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CONRAD’S MODERN NOMADS

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Sevda Altinkaynak

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The thesis of Sevda Altinkaynak was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Sanford Schwartz  
Assoc. Professor of English  
Thesis Advisor  
Chair of Committee

John Harwood  
Assoc. Professor of English

Linda Woodbridge  
Professor of English

Abdullah Yavas  
Professor of Business Administration

Robert Caserio  
Professor of English  
Head of the Department of English

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

Conrad juxtaposes Western culture with its native counterpart in order to formulate a vision that can guide the alienated individual who has lost his connection with his own nature, his family, and his society. Unlike many of his contemporaries who only describe this miserable human condition, Conrad offers guidance to rehabilitate the individual. His presentation of Western and native cultures focuses on their practices of cultural ritual, game, and gender relationships. His target is the Western mind, which needs to be decolonized by being reminded of the fundamental equality of all human beings. Once such a bond between the white and the native is established, each can learn and benefit from one another. His heroes who have come to accept the fundamental equality of all human beings are capable of achieving peace and tranquility in their lives. As a result of their interactions with the natives they are able to cherish a sense of belonging and sharing that can repair the damage caused by their painful experience of alienation. By marrying to the members of the native cultures, Conradian heroes and heroines learn how to exist as both individuals and social beings. A mutually respectful and complementary companionship between a male and a female becomes the backbone of a society of emotional solidarity and shared meaning. Conrad’s female characters, especially those who are exposed to injustices and exploitations, play a very crucial role in the establishment of such a society. They are strong and capable enough to decenter the self-evidence of the binary opposition between the male as the superior and the female as the inferior. They bring balance not only into social environment but also into the power struggle between cultures. Conrad’s juxtaposition of the native woman’s presence and active participation in social life against the complete exclusion of the Western woman from social life is the most significant binary opposition he points out between the West and the native. Although Coppola bases his Apocalypse Now upon Conrad’s Heart of Darkness and announces the end of Western civilization once patriarchal and imperialistic ideologies become invincibly dominant, he cannot see that Conrad offers a solution to prevent this undesirable end. Conrad’s remedy is that once the male and the female can relate to each other without engaging in a power struggle, they will be able to taste peace and happiness. This mutual and complementary relationship becomes the symbol of the social order Conrad’s art encompasses.
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Fiction is history, human history, or it is nothing. But it is also more than that; it stands on former ground, being based on the reality of forms and the observation of social phenomena, whereas history is based on documents, and the reading of print and handwriting-on second-hand impression. Thus fiction is nearer truth. But let that pass. A historian may be an artist too, and a novelist is a historian, the preserver, the keeper, the expounder of human experience.

JOSEPH CONRAD, Notes on Life and Letters
To my Daughters

Marwah Banu and Bushra Begum

Khalak
INTRODUCTION

The critical background of Joseph Conrad’s work supports his contention that books have their own fate, sharing with man “the great incertitude of ignominy or glory--of severe justice and senseless persecution--of calumny and misunderstanding--the shame of undeserved success.” The following quotation, one of the most popular twentieth-century interpretations of Conrad’s work, demonstrates the latest stage his books have reached, following the direction this indefinite fate has allotted for them:

Conrad’s tragic limitation is that even though he could clearly see that on one level imperialism was essentially pure dominance and land-grabbing, he could not then conclude that imperialism had to end so that ‘natives’ could lead lives free from European domination. As a creature of his time, Conrad could not grant the natives their freedom, despite his severe critique of the imperialism that enslaved them.

Although Edward Said seems to appreciate Conrad’s “severe critique of imperialism,” he still accuses the novelist of prejudice against the natives. According to Said, Conrad could not accept that natives were capable of establishing themselves as independent nations, free from European dominance. In the same article, Said concludes that Conrad is “a Polish expatriate, who became the employee of the imperial system.” One of Said’s contemporaries, Chinua Achebe, sharing the same view, takes this
criticism to an extreme and classifies Conrad as “a racist who totally dehumanized Africa’s native population.”

Disagreeing with Said’s and Achebe’s remarks, this study centers its argument on the notion that Conrad felt the urgent need for an alternative social structure and found it within the native cultures he had come in contact with. He knew that the Western social system was deteriorating drastically. He foresaw that the end of European imperialism was imminent because of its oppressive and dehumanizing practices towards its own members as well as others. He was not nostalgic in his effort to find an alternative. Since he did believe that the past had been the source of the present chaos, he turned to other cultures for help and guidance. His theme was as old as human existence, “finding some form or perhaps only some formula of peace and happiness,” and yet, his solution was revolutionary and unprecedented.

This remarkable prospect is prevalent in Conrad’s work. A historical overview of the era in which Conrad took up his literary career explains the reasons for the extra care and caution Conrad observed while putting forth his alternative. His stories deal with the issues of social justice, equality, and peace, at a time when the most dominant Western overseas practices were racism, colonialism, and expansionism. He was aware of the fact that most of his fellow citizens would be unable to comprehend his ideas fully or to deal with them accordingly. Such racist and expansionist practices implanted in the minds of most Europeans fear and hatred against the unknown other—the natives of Africa, or of any non-European land—by means of certain institutional tools such as schooling, military training, and literature. For Conrad, to express his approval of cultural exchange between the white men and the natives, let alone his
approval of miscegenation, in such a biased environment would have been professional suicide.

In his *Colonizing Egypt*, Timothy Mitchell explains how this imperialistic agenda was successfully carried out in Egypt. He describes the training process by which the Western mind was prepared for the ultimate mission of colonizing the Egyptian land as well as the Egyptian mind. The second part of Mitchell’s book is about the way these preprogrammed Western minds established similar institutions in Egypt to brainwash the Egyptians to accept their own inferiority and white supremacy as facts. In his *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngugi Thiong’o, talks about a similar process carried out by the West in the other parts of Africa.

In the midst of these racial and imperialistic practices, Conrad introduced a vision that crossed over the racial and cultural divides by telling the truths about bigotry and its effects upon the minds of both the colonized and the colonizer. According to Zdzislaw Najder, “Conrad thus anticipated the reversal of the relativistic trend in cultural anthropology and the revival of universalism.” He furthers his discussion by claiming that Conrad’s multiculturalism—but not moral relativism—was a result of his “declared and deeply ingrained belief in the fundamental equality—not sameness!—of all human beings.” Najder believes that in Conrad’s writings there is a paradoxical reversal of this formula. His insistence on the fact that all human beings are culture-bound is his way of rebutting relativism—on its ground. For him [Conrad] territoriality means the vast geographical panorama of cultural variety amongst human beings, and it is bound with the ensuing indigenousness of morals. He presents
behavior as explicable within its proper cultural context, but evaluated on a common human scale. Whatever the colour of their skin, his protagonists are presented as responsible moral agents. (Najder, 6)

The formula Najder mentions here is the prevailing attitude of Conrad’s time: the more cultural variety, the more moral relativity. Conrad knew that the possible outcomes of such relativism would be either the sense of racial and cultural superiority or cynicism. If everything is relative, the idea of having principles and values will be irrelevant. Conrad’s sincere presentation of characters from different cultures and races as good and evil, noble and despicable, indicates that he did not follow the traditional attitude towards the “Other.” His moral horizon went beyond class and cultural boundaries.

Najder finishes the first section of his article with a statement that reinforces the argument of this study: “For Conrad, women and men of all territories, of all cultures, are capable of fidelity and honour, love and sacrifice, and can serve, in their specific ways, his valeurs ideales” (Najder, 7). As a writer who believed in “an impartial view of humanity in all its degrees of splendour and misery together with a special regard for the rights of the underprivileged of this earth” (Najder, 4), Conrad knew that a peaceful and harmonious relationship between the European and the native was essential to the establishment of a new social order that could guarantee freedom and equality to all participants. He believed that this was not only conceivable but also essentially vital for the establishment of peace and stability man needed.

