important distinction is made concerning his eccentricity. He is seen not as "mad" (V,4), but as "queer" (V,4). It is a significant distinction to make, and the narrator himself insists upon it ("there is a tremendous difference between the two" [V,4]). This is a linguistic subtlety which indicates a narratorial flexibility in a similar manner to Marlow's distinction between the words
"mad" and "lunatic" in his discussion of Kurtz in Heart of Darkness.

Direct chivalric language is associated with Heyst. He describes himself as "enchanted" (V,6), but, in characterising Heyst as quixotic, the narrator's language indicates a tentativeness: "Perhaps that was it. A man who could propose, even playfully, to quench old McNab's thirst must have been an utopist, a pursuer of chimeras. . . . And, may be, this was the reason why he was generally liked" (V,9). Heyst himself acknowledges that he is "enchanted" with the islands, and, in Chapter 2, Morrison is also described as an "enchanted" man (V,10). With the meeting of the two characters, the irony is parodic. It singles out as ineffective the chivalric rituals of the two characters. Morrison, with his gentility, "was understood to be doing well with her [Capricorn], except for the drawback of too much altruism" (V,10). The meeting between the two characters is described in terms of "a prince addressing another prince" (V,12), and Morrison sees Heyst as an "angel from on high" (V,16). But, although Heyst is able to act out a chivalric ritual, the narrator points out that his formalised courtesy is inadequate for Morrison's plight: "Consummate politeness is not the right tonic for emotional collapse" (V,18).

After Morrison's death, Heyst's disappearance prompts this response by the narrator: "The enchanted Heyst! Had he at last broken the spell?" (V,25). He says also: "We were too indifferent to wonder over-much" (V,25-26). This comment is significant because it provides evidence of the kind of collective narratorial perspective which is predominant in The
Nigger of the "Narcissus" and Nostromo. We can remember that in both these novels we are confronted with contradictory narrators, who are torn between opposing allegiances--between the narcissistic Wait and the dutiful crew or between the quixotic Gould and his socially committed wife. The narrator of Victory is similarly torn between opposing allegiances; dual responses are evident in his discussion of Davidson's attitude to Heyst:

Davidson, a good, simple fellow in his way, was strangely affected. It is to be noted that he knew very little of Heyst. He was one of those whom Heyst's finished courtesy of attitude and intonation most strongly disconcerted. He himself was a fellow of fine feeling, I think, though of course he had no more polish than the rest of us. We were naturally a hail-fellow-well-met crowd, with standards of our own—no worse, I daresay, than other people's; but polish was not one of them. (V,29)

The narrator attempts to separate himself from Davidson ("a good, simple fellow"), but he also defines his own sensibility, together with Davidson's, in terms of membership of a homogeneous group ("hail-fellow-well-met crowd"). This is a similar problem to that encountered in The Nigger of the "Narcissus", where the subtle intelligence of the crew-member does not represent the view of the corporate mentality. However, the separation of the narrator from the larger group comes when the narrator discusses Davidson's label "hermit" for Heyst ("'... He's a hermit in the wilderness now... .'." [V,30-31]).

The narrator's intelligence is much more discriminating:

But apparently Heyst was not a hermit by temperament. The sight of his kind was not invincibly odious to him. . . . But this
reappearance shows that his detachment from the world was not complete. And incompleteness of any sort leads to trouble. . . . He had not the hermit's vocation! That was the trouble, it seems. (V, 31)

In contrast to the narrator's disagreement with Davidson's assessment of Heyst, Secor sees Davidson's character as representative of the world of actuality against which Heyst is judged. In seeking authority for such a claim, Secor quotes other critics, firstly West and Stallman, and secondly Leavis:

The entire first section serves to give us a solid footing as we enter the novel. It achieves a "life-like actuality" as the reader enters the recognizable circle of gossip, and in its closing pages the solid presence of Davidson—"upright, sensitive and humane . . . , in whom seems to be present a whole background of routine sanity and decency"—re-enforces this sense of actuality.22

Following on from Leavis's assumption that reality is social, Secor also asserts that "Heyst is to some extent the innocent victim of slander, fear, and jealousy, but he is fully a creature of this guilty world and only more guilty in his attempt to deny human kinship."23 But neither Davidson's view nor Secor's is upheld at this stage by the narrator, who, by differentiating Heyst from Davidson and sensitively disagreeing with the latter's label of hermit, sees Heyst as being caught in a general predicament ("And incompleteness of any sort leads to trouble" [V, 31]). There is sufficient discrimination in the narrator to see more thoroughly the consequences of such a word as "hermit" and that the word does not easily apply to Heyst. This sort of subtlety follows from his earlier differentiation between the words "mad" and "queer," and the
consequences of the incompleteness are explored thoroughly later on.