In his fiction, Conrad took the idea of peaceful social coexistence of the European with the native one step further by depicting mutual and complementary marital relationships between the Westerners and the natives. In such a relationship, a
white man can happily unite with a native woman or a woman who has lived among
the natives. The marriages between a white man and a Dutch girl who grew up among
the natives in *Lord Jim* and between a British-Malay woman and a native man in
*Almayer’s Folly* represent the highest point such desirable interactions between the
two cultures can reach. Juxtaposing these successful intimate relationships against the
dysfunctional marriage between a European man and a European woman depicted in
*The Secret Agent*, Conrad exhibited a positive and respectful attitude towards the
natives. He also employed these relationships to deconstruct the self-evidence of the
traditional binary opposition between the West as the superior and the native as the
inferior.

Conrad’s approach to natives contradicts both the literary trend of his time and
the currently popular post-colonial view. While the former believes that miscegenation
contaminates and desecrates the Western social system, the second claims that such
intimate relationships between the white men and the native women are imperialistic
and profane because of their implicit presentation of the native male as incapacitated
and weak. The impression Gail Fincham and Myrtle Hooper got after having tried to
bring different groups to contribute to their book on Conrad is an expression of this
recent bias against Conrad:

> The picture that emerged was a depressing one; it appears to be unwise to
teach Conrad. His texts evidently are often seen as monuments to white
privilege, his ironic vision a threat to popular revolutionary fervour, his
skepticism a confusion and an instrument of ideological control.
Conrad, on the other hand, saw these relationships as sources of rehabilitation and rejuvenation for the alienated European individual who is emotionally neglected and mentally unstable. He was convinced that the rapid and inevitable expansion of the world required that any social system make certain fundamental adjustments in order to achieve peace and order within its own structure as well as with different cultures. He knew that the Western culture, based upon the self-evident concepts of racial superiority, technological power, and cultural bias, eventually had to undergo a painful but necessary transition to be able to survive in a multicultural world.

However, the revolution Conrad envisioned was of an unusual kind. It was non-violent and anti-racial. In his author’s note to *Under Western Eyes*, Conrad expressed his disapproval of the use of violence as a tool of political resistance:

> The ferocity and imbecility of an autocratic rule rejecting all legality and in fact basing itself upon complete moral anarchism provokes the no less imbecile and atrocious answer of a purely Utopian revolutionism encompassing destruction by the first means to hand, in the strange conviction that a fundamental change of hearts must follow the downfall of any given human institutions.\(^8\)

His position on revolutionary movements has received very harsh criticism. Conrad was accused either of being pessimistic about the future of revolutionary movements or of accepting status quo without any questioning. His vision was revolutionary in the sense that it saw the imminent destruction of Western civilization and proposed an alternative reconstructive effort that did not depend upon violence.
It is undeniable that there were some efforts among Conrad’s contemporaries to make the transition easier for both sides and to alleviate the accompanying damage and the suffering. Those literary personalities deserve particular attention and appreciation because of their social awareness and concern. E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* is a manifestation of such a responsible effort. Most of those literary attempts, however, futilely ended with disappointments and failures because of their strong belief in the West as the only source of light and hope. The native was the inferior other who had to be civilized and taught to be a human.

Because the European leaders and traders were the initiators of this aggressive and costly imperialistic movement, they used battlefield terminology to justify their actions. This would eventually evoke patriotic and sympathetic feelings in their peoples towards their main goal: absolute power over the rest of the world. Consequently, the social, political, and cultural gaps between the cultures widened and the seeds of hatred towards each other were planted. In this political game, natives were presented as the evil that needed to be eliminated. In his article “Autocracy and War,” Conrad explains how the European idea of war and peace got complicated as a result of this power struggle:

> Never before has war received so much homage at the lips of men, and reigned with less disputed sway in their minds. It has harnessed science to its gun-carriages, it has enriched a few respectable manufacturers, scattered doles of food and raiment amongst a few thousand skilled workmen, devoured the first youth of whole generations, and reaped its harvest of countless corpses. It
has perverted the intelligence of men, women, and children, and has made the speeches of Emperors, Kings, Presidents, and Ministers monotonous with ardent protestations of fidelity to peace. Indeed, war has made peace altogether its own, it has modelled it on its own image: a martial, overbearing, war-lord sort of peace, with a mailed fist, and turned-up moustaches, ringing with the din of grand manoeuvres, eloquent with allusions to glorious feats of arms; it has made peace so magnificent as to be almost as expensive to keep up as itself. It has sent out apostles of its own, who at one time went about (mostly in newspapers) preaching the gospel of the mystic sanctity of its sacrifices, and the regenerating power of spilt blood, to the poor in mind--whose name is legion.9

War was seen inevitable if peace was desired. Conrad also described the different media these imperial powers used to propagate this perception of war and peace. Conrad began his literary career in the midst of this political turbulence and economic instability. Yet, he did not hesitate to question the validity of such popular Western notions of his time.

Conrad knew that the Western individual had to connect with the rest of the world to survive and to be able to keep himself centered and stable. He told the success stories of those who were able to connect with other human beings regardless of their color, race, or origin. His aim was that his narratives would de-center the basic oppositions between the West and the native, the white and the colored, success and failure, so that they would be open for reinterpretation. With this seemingly
deconstructive course of reasoning, Conrad did not indicate a meaninglessness of human existence; on the contrary, he shifted his attention to the second part of each opposition to show that life has a meaning worth seeking and cherishing. Because his vision crossed over the other side, he was able to re-center the disoriented European without letting him fall into nihilism, despair and hopelessness.

In their search for a new center, Conrad’s heroes cannot enjoy sedentary lives. They have to become modern nomads until they reach their final destination on earth where their unnourished souls can find comfort and tranquility. Most of his heroes follow a certain path throughout their eastbound journeys. Their sense of alienation and insecurity forces them to leave their own countries in search of another social environment that will allow them not only to survive, but also to lead a fulfilling life. Eventually, they will come to realize that their existence in their own land was dependent upon superficial and unreasonable conditions that prevented them from having any meaningful relationships with those who were of the same geography and culture. Now, in the absence of such social restrictions, they can tend to the needs of their souls.

Conrad knew that any effort to challenge the social stagnation and injustice in Europe might eventually succeed, but it would be harder and more painful. Therefore, he turned his attention away from Western social structures even though his target was the modern individual. He always juxtaposed his protagonists’ failures in their own land with their successful lives among the natives. The social flexibility and tolerance of the natives allow the alienated European individual to begin his healing process and
mental transformation. In fact, Conrad believed that those who did not overcome their racial superiority complex could not experience peace or happiness at all.

In *Almayer’s Folly*, Conrad told the tragic story of such a European male who loses his opportunity to enjoy happiness because of his racial discrimination towards his wife and the natives. The only reason for this white man’s continuous presence among the natives is to exploit them and their resources for his personal gain. His only dream is to return to his country as a rich man in order to be able to buy himself a respectable social position. Unlike other Conrad characters, his desire to go back home never diminishes. He calls the place that provided him with opportunities and wealth “this miserable swamp.” His house, Almayer’s Folly, is emblematic of his selfish and at the same time self-destructive desire. Consequently, his marriage collapses even though his wife tries very hard to make it work.

In their sincere search for complementary relationships, Conrad’s other protagonists, however, are capable of having successful marriages with the native women or half-native women, which marks the beginning of the establishment of a multicultural social structure Conrad believed to be the solution. Ignoring the fact that the lives of Conrad’s protagonists among the natives evoke hope for the future, one can view their deaths as tragedies or as dramatic manifestations of Conrad’s pessimism and existentialism.

Although Conrad’s use of first-person narrators delays and confuses the reader in his/her effort to identify the authorial intention, the narrators’ charismatic personalities provide Conrad with a useful tool both to conceal and to reveal his message. His narrators act as objective observers who witness the changes the heroes
undergo. Through their storytelling skills, the narrators relate what they have seen as objectively as possible while implicitly expressing their own personal feelings and opinions. Their eminent command of language, along with their gestures, allows them to perform this dual function. If the reader recognizes the dual function of the narrator, his/her perception of the heroes and the natives will become less biased and more sympathetic.

Since Conrad’s aim in writing was to emphasize and exemplify the necessity and usefulness of establishing a cross-cultural community that borrowed from all the cultures involved, he had to compare and contrast these opposing cultures in order to make his reader recognize his intention. Zdzislaw Najder also points to this aspect of Conrad’s art: “It is a truism to say that Conrad was self-consciously a writer of many cultures, showing them in relief as well as analyzing and contrasting them” (Najder, 1). The way he positioned his comparisons and contrasts was very unique for his era. It is very similar to the usage of binary oppositions by deconstructionists. Conrad’s deployment of binarism, however, has been overlooked, under-appreciated, and even misunderstood. Since the prevailing literary interest in different geographical locations and their peoples was limited to exotic tales and adventure stories, it was almost irrelevant to look for any serious philosophical views as well as literary innovations in a story that depicted the natives. Therefore, Conrad’s depiction of a multicultural social system that does not portray the natives as subordinates and savages has been pushed aside in favor of his linguistic and artistic accomplishments as a novelist. However, a close look at Conrad’s unique story lines explains the significant role
binary oppositions play in his art. They enable him to conceal and reveal his philosophical and social aspirations.

Many of Conrad’s stories consist of two parts: the first one takes place in a Western setting while the second in the circle of a native community. The main differences that Conrad pointed out between these two settings are not limited to their geographical locations; he investigated these cultures in their daily dealings with one another as well as with foreigners. The recurrent dichotomies in his stories are those between man-made law and divine law, man and woman, discrimination and justice, white and black, self and other, outcome and means, fear and love, pressure and compassion, and indifference and concern. The scenes that take place in a Western setting demonstrate the West’s preference of the first term in each opposition.

Identifying these oppositions is vital in understanding the alternative social order Conrad proposed in his novels. The following instances can further explain how a reader can easily misinterpret Conrad’s vision unless he detects the existence of these binary oppositions. If one does not juxtapose the court trial Jim undergoes in the first part of *Lord Jim* against the meeting between Jim and the native people in Patusan, Jim’s story can only be seen as a tragedy.

Viewed from such a limited perspective, Jim’s journey begins and ends as an existential one, confirming the futility and meaninglessness of his attempt to lead a heroic life. Jim as a daydreaming youngster becomes the most dominant and appropriate image in the reader’s mind. His relationship with Jewel, whom Jim meets in Patusan, only worsens the tragic dimension of his story.
Once Jim’s experience in Patusan is seen something more than a romantic escape into oblivion, in the light of the binary opposition between Western social system and its native counterpart its real meaning can emerge. Jim’s death is not a suicide, symbolizing his tragic realization that he cannot run away from his fate. It is now an action demonstrating his acceptance of a social structure where keeping one’s word is still a value. It is also an action of a real statesman. The social tolerance and acceptance Jim receives from the native community counterbalances the social rejection and alienation he experiences in the West.

In Kurtz’s case, many of his Western critics have described him as a beast who sold his soul to savagery and brutality. For them, he has “gone native.”7 Imposing all the negative aspects Said and Achebe are accusing Conrad of, this description disregards the protagonist and at the same time disrespects the natives by minimizing their substantial cultural, social, and political characteristics. Although the intentions behind describing Kurtz as a savage can differ from critic to critic, the anti-native sentiments in such a description are undeniable. Once the native social system is taken into consideration and juxtaposed against its Western counterpart, a fair and more objective judgment becomes possible. Then, the novel can no longer be seen a tragic story of a European extremist who turned into a beast because of his strong will to power. Despite his initial intention at the beginning of his journey, Kurtz has changed for better due to his life in the wilderness.

Frederick Karl’s description of the jungle provides the reader with a synopsis of how the reader will reach a biased understanding of Kurtz and the natives if he/she does not detect the existence of binarism within the story.
The jungle itself, that vast protective camouflage barring the light of sun and sky, masks and hides, becoming part of the psychological as well as physical landscape. Like the dream content, it forms itself around distortion, condensation, and displacement.

Post-Darwanian and overpowering, the jungle is not Wordsworth’s gentle landscape, by no means the type of nature which gives strength and support in our darkest hours. Rather, it runs parallel to our anxieties, becomes the repository of our fears. The darkness of the jungle approximates darkness everywhere, adumbrating the blackness of Conrad’s humor, the despair of his irony. 10

The jungle, representing the natives, becomes the reason for Kurtz’s savagery and so-called tragic end. However, Conrad’s reevaluation of the meanings of the words “black and white, dark and light” views the latter terms as the destructive power that turns Wordsworth’s once-gentle landscape into a jungle of death. The dying black figures Marlow meets at the very beginning of his journey are in complete contrast to the image of a European man in white, standing in the middle of this disaster. The light of civilization is no more enlightening; the color white is false and deadly. The color white also used to describe the lie Marlow tells Kurtz’s Intended at the very end of the story. For Karl,

Returning from the world of the dead, Marlow--our twentieth-century Everyman--cannot even admit the full impact of the indecency he has witnessed, of the feelings he has experienced. Even this most honest of men must disguise what he has seen and felt. Like a politician he must bed
down with lies [...] Marlow, the pillar of truth and morality, does Kurtz’s work at the end, lies to protect the lie of Kurtz’s existence and to preserve his [Marlow’s] own illusions. In an impure and dirty world, he desperately seeks a compromise - and finds it in the pretty illusions of naïve women.

(Karl, 131)

Marlow plays the modern game of survival very successfully by ignoring a significant part of his life. For Karl, the narrator’s reluctance to deal with his Congo experience is enough to make him the most dutiful man. Kurtz, on the other hand, is an idealist and extremist because he tries to comprehend and analyze his Congo experience in order to come to terms with this reality. Karl completely disregards the hero’s realization that this unfair and indecent game can end up being self-destructive.

However, Karl describes Marlow as the only character that is capable of such a moral judgement. His explanation of Marlow’s capacity to escape a tragic end, similar to Kurtz’s, is another example of Karl’s inability to detect Conrad’s “concealed” binarism:

He [Marlow] accepts private enterprise-with personal restraints. He believes that imperialism must justify itself with good deeds. He expects all men to be fair and decent. Such are Marlow’s preoccupations…

Since he is a man of order and moral courage, Marlow expects similar restraints to prevail elsewhere. As a captain he of course knows that such qualities are essential to preserve life at sea. Carrying them over into civilian life, they become for him psychological expectations. Marlow looks upon the world’s work as being basically just and fundamentally good, even necessary, provided it is done by enlightened men. (Karl, 126)
Karl does not recognize that Marlow’s main reason for leaving his country is the Europeans’ hypocrisy and greed for power. The narrator does not appear to be such a strong person, as Karl believes him to be, because Marlow usually assumes the role of an observer and does not go much further than describing what he sees. Yet, he, at times, gives in to his emotions. His feelings about private enterprise are very cynical. He does not believe in the civilizing mission. He is sure that it is all about monetary benefits and power.

Disregarding Marlow’s real feelings about European imperialism before his Congo experience, Karl goes further to claim that both Marlow and Conrad accept the status quo:

Like Conrad, he [Marlow] accepts the status quo, but as one maintained, he trusts, by just men. Marlow rarely questions whether particular work is necessary; for example, he never asks whether white men should be in the Congo— for whatever reason. Rather, he assumes they should be, since they are, ad that they must come as friends, as helpers, as bringers of enlightenment.

Marlow’s great revelation comes when he sees the world is not arranged this way—and here the Congo is a microcosm of the great world in which those who can, plunder those who cannot. Marlow’s awareness of evil comes when he notes that many men, and those the most willful, do not share his belief in an orderly, enlightened society. Theirs is one of chaos, anarchy, “unspeakable rites”…They approve human sacrifice, and they eat their victims. This is what Conrad’s novel is about. A law-abiding
morally sensitive man enters an avaricious, predatory, almost psychopathic world. For the moment he sees that civilization brings dubious rewards. He learns the harsh vocabulary of reality. He matures.