Heyst's disaffection from the social world is revealed in explicit terms to the uncomprehending Davidson:

"... I suppose I have done a certain amount of harm, since I allowed myself to be tempted into action. It seemed innocent enough, but all action is bound to be harmful. It is devilish. That is why this world is evil upon the whole. But I have done with it! I shall never lift a little finger again. At one time I thought that intelligent observation of facts was the best way of cheating the time which is allotted to us whether we want it or not; but now I have done with observation, too." (V,54)

The narrator accurately points out: "Imagine poor, simple Davidson being addressed in such terms ..." (V,54). A complex figure emerges in the above self-portrait. We have the task of comprehending an enigmatical character, who denies the validity of action while performing actions (assisting Morrison and Lena).

In Part 2, the narrator raises Heyst's predicament to a general level rather than uses it as a target for parody or admonishment. The narrator makes a distinction between the "common" (V,65) run of men and Heyst: "His scornful temperament, beguiled into action, suffered from failure in a subtle way unknown to men accustomed to grapple with the realities of a common human enterprise" (V,65). Heyst is depicted as a dreamer and a "wanderer" (V,66). Then the narrator describes the contradictory position of Heyst in his wanting solitude and his loathing the loneliness:

And though he had made up his mind to retire from the world in hermit fashion, yet he was
irrationally moved by this sense of loneliness which had come to him in the hour of renunciation. It hurt him. Nothing is more painful than the shock of sharp contradictions that lacerate our intelligence and our feelings. (V, 66-67)

Heyst's leap into action differentiates him from his father, who had advocated and instilled in his son a "contemptuous, inflexible negation of all effort" (V, 173). Following on from his father, Heyst's life ought to have been a "masterpiece of aloofness" (V, 174). This principle of detachment, as advocated by Heyst's father, is more complex than a derogatory evasion of one's social responsibility, for it is allied to a "form of contempt which is called pity" (V, 174), and, accordingly, fits into the tradition of the Lady Patroness's and the Assistant Commissioner's advocacy and practice of social detachment in The Secret Agent. The narrator again sympathetically divorces himself from Davidson's perspective on Heyst's following the parental dictum, which leads to isolation:

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 own contempt of the usual coarse a\v{}iments which life offers to the common appetites of men. (V, 177)

This kind of contempt for "common appetites" is shared by Marlow in Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim, and Chance; it also forms part of the satirical perspective of the narrator of The Secret Agent, which contains several antisocial tracts. Heyst himself is contemptuous of a world "where men and women go by thick as dust, revolving and jostling one another like figures cut out of cork and weighted with lead just sufficiently to keep them
in their proudly upright posture" (V,175).

Heyst does not remain committed to his father's philosophy of contemptuous non-action. While the narrator clearly understands the dilemma of Heyst, who acts while espousing non-action, he does not sustain sympathy for the contradictory character. In commenting on Heyst's complex position, he eventually says:

But at the same time he could not help being temperamentally, from long habit and from set purpose, a spectator still, perhaps a little less na"ive but . . . not much more far-sighted than the common run of men. Like the rest of us who act. . . . (V,185-86)

At this point, like the narrator of Nostromo, he privileges action in the action versus scepticism debate, even though he has illustrated that he can understand Heyst's predicament and the genuine contradiction involved. From this point, the characterisation of Heyst concentrates on his relationship with Lena, which is similar to the relationship between Decoud and Antonia—in both cases, the male sceptic finds consolation in feminine affection. There are references to his dependence upon Lena and the relationship:

\[ \begin{align*}
(a) & \quad \text{Every time she spoke to him she seemed to abandon to him something of herself—something excessively subtle and inexpressible, to which he was infinitely sensible, which he would have missed horribly if she were to go away.} \\
& \quad \text{(V,188)} \\
(b) & \quad \text{He felt intensely aware of her personality. . . . The peculiar timbre of her voice . . . would have given interest to the most inane chatter.} \\
& \quad \text{(V,192)}
\end{align*} \]
Even though Heyst is intellectually against forming ties ("... he who forms a tie is lost" [V,199-200]), a legacy of his father's philosophy, the narrator is adamant that the relationship with Lena gives Heyst "a greater sense of his own reality than he had ever known in all his life" (V,200). Later he insists that Heyst's "cherished negations were falling off him one by one" (V,222).

From this point of the intensification of the relationship between Lena and Heyst, the narrator shows that Heyst is caught up in a quixotic world wherein he clings to his dream of sanctuary and refuses to acknowledge the reality of the marauding villains. Secor comments on Heyst's quixotism:

We feel responsive to Heyst's sensitivity, to his distaste for the garish world the opening narrator names but does not question. To this extent Heyst appears superior to the ordinary man. But to the extent that the world he desires and creates is a dream world, impossible and unreal, he must be seen as an ironic figure as well, and in the impossibility of his quixotic world lies his inevitable failure. 24

Because the narrator is careful to differentiate his own view from Davidson's, Heyst is portrayed as being in a genuine predicament, and therefore the irony levelled against him is not merely specific irony, as Secor's term "ironic figure" suggests. However, difficulty arises with the narratorial perspective, as it does in Nostromo, for the subtle analysis of Heyst's complex character is not sustained. Heyst is initially characterised as romantic, then sceptical, and finally flagrantly quixotic, when he attempts to cocoon Lena and himself from the outside world. His utterances gradually confirm the extent of his delusion concerning his illusory
world of love and isolation. Although Heyst can accurately name the kind of people arriving on the island ("evil intelligence, instinctive savagery . . . brute force" [V,329]), he cannot take the necessary practical action to thwart their intrusion. Instead, he attempts to deny their existence and calls them "fantasms from the sea—apparitions, chimaeras" (V,329).

With the disappearance of the revolver, Heyst sees that his means of defence has been removed. He uses figurative language, somewhat knowingly, to define his position:

"... I have managed to refine everything away. I've said to the Earth that bore me: 'I am I and you are a shadow.' And, by jove, it is so! But it appears that such words cannot be uttered with impunity. Here I am on a Shadow inhabited by Shades. How helpless a man is against the Shades! How is one to intimidate, persuade, resist, assert oneself against them? I have lost all belief in realities. . . ." (V,350)

Unlike Jim with his dream of heroism or The Professor of The Secret Agent with his dream of the perfect detonator or the Assistant Commissioner with his belief in the Lady Patroness, Heyst can no longer sustain a belief in his dream which he can use to assert himself against the world he describes as a "Shadow" inhabited by "Shades." His philosophical scepticism has overpowered him in much the same way that Decoud could no longer maintain his belief in his love for Antonia. His dream has gone, and his submission to the destructive forces of his own scepticism and of the outer envoys is complete. He can only lamely assert: "'You people . . . are divorced from all reality in my eyes'" (V,364), before he eventually renounces his quixotic world:
All the objects in there—the books, the gleam of old silver familiar to him from boyhood, the very portrait on the wall—seemed shadowy, unsubstantial, the dumb accomplices of an amazing dream-plot ending in an illusory effect of awakening and the impossibility of ever closing his eyes again. (V,403)

The later fiction demonstrates the difference between its treatment of paradox and that of the early Marlow and the narrator of *The Secret Agent*. Although the language of duality is established to some extent in each of the novels and story discussed, it is used at best to establish a general irony. As I have shown, once the notion of tension between two systems is derived, it becomes a matter of what the narrator does with it. With the early Marlow and the narrator of *The Secret Agent*, the tension is construed into an internal paradox, which becomes the perceptual base for the novels, *Lord Jim*, *Heart of Darkness* and *The Secret Agent*. However, the tension, while explicitly established, is not internalised by the later narrators, and hence the extensive irony of manner, leading to Romantic irony, does not eventuate.

The young narrator of *The Secret Sharer* ostensibly uses his experience with Leggatt in a manner akin to Marlow after his meeting with Jim. However, the young narrator's attitude towards his experience at the beginning and the end of that tale indicates that he uses the retelling as a means of exorcising the ghost of doubt about the fixed standard of conduct. This is the doubt that Marlow identifies, but cannot exorcise in the early fiction.