The nineteenth century becomes the twentieth. (Karl, 126)

With the last sentence, Karl expresses his belief that the white men experience instability and chaos because of his interaction with the natives. His attachment to nineteenth century European notions of white supremacy and native primitivism prevents him from realizing that the roots of the twentieth-century chaos lies in the past.

Unlike Karl, Conrad does not believe that nineteenth-century European values can help the modern individual in his search for a center. Karl’s description of Marlow as a law-abiding morally sensitive man is partially accurate. Karl is not able to see Marlow’s criticism of European societies in general. The psychopathic condition of the world is not the work of a group of willful individuals. The source of this chaos lies in the discriminatory and unjust practices of all the branches of European social system.

Karl is mistaken in his claim that Marlow accepts the presence of white men in the Congo without questioning. He accepts the reality of the situation, but he does not approve of the reasons behind it. Marlow knows that most of the white men who have been there are not friends with the natives. Neither Conrad nor Marlow seems to believe that they can be helpers or carriers of light, either. As is mentioned earlier, Marlow explicitly expresses his skepticism about European presence overseas. Conrad challenges Karl’s reliance on the past for enlightenment by de-centering the European value system and turning to native culture for its healing power.
The polarity between Marlow and Kurtz is more complicated than Karl’s analysis of it. Karl’s depiction of the latter as an evil and savage man is not only unfair but also wrong. The reasons for Kurtz’s “unspeakable rites” cannot be limited to his strong will to power or his subjugation to the wilderness. The social system that he has lived in must assume some of the responsibility as well. Karl’s focus on these two characters implies his unwillingness to accept the natives and women as independent individuals. For him, the rest of the characters, especially the women and the natives, are the necessary stage properties to help Marlow, his “latter-day Ulysses,” to achieve self-knowledge through his symbolic journey into the core of his soul.

While Karl denies the natives their existence as a people and culture, he does not hesitate to reiterate the patriarchal attitude towards Conrad’s female characters. Again, Karl uses his favorite character in the novel, Marlow, to exemplify his prejudice against women, regardless of their color, race, and economic origins. Karl misinterprets the different attitudes Marlow exhibits towards European women and native women.

There are two significant scenes where this behavior becomes more illustrative: Marlow’s challenging encounter with the native woman and his visit to Kurtz’s British Intended. Marlow appears more at ease with the latter female than the former because he is aware of the role the Western—British—women are allowed to play: they should stay in their world of sentimentalism and romanticism since they are fragile and weak by nature. He does not hesitate to lie to the Intended that Kurtz’s last word was her name. He feels in control when dealing with the women of his own culture. His attitude towards them is arrogant and disregarding. He uses the excuse for his lie that she cannot understand the significance of her beloved’s experience in the Congo. If one interprets Marlow’s words
literally, this appears to be the only possible meaning. However, it is also true that he uses this patriarchal attitude to conceal his real feelings about women. He lies because he does not know how to deal with the possible emotional consequences of such a confrontation.

Once the strong native woman challenges him with her fearless and demanding appearance and words he cannot understand, Marlow is completely disturbed and terrified. Karl’s interpretation of this scene explicitly displays his own bias against the native woman. According to him, the only possible way of explaining this scene is through sexuality:

Marlow, that neuter bachelor, is fascinated by the jungle woman, by her wanton, demanding display of sex, by the “fecund and mysterious life” she embodies…by her deliberate provocation of her measured walk. He is further drawn to her sense of reality; without illusion, without question, she accepts Kurtz for what he is, as integrated with the savagery which enfolds her. (Karl, 133)

The native woman is the culprit for the attraction Marlow feels towards her. Karl interprets everything this woman does as a display of her sexuality.

Instead of questioning the reasons behind Marlow’s fear and behavior, Karl easily identifies the feminine with the savage, dangerous jungle as well as the river winding like a deadly serpent:

Though the reticent, chivalrous Marlow never speaks directly of sex, it lies heavily on the story, in every aspect of nature, In his fears. In its demands. Like the Styx, the mythological river that winds nine times about the
underworld, the long river that informs this world is described by Marlow in treacherous, serpentine terms—“deadly-like a snake,” resembling an immense snake uncoiled’…The river is essentially a woman: dangerous, dark, mysterious, concealed, with the jungle so feminine, personified by Kurtz’s savage mistress. Marlow is overwhelmed; his ideal of womanhood is clearly the girl back in Brussels, or his aunt—the brainwashed public—that naïve woman who believes “the laborer is worthy of his hire” Such womanly illusions Marlow wishes to preserve. But his experience includes a treacherous, feminine river, an equally perfidious jungle that conceals its terrors, and finally, a savage mistress—in all, an unspeakable sexual experience. And so it is that Marlow remains silent. As much as he fears the attraction of power, he shies away from the temptation of orgiastic uncontrollable sex. He retreats into neutral shock. (Karl, 134)

Karl states that what the native woman signifies does not go beyond sexual temptation. Undermining her strong personality and fearless demand to have her husband back as a loyal wife, Karl claims that she is dangerous, treacherous, and deadly. For the critic, the ideal woman is the Intended who represents Marlow’s “womanly illusions:” the female should be passive, brainwashed, gullible, disconnected from reality. Any woman who defies this description becomes a threat and an obstacle to the most dutiful of men. Thus, the female becomes an object whose meaning and role is decided by the male. However, this is the critic’s misinterpretation of Conrad’s view and Marlow’s behavior.

Karl interprets Marlow’s silence as shying away from the attraction of power and eventually from destruction. However, Marlow’s silence is the sign of his recognition of
his need for female companionship—for a woman who will fight for him. It also indicates that he does not know what to do with such a feeling since he has learned to suppress it. He has learned not to view a woman as an equal social being, especially one of a different color trying to assert her individuality and her right to be equal. The idea that man and woman need each other to lead a healthy and fulfilling life appears to be unacceptable to Karl rather than Marlow. Therefore, stressing the aspect of sexuality in terms of the male/female dichotomy puts forward a seemingly agreeable front for Karl’s argument against active participation of the female in society.

Marlow, on the other hand, holds a middle position; he feels and accepts the necessity of male and female companionship. Yet, he does not know how to deal with the issue in practical terms. In spite of accepting that he is dependent upon a woman for emotional as well as physical satisfaction, he gets intimidated and chooses the easiest way to achieve emotional detachment by redefining the woman as sinister, dangerous, and fatally attractive. His interest in and admiration for the heroes imply his awareness of his need and his incapacity to deal with it. He comes to realize that those who have engaged in intimate relationships with females of different natures and origins are much happier. The outcome is always for the better: happiness, peace, and tranquility. During the moments when a man and woman are mutually committed, the tone of his voice gets more relaxed and more peaceful, indicating the stability and tranquility these alienated individuals experience under these new circumstances.

The essential aspect of Conrad’s solution to the existential dilemmas of the alienated modern individual is a mutual, emotionally engaging, and complementary relationship with the other gender. However, due to their strict and predetermined social
roles, Conrad does not seem to think that the European woman and man are able to engage in such interactions with one another. Once again, Conrad moves the center of attention away from the West to the lands of the “Other” where women are comparatively more active and involved in their so-called primitive communities.

He is also aware that the European man will not be able to reach such a fulfilling union with the female unless his main reason for his nomadic search is to end his unbearable emotional misery and solitariness. While Kurtz and Jim find their soul mates, Almayer, the main character in *Almayer’s Folly*, turns his own life, along with his family’s, into a disaster. His attachment to his culture and his desire for money destroy him. His obsession with money and his strong belief in white supremacy turn him into an exploiter but eventually into a disappointed and dissatisfied man. Conrad places the opposite of what Almayer represents in his portrayal of the daughter, Nina. She is the strongest female protagonist, followed by Kurtz’s mistress. Although the information about the latter is very scarce and partial, the narrator in *Almayer’s Folly*, tells Nina’s story in detail. Conrad presents her easy access to both the native and Western cultures thanks to her parental background as the source of her strength and her sound judgement. She becomes the embodiment of Conrad’s philosophical and pragmatic answer to modern man’s existential dilemmas.

Ignoring the significant roles that Conrad’s female characters play, one cannot reach a complete understanding of the scope of Conrad’s art and message. For example, Karl’s interpretation suggests that Said and Achebe are right in their accusation that Conrad is an imperialist who reinforces the traditional patriarchal and imperialist ideologies by colonizing and pacifying savage darkness and natives. Harry Sewlall talks
about the enormous effect Achebe’s accusation of Conrad as a racist had upon contemporary critics: “It is my view that Chinua Achebe’s notorious denunciation of Conrad as a “bloody racist!” back in 1977 has played no small role in this regrettable state of affairs.”

Despite all these oversimplifications and accusations, Conrad’s stories remain as useful coefficients in any age and culture because of their applicability and relevance. In this respect, Conrad’s excellent manipulation of dichotomies, among his other unique qualities, offers a satisfactory explanation to how Conrad still can appeal to a diverse reading community, crossing over any racial, national, geographical, and economic boundaries.

In conclusion, a close examination of the binarism in Conrad’s work will answer the issues, raised by long-lasting misconceptions about Conrad’s literary objectives. The following section will provide the reader with a historical synopsis of the critical perspectives that have enormous effect in shaping the public opinion on Conrad. In addition to the critical background, the philosophical dimension of Conrad’s work will be discussed in the second half of the same section. The third section will explore Conrad’s successful way of revealing two different social systems through a significant number of binary oppositions. These systems will be compared in terms of their legislative, executive, and judicial aspects, best manifested in their communal rituals, their perceptions of game playing, and their family structures. The concluding section will juxtapose the interpretation this study proposes with Francis Ford Coppola’s interpretation of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* in his movie, *Apocalypse Now*, to further discuss the reasons behind this recurrent misunderstanding. The aim behind choosing
these two readings, Karl’s and Coppola’s, representing two different areas of art--literary criticism and film--is to exhibit how prevailing and effective a (mis)interpretation can be in predetermining the public opinion. Therefore, it becomes obligatory upon those who hold views different from the established one to offer their alternative perspectives to make Conrad’s effort to expound the human experience possible.

The following novels will be the focus of this study: *Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim, The Secret Agent,* and *Almayer’s Folly.* Their depictions of these two cultures are explicit enough to explain the vision that Conrad has formulated throughout his career as an artist. His is a vision that enfolds the detection of the problems as well as the solution. These novels also provide the reader with a pleasant understanding of whom Conrad was trying to depict and to reach. Once the targeted individuals are able to look at the world from a more inclusive perspective, they will be able to participate in the decolonization process Conrad initiates in his novels. During this process, the Western and the native mind can expand beyond the boundaries of the local culture in terms of their ideology, if not their methodology.

The effects of Conrad’s brave effort can be found in more recent works. Harry Sewlall’s article “Writing from the Periphery: The Case of Ngugi and Conrad” compares Ngugi’s *A Grain of Wheat* with Conrad’s *Under Western Eyes* to demonstrate the influence Conrad had in shaping Ngugi’s writing. In his books, Ngugi Thiong’o follows a similar decolonizing process although his target is different from that of Conrad. While Thiong’o tries to free the native mind from the cultural habits imposed upon it by the white men, Conrad deals with the source and attempts to emancipate the Western mind from its destructive practices of racism and imperialism. Sewlall’s
conclusion confirms the relevance and the validity of this study’s claim that Conrad’s main goal was to decolonize the Western mind by de-centering the West’s social and political systems:

In a similar way, Conrad, who was doubly exiled, from his native land and his mother tongue, sited himself on the periphery of the empire to write back to it. In their respective ways and within the artistic and ideological parameters, they imposed on their work, these writers succeeded in decentring empire. (Sewlall, 67)

Conrad’s stories end with the indications of future success stories. He allows his narrators and his female characters to survive the heroes so that they can make sure that his vision will reach the successive generations. His narrators will perform this mission through their storytelling skills while the female characters will continue to reproduce more protagonists through their healing power and reproductive capability.
Part One

I) Conrad the Philosopher

This chapter will focus on the philosophical dimension of Conrad’s vision. His is not an aesthetic vision that can be contained within the text itself. It is not a dream nor a utopia that requires an imaginary location, disconnected incidences or an unreal community. It deals with life situations. Because his main objective is to provide the modern individual with a way to confront and deal with reality without giving up hope, Conrad wants to make sure that the outcome of such a confrontation should not be despair and pessimism.

In his own letters, Conrad expresses his optimism and its source:

It must not be supposed that I claim for the artist in fiction the freedom of moral nihilism. I would require from him many acts of faith of which the first would be the cherishing of an undying hope; and hope, it will not be contested, implies all the piety of effort and renunciation. It is the God-sent form of trust in the magic force and inspiration belonging to the life of this earth. To be hopeful in an artistic sense it is not necessary to think
that the world is good. It is enough to believe that there is no impossibility
of its being made so. ¹

Such an optimistic view of the world helps the individual find ways of obtaining what he
is in need of--trust, respect, care, love, peace of mind, and happiness--so that he can
survive in the midst of inevitable trials and tribulations. Once the individual is
empowered with these qualities, his/her view of himself/herself and of the world will be
more stable and inclusive. That will eliminate any existential dilemmas caused by the
impersonal demands of modernism. Conrad is aware that modernism is severing human
beings from one another in such a cruel way that it becomes impossible for an individual
to have a mutual and fulfilling relationship with another human, man or woman. The
notions of parental concern, familial unity, marital companionship, and friendship have
been replaced with the materialistic aspirations of modernism. Conrad’s art, therefore,
does not focus on creating a work for aesthetic pleasure but on empowering the
individual by invoking hope and optimism.

Such an artistic vision has to have some affinity to reality in terms of characters,
its settings, story lines, and its message in order to receive a desired amount of
recognition from the reader. Therefore, the greatness of Conrad’s art cannot be limited to
the aesthetic dimension of his achievement. It also involves the realization of his
objective by almost real characters in real geographical locations and within the story.
Such realistic narration enables his readers to be able to associate with the characters and
their fulfilling and empowering experiences. Most of Conrad’s stories are based upon
actual individuals whom Conrad himself had met or heard about. His heroes have a touch
of genuineness and naturalness in them, although some critics detect some surreal
aspects in their existence among the natives. Even Conrad’s narrators, because of their upbringing, initially seem to view the heroes as fictive and even otherworldly. By holding back information and moving forward and backward in time, Conrad delays his narrators’ as well as his readers’ realization of the authenticity of the heroes and their experiences. His narrators eventually come to perceive these heroes and their own overseas experiences as inseparable parts of their existence and reality.

Conrad is interested in the lives of these characters because they involve real life struggles of individuals who are disconnected, isolated, and deprived of emotional and spiritual support. The lack of philosophical approach to the issues these characters have to deal with will end up producing wonderful adventure stories at best. Since it is hard to classify his stories as traditional adventure tales, it becomes urgent for the reader to look for something else to justify his/her reading of Conrad’s stories, such as their philosophical orientation. A quick history of Conrad’s literary career will show how Conrad’s early critics ignored the philosophical dimension of his work while their successors misinterpreted it.
II) Conrad and His Critics

In his book, *The Art of Reading the Novel*, Philip Freund describes the initial reception of Conrad’s work, especially from its Western readers. He claims, “from the beginning of his career it was fashionable to speak of Joseph Conrad as a poet, but it took longer for him to be respectfully spoken of as a philosopher.” Freund believes that Conrad’s first readers were not prepared to look for philosophy in the exotic sea tales. Because his stories were based both on his life at different foreign countries and on those he heard in different exotic places, his work was classified and criticized as adventure literature. Freund confirms that Conrad’s work became part of the Western canon because of its elevated language and unique literary techniques. His critics preferred his poetic prose and his unprecedented narrative techniques to his philosophical views.