In *Under Western Eyes*, the predominant ironic mode is dramatic irony, which arises out of Razumov's stay with the
uncongenial company of the exiled revolutionaries. As I have suggested, Razumov initially conceives of his political ideal in highly figurative terms, which the Professor sees as an example of disembodied aspiration, and with the Professor's insistence that ideals should be "clothed in flesh" (UWE,106), we witness the fragility of Razumov's controlling metaphors once he is thrust into the vicious world of revolutionaries. The novel dramatizes the frustrations of an idealist, who far from expressing his dream, is thwarted by the very forces he disdains. Jim has Patusan, Gould Costaguana, but Razumov has no such opportunity. Rather, we witness the dismantling of his political aspirations, albeit only after defiant resistance, and his entry into the community through his love for Natalia. It is at this point of confession and acknowledgement of love that the explicit paradox, of the kind Gekoski proposes for Conrad's fiction, surfaces.

Razumov finds himself in a similar position to Heyst—wanting independence but discovering a social existence through the love of a woman. However, that dilemma is never explored. The narrator had not been affected by Razumov's dilemma sufficiently to internalise the paradox, although he admits discomposure. Accordingly, the irony is not dialectical. The narrator insists merely on deferring judgement on Razumov and on tentatively pointing out the differences between East and West. The net effect is that the function of the irony is to illustrate Razumov's inevitable psychological disintegration, as the personal vision becomes impossible to implement, and to reveal his education into paradox.

*Chance* and *Vitory* explore the disillusionment with personal dreams. Both novels contain characters who exhibit
discernible quixotic tendencies. Both explicitly renounce their respective dreams. Marlow's narration of *Chance* differs from his two earlier narratives, *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* because he is unable to sustain his interest in idealism—and he himself is unaffected by Anthony's plight. In *Victory*, the narrator shows the same discrimination as the narrator of *Nostromo*, but he is unable to sustain the subtle analysis. Nevertheless, as the novel progresses from its initial parody, the narrator's attitude towards the issues raised by the complex Heyst becomes more subtle; he gradually differentiates himself from Davidson and establishes Heyst's position as one containing a genuine predicament. Like Marlow with Jim, he distinguishes Heyst from the common run of men in a manner which lends sympathy to Heyst's stated objective of non-involvement. This kind of detachment from the social world receives sympathetic treatment by the narrator towards the Professor in *The Secret Agent*. In addition, Heyst's complex form of pity is similar to the Lady Patroness's and the Assistant Commissioner's of that novel. However, the novel does not dialectically scrutinise the involvement-detachment tension at a sustained level. Like the narrator of *Almayer's Folly*, the narrator of *Victory* finally focuses on the protagonist's disillusion with his quixotic illusion and indicates that his own allegiances are with an ill-defined notion of action. Accordingly, the irony, having been raised to a general level, descends to a specific irony.

The difficulty of coming to terms with the irony of the later novels lies with the inconsistencies of the narrators. Following on from the narrator of *Nostromo*, they possess the
capacity to understand paradox, but they do not pursue the intellectual implications. Rather, they privilege one element: the young captain wants a surety of command; the Professor does not explore his own discomposure; Marlow is too fatigued and middle-aged to explore the theme of romantic love in Chance; and the narrator of Victory, finally, even though he had differentiated himself from Davidson, sides with the world of simple social action. Whereas Marlow had seen scepticism as an indispensable ingredient of his perspective in Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim, the later narrators abolish it in favour of the safer endorsement of social values.

All through the stories and novels discussed in this thesis there has been an explicitly stated dissatisfaction with what the narrator of Victory calls "the common run of men" (V,185-86). Consequently, there is a narratorial fascination with the Quixotes and anarchists. As I have stressed, that fascination becomes the base of a determined examination of more eccentric expressions of behaviour. The narrators often stress that the unusual characters control their identity by figurative constructions. Karain's illusions of identity are described as theatrical, Jim's reveries in terms of simile, and Kurtz's utterances are poetically suggestive. In The Secret Agent, where the dissatisfaction with ordinary living reaches a high point in Conrad's fiction, the Assistant Commissioner is directly depicted as a Quixote. This dissatisfaction continues in the later novels. In Chance, Marlow abhors the world of the shore people, and in Under Western Eyes, the Professor satirises the complacent Swiss couple, secure in their democracy. As in the earlier works, the characters who seek
personal expression beyond the quotidian tend to conceive their identities through figurative construction of language. Razumov conceives of his country and its autocracy as the "perfect plant," Heyst of the world as a "Shadow," and Anthony is overtly chivalric. However, the controlling metaphors are set up by the narrators to be dismantled, with the effect of rendering the irony as primarily specific and inevitably corrective.
CONCLUSION

Heyst could not take seriously the savage capacity of the desperadoes who came to plunder Samburan. They were "divorced from all reality" in his eyes. However, the bullet which kills Lena forces him to see the thwarting claim of the world outside the idealising imagination and his previous quixotic world as an ineffectual "Shadow." The disillusion of Heyst is substantially the disillusion of the original Quixote. Many other characters conceived quixotically end in similar disillusion. Almayer, Jim, Anthony, and Gould all live to see the shattering of their highly treasured personal ideals.