Considering Conrad a writer of adventure literature and using the traditional literary tools and critical perspectives available, his early readers were not able to interpret or comprehend Conrad’s stories. Thus, they interpreted the ambiguous and inexplicable parts as ironies or Conrad’s own mental fog over the issues he attempts to explain. The sense that he tells wonderful stories and yet there is something inscrutable and ambiguous was a dominant feature of the early criticisms he received. Later, what his
early readers found incomprehensible and ambiguous in his work has been interpreted as either Conrad’s approval of European superiority and imperialism, or his critique of Western civilization.

This change of views definitely represents the historical and political changes that have taken place since the beginning of Conrad’s career. Frederick Karl’s conservative interpretation, mentioned in the Introduction to this study, is an expression of the popular political ideas of his time. Karl follows the trend in which Europe presented itself as the center of civilization and humanity. For him, Conrad’s heroes, not his narrators, are failures because of their weak faith and of their uncontrollable will to power. Said and Achebe, on the other hand, are not Europeans, or Westerners; their perspectives of Conrad center around Conrad’s conditional approval of European imperialism and its fatal effects upon native peoples. According to them, Conrad’s heroes, including his narrators, are mere colonizers. In his article “Desire in Heart of Darkness,” Stephen Ross claims that Conrad’s heroes are capitalists whose main concern was the fulfillment of their economic and libidinal desires, reinforcing Said’s and Achebe’s idea that Conrad’s heroes are colonizers.2

Before arguing against these critical perspectives, some more examples from the critical panorama of Conrad’s work will help the reader understand how more recent criticisms have been affected by the earlier ones. In an unsigned 1902 review, Edward Garnett evaluated Heart of Darkness as “a psychological masterpiece” connecting “the subconscious life within us […] to our conscious actions”. Yet, Garnett did not hesitate to call Conrad’s most famous story “too strong” a piece of “meat for the ordinary reader.”
He seems to indicate that the reader has to rely upon professionally trained minds to explain the meaning of what they have read.

Then came his political claim that *Heart of Darkness* is “an analysis of the deterioration of the white man’s morale, when he is let loose from European restraint, and planted down in the tropics as an emissary of light armed to the teeth, to make trade profits out of the subject races.” With this statement, Garnett claims that Conrad criticizes the immorality and pure selfishness of the whites in the other parts of the world. The difference between this early critic and the later ones appears in their attitude towards Conrad’s presentation of the natives. Garnett did not seem to worry about this issue at all. His Europeanness took priority over his concern for humanity at large. He was more worried about the deterioration of the white man than the crimes they committed there: a multiracial genocide. In spite of all his bias, Garnett was one of the very few early critics who detected certain psychological and political aspects of Conrad’s art.

Unlike Garnett, E. M. Forster, one of Conrad’s contemporaries, focused on the literary aspects of Conrad’s work, but failed to see the clear message behind Conrad’s misty images and vocabulary. Forster accused him of being “misty” at “the edges” as well as “in the middle.” John Masefield showed an approach similar to that of Forster. Masefield claimed that “Conrad’s style, in general, is neither vigorous, direct, effective, like that of Mr. [Rudyard] Kipling, nor clear and fresh like that of [Robert Louis] Stevenson.” Masefield’s criticism explicitly puts forth that Conrad’s work cannot be classified as adventure literature as many used to believe.
Compared to the canonical works of this literary category, Conrad’s stories are failures because Conrad does not believe that mere adventure has any value:

The mere love of adventure is no saving grace. It is no grace at all. It lays a man under no obligation of faithfulness to an idea and even to his own self. Roughly speaking, an adventurer may be expected to have courage, or at any rate may be said to need it. But courage in itself is not an ideal. A successful highwayman showed courage of a sort, and pirate crews have been known to fight with courage or perhaps only with reckless desperation in the manner of cornered rats. There is nothing in the world to prevent a mere lover or pursuer of adventure from running at any moment. There is his own self, his mere taste for excitement, the prospect of some sort of gain, but there is no sort of loyalty to bind him in honour to consistent conduct. I have noticed that the majority of mere lovers of adventure are mightily careful of their skins; and the proof of it is that so many of them manage to keep it whole to an advanced age. You find them in mysterious nooks of islands and continents, mostly red-nosed and watery-eyed, and not even amusingly boastful. There is nothing more futile under the sun than a mere adventurer. He might have loved at one time—which would have been a saving grace. I mean loved adventure for itself. But if so, he was bound to lose this grace very soon. Adventure by itself is but a phantom, a dubious shape without a heart.\(^6\)
Conrad states that being loyal to an idea or one’s own self is what makes life valuable. He equates being faithful to an idea with being truthful to one’s own self. Therefore, mere adventure is not his subject matter and his characters are not adventurers. He associates adventure with selfishness and indifference. Conrad’s own words clearly show that any attempt to classify his stories as adventure literature cannot be substantial.

The most influential criticism of this early period came from F. R. Leavis. Being an authoritative literary critic of his era, he ranked Conrad as one of the four best British novelists in his *The Great Tradition*, regardless of his agreement with Forster that Conrad’s style is obscure and vaporous. He also claimed, “Conrad tries too hard to impose a significance that is merely an emotional insistence on the presence of what he can’t produce […] He is intent on making virtue out of not knowing what he means.” Leavis concluded that Conrad overworks “adjectival” vocabulary such as “inscrutable,” “inconceivable,” “unspeakable” and “inexpressible.” He added that although Conrad’s intention was to “magnify a thrilled sense of the unspeakable potentialities of the human soul the actual effect is not to magnify but rather to muffle.” Leavis’ statements display the duality Conrad’s readers sense as soon as their engagements with his work begin: his stories are great and yet there is something inscrutable about them. Leavis and the others left the inconceivable and ambiguous potentialities of the human soul in Conrad’s work undefined and unexamined.

Freund’s reading of Conrad provides a partial explanation of these problematic issues ignored by Conrad’s earlier critics: his ambiguous themes and linguistic confusion. He sees a vision in Conrad, a vision that was inclusive enough to go beyond the
boundaries of any social and political system. He briefly explains why it is important to grasp Conrad’s vision and the way it works. His explanation comes in comparative terms:

D. H. Lawrence thinks that Conrad is less sound than Melville, because Conrad sentimentalizes the ocean and the sea’s unfortunates. “Snivel in a wet hanky like Lord Jim.” Lawrence prefers Melville, “because Melville is like a Viking going home to the sea, encumbered with age and memories, and a sort of accomplished despair, almost madness. For he cannot accept humanity. He can’t belong to humanity. Cannot.” (Freund, 94)

Freund uses one of Conrad’s contemporaries, D. H. Lawrence, and his interpretation of Conrad’s work to demonstrate the greatness of the latter’s art. Lawrence did not see anything except ambiguity in Conrad. He could not appreciate the fact that Conrad does not allow himself or his characters to indulge themselves in existentialism and escapism as Melville himself does. Lawrence favored Melville over Conrad because he saw the work of the latter as less serious and overly sentimental. By classifying Conrad’s characters as “the sea’s unfortunates,” Lawrence reinforced the early view that Conrad’s heroes are failures. Freund, on the other hand, prefers Conrad and explains his reasons by pointing to the most crucial difference between Melville and Conrad:

But perhaps Conrad is preferable for that very reason, because he comes from the sea, rather than returns to it, though encumbered too with age and memories; because he does not submit to despair, and finally because he can write to Edward Garnett, “The fact is that I [Conrad] approached things human in a spirit of piety foreign to those lovers of humanity who would like to make a life a sort of Cook’s Personally Conducted Tour-
from the cradle to grave, I have never debased that quasi-religious sentiment by tears and groans and sighs, I have neither grinned nor gnashed my teeth. In a word I have behaved decently--which, except in the gross conventional sense, is not so easy as it looks. Therefore there are those who reproach me with the pose of brutality--sentimentalism--idealism. (Freund, 95)

Freund uses Conrad’s own words to emphasize the novelist’s answer to those who accuse him of being a sentimentalist and an idealist.