I have stressed that quixotism in Conrad's fiction does not follow a pattern of slavish and unyielding commitment to a code of chivalry. The quixotism always begins with a personal ideal for which there are various references: of heroic deeds (Jim), of wealth (Almayer), of material interests (Gould), intellectual adventure (the Russian), of sanctuary (Heyst), of romantic love (Anthony). The intensity of the obsession with the dream develops to the point where the Quixote is seen to be at odds with the immediate social or physical surroundings, and it is the narratorial exploitation of the incongruity between dream and the actual world which characterises what I have called the quixotic principle.

I have shown that from the early stories there is a narratorial dissatisfaction with ordinary living and a
preparedness to explore eccentric manifestations of behaviour, of which quixotism is a predominant mode in Conrad's fiction. As Gekoski argues, the fiction constantly exhibits a tension between the opposing systems of what he calls "personal autonomy" and "social responsibility." Almost always, at some point in the narrative, this tension is raised to the status of a genuine predicament deserving of a general irony. The vigour and scope of that irony vary. The ambivalence of the early narrators of "Karain" and The Nigger of the "Narcissus" becomes the ironic rhetoric of temporality of Marlow's retrospective narratives Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness. Marlow, the detached scrutineer of his own contact with Kurtz, is able to mediate between the opposing claims of the two systems. Wilde sees poise between the extremes as the key element of modernist irony, but it is Paul de Man who investigates the price exacted to attain that poise. Marlow, in Heart of Darkness, lives in conditions where the ordinary social veneers are no longer sufficient to preserve identity; consequently, he experiences alienation and incipient psychological disorder. The need to structure his experience in language leads to the disabling recognition that he cannot be satisfied with any final level of insight. All he can do is utter a series of affirmations and denials, as he searches his memory for the various conceptions of identity he has confronted or exploited. As the narratives of both Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness progress, it becomes clear that Marlow's intellectual perspective is not informed by an unequivocal allegiance to a fixed ethic. This radicalism is dramatically evident in his stated intolerance of his audience's bourgeois entrenchment in
Heart of Darkness. The notion of Romantic irony is important, because it accounts for the temporal element of the irony, as the persona of the narrator in the present creates identity as he narrates. Inevitably, the irony is dialectical. It weaves recollections with spontaneous insights, extols past conceptions of self with parodies of those conceptions, holds on to the exactions of the Conway code and a fascination with the ineffable dreams of Jim and the poetic utterances of Kurtz. The battle with language leads to the eventual recognition in Heart of Darkness of the impossibility of conveying the meaning of human testimony through language. This is a statement of Romantic irony. The artist, on confronting the chaos of experience, recognises that literary forms are necessary but only temporary expressions of meaning. Necessarily, his own art and language are ironised.

Several critics see the irony of the narrator of The Secret Agent as chilling and lacking in any definitive ethical brief. As I have argued, that seems to be precisely the function of the irony--not to hold on to a sure perspective but mediate between the extremes of quixotism and stolidity, in the tradition of Marlow. This capacity for mediation is shared by the Assistant Commissioner, who is simultaneously able to harness the responsibility of working within the legal and political system with his desire for an eccentric expression of an "evil freedom." Decoud in Nostromo is not able to sustain this mediation like Marlow and the Assistant Commissioner. Whereas both the latter characters can wear the necessary social mask (Paul de Man's metaphor), as well as express their antipathy, Decoud is left with only his "ironic murmurings,"
which lead to despair and suicide. In his case Schlegel's aphorism ("It's equally fatal for the mind to have a system and to have none. It will simply have to decide to combine the two" [A,53]) is chillingly true.

Schlegel himself asked if there was an end to irony.\(^1\) Psychological disorder and suicide are possibilities. But for Schlegel himself irony ended with the advent of his commitment to Roman Catholicism, a matter which Irving Babbit and Paul de Man discuss.\(^2\) In Conrad's fiction, the irony ends with the privileging of one element of the crucial paradox of being committed to social values and interested in structures of experience which threaten those values. This process begins in *Nostromo* with the narrator's siding with Emilia Gould and Monygham against the idealists. This resolution of the intellectual dilemma posed by quixotic or anarchic behaviour into a commitment to a simple notion of social action continues in "The Secret Sharer." In *Under Western Eyes* the narrator does have the capacity to understand paradox, but his function seems to be to defer judgement on the part of Western readers on account of their ignorance of the exigencies of living in the totalitarian East. In *Chance* a fatigued Marlow is no longer interested in idealism, and in *Victory* Heyst is gradually shown to be in an untenable position on Samburan by a narrator who finally confesses to commitment to the world of "action."

Hewitt argues that the irony of the early novels is "offensive," in that it forces us to challenge our beliefs, whereas in the later novels it is "defensive" of the existing social norms.\(^3\) This I believe to be true. Irony as an intellectual tour de force is unable to be sustained in Conrad's
fiction. In Conrad's case, Derrida's claim about the inevitable privileging of one element of paradoxical formulations proves to be true. The infinite cerebral agility cannot last just as quixotic idealism cannot, and the final narrators, even though they give hints of being able to construe experience into the language of paradox, eventually either wearily or naively side with the less demanding solidity of conventionally defined codes of behaviour.

* * * * *
INTRODUCTION: NOTES


2 Muecke, p. 4.

3 Dorothy Brown, "The Irony of Joseph Conrad," Diss. Univ. of Washington 1956, p. 18. Brown cites the comment of an anonymous reviewer after Conrad had won fifty guineas from *The Academy for Tales of Unrest*. The reviewer claimed that Conrad had the irony of the Greeks. Elsewhere she has two separate sections in her introductory chapter: on Socratic Irony (pp. 6-9) and on Sophoclean Irony (pp. 9-12).

4 Brown, p. 20. She argues: "Though Conrad's irony was not, as a rule, deliberate, it was conscious—as indeed was every aspect of Conrad's art. He did not plan his work before writing it; he stated that he did not know until he had written the last page of a novel what the complete pattern would be. Yet his novels and stories contain an obvious ironic pattern, which seems to be not contrived, but intuitive." Brown does not make clear distinctions between "deliberate" and "conscious." I see the terms as synonymous. Furthermore, her insistence that the irony is "intuitive" leads her to write elsewhere: "... Conrad refused, in his work as an artist, to be satiric" (p. 21). This claim is demonstrably false.


6 Karl, p. 568n.


8 Brown, p. 43. She describes the irony as "pure verbal irony" and avoids systematisation of the concept of irony by calling Marlow "sarcastic" (p. 43). I see Marlow's sarcasm as an element of his satirical strategy, which is more subtle than the word "sarcastic" suggests.


11 Muecke, pp. 19, 20.
12 Booth, pp. 10-14.
14 Muecke, pp. 120, 126.
15 Muecke, pp. 121, 122. Muecke draws his definition of
general irony from descriptions of irony of this type by
Kierkegaard, Georges Palante, and Morton Gurewitch (p. 120).
16 Walter F. Wright, ed., Joseph Conrad on Fiction (Lincoln:
Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1964), pp. 92-93.
17 Wright, p. 27.
18 R.A. Gekoski, Conrad: The Moral World of the Novelist
19 Gekoski, p. 21.
20 Gekoski, p. 23.
21 Albert J. Guérard, Conrad the Novelist (Cambridge, Mass.:
22 Guérard, p. 58.
23 Ian Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century (London:
Chatto and Windus, 1980), p. 27.
24 Watt, pp. 28-29.
25 Watt, p. 29.
26 Alan Wilde, Horizons of Assent (Baltimore and London:
27 Gekoski, p. 16.
29 Wilde, p. 44.
30 P.J. Glassman, Language and Being (New York and London:
psychology in Heart of Darkness contends that Marlow is
confronted with a choice (between a stolid acceptance of
conventional values and a contemptuous nihilism) and that he
chooses the latter.
31 E. Najder, ed., Conrad's Polish Background: Letters to
and from Polish Friends (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964),
p. 31.
32 Watt, p. 323.
33 Watt, p. 324.


36 Watt writes: "Maupassant's detached and reductive irony of style and structure is most apparent in Conrad's two earliest short stories, "The Idiots" and "An Outpost of Progress," both written in 1896" (p. 49). Later, he argues: "Conrad's obtrusive detachment as narrator, for instance, follows from Flaubert's conception of the novelist as God . . ." (p. 52).

37 Muecke, p. 121.


39 Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*, trans. and introd. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1971). With references from Schlegel's fragments I will use A (to signify *Athenaeum Fragments*) and L (for the *Lyceum Fragments*) and alongside the letter, the appropriate number.