Conrad’s criticism of those who pretend to be humane and yet want everyone to live according to their standards is an explicit expression of his severe critique of European imperialism as well as private enterprise. Conrad believes that the love of those people for humanity begins and ends with their love for themselves and their ideas. He adds that this self-centered perspective of life is prevalent in Europe by using the name of a then-famous travel agent Thomas Cook. On the one hand is Cook’s superficially problem-free and self-designed life patterns in which one can remain as an observer, and on the other is Conrad’s problem-solving and inclusive perspective of life that requires participation and involvement.

Cook’s view presents one extreme of the conventional view of life-relaxed, self-protective, and self-serving-while Melville’s stands at the other extreme, away from humans, in despair and self-pity. Conrad’s, however, stands somewhere in between. It is neither exclusively self-centered nor self-denying. It discourages a biased and self-indulgent view of humanity as well as a complete withdrawal from it. Conrad offers a view that envisions some sort of reconciliation between these two extremes:
The ethical view of the universe involves us at last in so many cruel and absurd contradictions, where the last vestiges of faith, hope, charity, and even reason itself, seem ready to perish, that I have come to suspect that the aim of creation cannot be ethical at all. I would fondly believe that its object is purely spectacular: a spectacle for awe, love, adoration, or hate, if you like, but in this view alone-never for despair! These visions, delicious or poignant, are a moral end in themselves. The rest is our affair—the laughter, the tears, the tenderness, the indignation […] that’s our affair. And the unwearied self-forgetful attention to every phase of the living universe reflected in our consciousness may be our appointed task on this earth—a task in which fate has perhaps engaged nothing of us except our conscience, gifted with a voice in order to bear true testimony to the visible wonder, the haunting terror, the infinite passions, and the illimitable serenity; to the supreme law and abiding mystery of the supreme spectacle. (Freund, 90)

These remarks clearly show that Conrad is not an existentialist or a pessimist who loses hope very easily and gives in to despair at the first attempt. He cherishes a positive approach to life and encourages maturity and stability through its surprises. His stories are the products of his effort to pass this optimism to future generations.

While Melville displays a reclusive attitude toward humanity by taking refuge in solitary places, Conrad embraces humanity at any cost. He himself states that something human is dearer to him than the wealth of the entire world. He knows that the cost of escape is high, deadly serious, and not possible in this life. As Najder claims, Conrad
showed by his characters that it is a big loss not to belong and not to be rooted (Najder, 15). Hence, his novels begin with the depictions of the individual’s desire and effort to initiate the process of reconnecting with others and dealing with its consequences, positive or negative. Any attempt to reconnect with humanity requires human presence and interaction. Human involvement and sincerity is what each of Conrad’s protagonists is yearning for, regardless of his/her geographical and social surroundings.

Conrad knows that attachment to one place, country, or culture, can be very confining and limiting for any individual in his effort to fulfill his desire for happiness and peace. Such an attachment limits the individual’s exposure to and interaction with the rest of the world. He asserts that the universal concepts of one particular place or culture cannot be self-evidently true unless they are compared with those of another. It can also be deadly serious if a social system, relying upon this sort of attachment from its members, does not allow those members to interact with one other because of such superficial criteria as race, color, class, and gender. The unbearably indifferent and desolate life in such a restrictive social environment is the reason for Melville’s preference of the sea and Conrad’s decision to move away from Europe.

Conrad sees hope once individuals with different values can transgress the cultural barriers and learn to be more realistic and to live together because he believes that

there is a bond between us and that humanity so far away […] no matter where they live; in houses or in huts, in the streets under a fog or in the forests behind the dark line of dismal magroves […] Their hearts--like ours--must endure the load of the gifts from heaven: the curse of facts and
the blessing of illusions; the bitterness of our wisdom and the deceptive
consolation of our folly. (quo. in Najder, 4)

Conrad’s multi-cultural vision is yet to be fully materialized although cross-cultural
marriages and business interactions have forced different cultures and nations to specify
their commonalities, to articulate disagreements, and to learn from one another. This
positive approach to human worth and life is what Conrad the philosopher formulates and
what Conrad the artist depicts.

Conrad’s protagonists are always in search of a place to put this positive belief
into practice. Their search is an attempt to achieve some sort of reconciliation between
Cook’s too self-confident and wrongly motivated individualism and Melville’s
hopelessness and dehumanizing despair. The lives of these heroes in their European
countries illustrate Melville’s frustration and disappointment with the West. They also
indicate the impossibility of meaningful existence in such an environment where human
worth can be traded away. Sir Edward Taylor summarizes this general tendency in his
Antropology: “there is this plain difference between low and high races of men, that the
dull-minded barbarian has not power of thought enough to come up to the civilized
man’s best moral standard.”8 Once the individual’s value depends upon his/her color,
race, gender, and class, the definition and application of the most significant value of
humanity, justice, becomes relative and discriminatory. However, their lives away from
such racially-biased social environments are hopeful and tranquil enough to empower
anyone who is in search of harmony and peace.

Consequently, any criticism that misses these aspects of Conrad’s novels will end
up portraying him as a “nautical writer” without any organized worldview of his own,
without a serious philosophical orientation, or as a “romantic” with too many existential dilemmas. David Thorburn, in *Conrad’s Romanticism*, describes Conrad as a romantic. He claims that Conrad’s novels are the individual’s journey into regions where they confront some aspect of themselves. He adds that Conrad’s emphasis on self-confrontation owes much to the traditions of the adventure tale and of Romantic poetry. Thorburn does not realize that Conrad’s vision is not a romantic escape but an attempt to face and deal with reality. Thorburn’s answer to Leavis’s concern with Conrad’s adjectival insistence is that Conrad’s concern with the inadequacy of language lies in his romantic approach to life:

Conrad, like the English Romantic poets, holds to a meager but partly sustaining faith in the power of language to make sense of the world… however imperfectly… “I cannot paint / What then I was [Wordsworth writes].” But I will try and I will come close.9

Conrad, however, makes sense out of the world and expresses his perception in his stories, using several linguistic tools, narrative techniques and gesture language as well as his own personal experience. In spite of all these linguistic difficulties, Conrad’s experience with more than one social system, Polish, French, different native societies, and British put him in an advantageous position by enabling him to perceive the world from a wider perspective.

The ability to comprehend his vision, however, requires that the reader or the critic approach his stories with willingness to examine them from different angles since the author’s worldview was affected by more than one culture. Since Conrad’s stories involve the natives, his reader cannot ignore their existence and role in the stories. If his
presentation of the West is not compared and contrasted with that of the native cultures, Conrad's binarism will be overlooked, his images and vocabulary will remain ambiguous, and his message will be misinterpreted.

Reacting to the earlier critics’ complete ignorance of the natives, another group of critics appreciated Conrad’s depiction of Western imperialism as a disruptive and destructive force that shattered the natives’ sense of unity. Responding to his predecessors who claimed that the white emissaries were deteriorating because of their interactions with the savage natives, Avrom Fleishman discusses the moral decay of the natives once Europeans have been loosed upon them. He accuses Kurtz of degenerating and prompting the natives to “organized warfare in order to obtain ivory for export.” He claims that Conrad does not hold the natives in low esteem.

Describing the hero as a degenerated European before he came to the land of the “Other,” Fleishman, in a way, follows the footsteps of those with whom he disagrees. He accuses the West for the chaos while the others blamed the natives for it. Each one is looking for the cause of the problem and defending the other without reconciling between the two sides that can no longer deny each other’s existence. Both groups ignore the inclusive nature of Conrad’s art. Although this group’s recognition of Conrad’s respect for the natives is only a partial understanding of Conrad’s objective, its ignorance of Conrad’s ideal social order, including both the West and the Other, is evident.

Conrad does not juxtapose Western culture against the native culture just to prove the superiority of one over the other. It is true, however, that he shows an inclination towards the native culture because of its more inclusive and tolerant nature in terms of certain issues, specifically the active involvement of the female in social life. It is clear
that the degree of inclusiveness and tolerance shows variation from one native society to the other. The Malay culture in *Lord Jim* and *Almayer’s Folly* seems to be more tolerant of different races and cultures than the native culture in *Heart of Darkness*. An interesting comment about Conrad’s presentation of the native cultures comes from a non-Western writer. D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, a Sri Lankan writer, says that Conrad’s Malayan world is “predominantly authentic,” rendered without “conventional Western prejudices.”