41 Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony, with Constant Reference to Socrates*, trans. Lee M. Capel (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1965). Kierkegaard attacked Schlegel's *Lucinde* on the grounds that it was "a very obscene book" (p. 313) in which "the flesh negates the spirit" (p. 315). He contended that the ego that has found its own freedom finally arrives not "at a still higher aspect of mind but instead at sensuality, and consequently at its opposite" (p. 316). Kierkegaard objected to Romantic irony because he saw it as completely destructive both of the artist's own self and of his society: "Because the ironist poetically produces himself as well as his environment with the greatest possible poetic license, because he lives completely hypothetically and subjunctively, his life finally loses all continuity. With this he wholly lapses under the sway of his moods and feelings. His life is sheer emotion" (p. 301).


43 Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co., (1955). Babbitt's invective against romanticism rests on his distaste for what he calls an "uncritical enthusiasm" which needs to be kept in
check by a "powerful dialectic" (p. 201). He contrasts Romantic irony with the "traditional and conventional control of the "classicist": "Decorum is for the classicist the grand masterpiece to observe because it is only thus he can show that he has a genuine centre set above his own ego; it is only by the allegiance of his imagination to this centre that he can give the illusion of a higher reality. The romantic ironist shatters the illusion wantonly. It is as though he would inflict upon the reader the disillusion from which he has himself suffered. By his swift passage from one mood to another (Stimmungsbrechung) he shows that he is subject to no centre" (p. 207). Kierkegaard's objection to Romantic irony was similar. Babbit, however, neither concedes to Schlegel's notion of "chaos," preferring to side with the classical allegiance to the "illusion of a higher reality," nor does he acknowledge that F. Schlegel's aphorisms contain the "powerful dialectic" which he finds wanting in romanticism.

44 Friedrich Schlegel, Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms, trans. Ernst Behler and Roman Struc (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1968), p. 81. Future citations from this book will be noted in the text. I will use DP and the appropriate page number.

45 In L,28 F. Schlegel writes: "Feeling (for a particular art, science, person, etc.) is divided spirit, is self-restriction: hence a result of self-creation and self-destruction." The idea is repeated in L,37 ("... one can only restrict oneself at those points and places where one possesses infinite power, self-creation, and self-destruction") and in A,51 ("Naive is what is or seems to be natural, individual, or classical to the point of irony, or else to the point of continuously fluctuating between self-creation and self-destruction.").


48 Wellek, p. 15.

49 Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms, p. 12.

50 Muecke, p. 201.

51 Muecke's list of authors as Romantic ironists occurs on p. 186; he discusses Thomas Mann pp. 204-11.


53 Watt, p. 329.

54 Guérard, pp. 165-66.
55 Watt, pp. 328, 325.
56 Watt, p. 328.
58 Nostromo, p. 171.
The Secret Agent, pp. 115, 147.
66 Salvador de Madariaga, Don Quixote (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1934). This discussion concerning change in the characters occurs on p. 143 and p. 145.
68 Watt, p. 51.
69 Wilde, p. 178.
71 Paul de Man, p. 198.
72 Paul de Man, p. 201.
74 Gekoski, p. 23.

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CHAPTER 2: NOTES

1 Watt, pp. 49-55.

2 Gekoski, p. 70.


4 Muecke, p. 34.

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CHAPTER 3: NOTES


2 Wiley sees the attraction of Kurtz for Marlow as residing in the former's "stripping away of all the rags of ethical self-deception with which men fatuously seek to confront the eternal powers of darkness" (p. 204). The nature of Marlow's response to Kurtz is more complex than this criticism suggests, for Marlow's irony also seeks to acknowledge the status of the various deceptions, the illusions, with which various characters shield themselves from the powers of darkness.

3 Brown's discussion of Heart of Darkness does not go beyond a consideration of irony as satire. I divide the text of Heart of Darkness into various sections to facilitate discussion and to illustrate that, while satire is significant as a mode of irony, other types eventually predominate as Marlow's narrative proceeds.

4 Gekoski, pp. 75-76.

5 Watt, p. 213.

6 Gekoski, pp. 85-86.

7 Gekoski, p. 86.

8 Watt, pp. 216-17.

9 Watt, p. 216.

10 Matthew xxiii, 27.

11 Gekoski, p. 75.

12 Muecke uses the term "Dramatized irony" as one of his four modes: "The function of the ironist in Dramatized Irony is simply to present ironic situations or events to our sense of irony" (p. 92). Muecke continues: "... a sense of irony enables a man to see occult incompatibilities within a total situation and to see a 'victim' confidently unaware of them" (p. 94).

13 Paul de Man, p. 196.

14 Paul de Man, p. 198.
15 Muecke, pp. 198-99.
17 Watt, p. 241.
18 Muecke, p. 237.
CHAPTER 4: NOTES

1 Guérard, p. 143.
2 Gekoski, p. 106.
3 Watt, p. 352.

5 Guérard makes several references to the sympathy-judgement mechanism: pp. 132, 152-57, 160, 161, but he does not elucidate the base which is to be used to judge Jim, although he insists on "how strong Marlow's moral and community engagement was" (p. 161) and describes Jim's dreams as "self-deceptive" (p. 132).

6 Watt, p. 355.
7 Hewitt, pp. 37-38.
8 Tanner, p. 8.
9 Guérard, p. 129.
10 Watt, pp. 350-51.
12 Muecke, pp. 121.
13 Watt, p. 346.
14 Muecke discusses the Irony of Events (pp. 102-04) as an example of situational irony.
15 Guérard, p. 141.
16 Guérard, pp. 159-60.
17 Watt, p. 343.
18 Jim refers to the missed opportunity several times: 
   "'...' "Ah! what a chance missed! My God! what a chance missed!"..." (LJ,83); "'...' "No! the proper thing was to face it out—alone for myself—wait for another chance—find out..."' (LJ,132); "'...' I would have swam back—I would have gone back and shouted alongside—I would have begged them..."
to take me on board ... I would have had my chance ..." (LJ,135).


20 Guérard, pp. 164-65.

21 "Such were the days, still, hot, heavy, disappearing one by one into the past, as if falling into an abyss for ever open in the wake of the ship ... (LJ,16).

22 Kirschner, p. 242.

23 Gekoski, p. 95.

24 Gekoski, pp. 99, 100.

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CHAPTER 5: NOTES

1 Hewitt, p. 51.

2 Guérard, pp. 208-09.

3 Hewitt, pp. 48-49.

4 Gekoski, pp. 115-16.

5 Gekoski, pp. 124-25.

6 Guérard, p. 182.

7 Kierkegaard, The Concept of Irony, p. 292.

8 Guérard, p. 200.

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CHAPTER 6: NOTES


2 Muecke, p. 103.

3 Guérard, pp. 218-19.

4 Hewitt, pp. 85-86.


6 Stewart, p. 178.


9 Garnett, p. 43.

10 Howe, p. 96.


12 Garnett, p. 42.


15 Gekoski contends that "Conrad's conventional values of honour, fidelity, and hard work, as keys to social stability, totally overwhelm his deep-seated . . . sense that, after all, man is ultimately alone in a hostile universe . . ." (p. 149).

16 Gekoski (p. 85) uses this phrase to account for Kurtz's eccentric psyche.
21 The persistence of the taunting refrain has the ironic effect of undermining Winnie's notion of freedom. Its variants include: "Mrs. Verloc was a free woman" (p. 254); "She was a free woman" (p. 254); "... Mrs. Verloc, the free woman" (p. 261).
CHAPTER 7: NOTES

1 Guérard, pp. 231-32.
2 Gekoski, p. 152.
3 Guérard, p. 241.
4 Hewitt, p. 81.
5 Under Western Eyes, p. 316.
6 Guérard, p. 245.
7 Gekoski, p. 153.
8 Hewitt, p. 81.
9 Kirschner: Conrad: The Psychologist as Artist, p. 95.
11 Schwarz, p. 197.
12 Guérard, p. 233.
13 Schwarz, pp. 196, 200.
14 Hewitt, p. 90.
16 Guérard (pp. 258-59) discusses Marlow as an example of narrator as "dullard"; Hewitt (pp. 99-101) discusses Marlow's "hackneyed clichés."
17 Marlow's suggestion that the incapacity for understanding preserves sanity is similar to Paul de Man's metaphorical notion of the "mask" (p. 198) which the ironist lifts at the cost of the empirical self.
18 Guérard, p. 264.
19 Secor, p. 60.
20 Secor, p. 34.
21 Secor, p. 47.
22 Secor, p. 17.
23 Secor, p. 17.
CONCLUSION: NOTES


2 Irving Babbit, p. 205.

Paul de Man, p. 204.

3 Hewitt, p. 88.


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