Conrad’s intention, then, is not to subjugate the natives to the white men, but to find ways of reconnecting the alienated Western individual to the rest of the world and to his own self.

Bruce Johnson agrees with Fleishman’s claim that Conrad defends the natives and juxtaposes their sense of unity against the Western sense of alienation. Johnson also sees the seeds of existentialist thought in Conrad’s work. He believes that Conrad’s stories describe how the alienated European self, when confronted with the meaninglessness of existence, has both the freedom and the responsibility to create its own values and reality. He perceives Marlow’s lie to Kurtz’s Intended as a manifestation of the narrator’s existential effort to make both a myth and a reality for her as well as himself. Examining the life of each character as an isolated case, Johnson eventually sees a multitude of visions in each story. The expression of different visions, or realities, reminds one of the currently popular norms of reading: deconstructive reading.

The deconstructionist J. H. Miller’s notion of unfolding the indeterminacies in a text due to the “multiple cacophonous and deceitful voice flowing” seems to be a recent interpretation of Johnson’s idea of existential thought in Conrad. In his deconstructive reading of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, Miller uses the inclusion of different voices and
perspectives to claim that Conrad’s novel dismantles itself and does not fit into one
literary category per se. Miller’s view also suggests that there is no authoritative view
that the text supports in the midst of these multiple worldviews. Conrad’s comment on
adventure-explorers clearly emphasizes that Miller does not see the authorial intention in
the midst of these cacophonous voices.
III) The Alienated Soul

Conrad’s excellent manipulation of the dichotomies between the Western culture and its native counterparts have allowed his critics to reach all the conclusions that were mentioned in the first half of this section. In an 1899 letter to R. B. Cunninghame Graham, Conrad admits that the theme of *Heart of Darkness* is not obvious: “The idea is so wrapped up in secondary notions that You--even You! May miss it.”¹ What Conrad meant by secondary notions is beyond anyone’s power to know for sure. However, one can claim that he refers to the philosophical dimension of his work because the literary tradition of his era successfully analyzed his stories in terms of their literary qualities. His letter proves that Conrad has an idea and therefore a message to convey to his readers through his work. The existence of an authoritative message lucidly contradicts the deconstructionists’ claim that there are apparently limitless possibilities for the production that come about when the language of the critic enters the language of the text. The various interpretations of a work of art do not necessarily cancel out the reality of the authorial intention, explicit or concealed. When Miller, in his reading of *Heart of Darkness*, combines these limitless possibilities of production and meaning with the notion that “literature continually exceeds any formula or theory with which the critic is prepared to encompass it.”² While he tries to expose the restraining nature of Western
canon, he is satisfied with just stating the fact rather than coming up with a theory that can include Conrad and others who follow the novelist’s footsteps.

The overview of different critical perspectives on Conrad shows that the textual ambiguity and irony the earlier critics found in his work has recently been viewed either as its impenetrability due to the incompatibility of discourses or as imperialistic propaganda. It is not this study’s effort to claim that Conrad’s vision is unique and flawless in every sense and aspect. The main objective of this study, however, is to show that Conrad formulated a new and comprehensive social order that allows individuals from different backgrounds to live together without getting engaged in a power struggle. The reader’s reaction to the impenetrability and ambiguity of his stories demonstrates his/her willingness or reluctance to participate in Conrad’s effort to deal with reality as it deserves. Once the intention is to comprehend his stories as a whole, one can realize that Conrad is not an imperialist, a racist, an establishmentarian, or “a creature of his time” with excellent story-telling skills.

In spite of these undeserved labels, his optimistic vision has been encouraging his readers to widen their own worldviews and to discover the world outside their exclusive, limited, and self-centered social circles. Once most individuals are willing to discover different cultures and reconcile their differences in order to accomplish some sort of a synthesis, the world can be a place to share rather than occupy and exploit. Such a view of the world was unthinkable in Conrad’s era because of the perceived cultural, racial, financial, and geographical differences among people.

Conrad’s juxtaposition of the alienated and disillusioned individual against the self-reflective and patient native is not an existential effort. Conrad’s characters do not
experience the meaninglessness of human existence, especially after their interaction with another culture. On the contrary, through their experience in the land of the Other, they find what makes their lives meaningful and learn to cherish the moments of peace and happiness. His heroes do not show any intention to create their own realities or values, either. Instead, they participate in a different value system that does not require them to deny their natural inclinations. It is possible that Marlow’s lie to Kurtz’s Intended can be his effort to create a reality for her. However, she is the one who has the tendency to lock herself in a dream world for self-preservation.

Marlow himself uses the lie as a self-protection strategy as well. He meets the Intended at a time when he himself still is trying to make sense out of his Congo experience. Although these attempts suggest that the characters are trying to create an individual reality and a set of values of their own, it is evident that such attempts always take place in a Western setting. In his article on *Heart of Darkness*, Daniel Brudney claims that the disunity of the virtues is one of the themes Conrad deals with in his story. Brudney’s own argument, however, shows that he depends upon Marlow’s early judgment of his Congo experience:

Indeed, one theme of *Heart of Darkness* seems to be the disunity of the virtues. Again and again we see characters impressive for the presence of one virtue and problematic or even repellent for the absence of another, e.g., the cannibals possess “restraint” (i.e., temperance) but are cannibals. Since Brudney does not see any unity of the virtues, he concludes that Marlow’s tale has no moral and no inner truth. He seems to pay little, or no attentiveness to the native.
Those who claim that Kurtz exhibits a similar effort by oppressing the natives of the Congo describe him as a people’s disruptive, destructive, even murderous god.\textsuperscript{4} This seems to be a partial portrayal of the hero. The actions of the native woman and the native men who followed her to the shore while Marlow and his crew were taking Kurtz away by force do not come across as the actions of an oppressed people. They seem to protest against the savagery and tyranny of the white man that is forcefully takes one of them away. They are at the shore to show their support for their hero and display their silent resistance to the Europeans by claiming their man-Kurtz, who has adopted the native life style instead of creating a personal one.

This study recognizes that Conrad, as he himself claims, had an idea during the process of composing his stories. It is a truism that Conrad’s idea involved an ideal community that is in complete contrast with Plato’s discriminative, exclusive, and elitist commonwealth.\textsuperscript{5} Conrad’s does not reject the weak, the vulnerable, and the misfit. Instead, it investigates the reasons for these social deviations and depicts a way of forming a new environment for the individuals from different backgrounds to coexist. His vision does not focus on empty generalizations such as the idea that all white men are better than the natives are, or that the western value system is completely wrong.

A negative attitude towards native peoples does not receive approval from Conrad, either. He believes in the essential equality of all human beings. Najder’s statement that Conrad’s Malay, Arab, and black protagonists are depicted as moral equals to their European counterparts emphasizes that there is no racial bias in Conrad’s presentation of the natives. Najder’s argument against Achebe’s allegation of racism in \textit{Heart of Darkness} is worth mentioning. Najder believes that Achebe is wrong not only
because he misinterprets the story but also because he does not see that Conrad’s African characters are “fully humanized by the powerful presentation of their suffering” (Najder, 3), both collective and individual. He uses Kurtz’s African mistress as an example of the individual suffering. Once can easily add the people of Patusan, their leader Doramin, and his wife to this list.

Although some of his characters, especially his narrators, seem to be very hesitant to interact with natives, they become involved indirectly because of their relationships with the protagonists who have become the members of these native communities. Therefore the relationships between these two groups of Western characters have to be closely scrutinized to recognize Conrad’s affinity to the natives.

The most significant aspect of Conrad’s vision is its accurate perception of the individual as a whole. He knows that social discrimination and indifference are very dangerous to the individual’s mental and physical health. He is aware of the fact that modern individual has to focus exclusively on the physical aspects of his life at the expense of his spiritual existence. As Freund asserts, Conrad does not give in to pessimism and despair because they harm the wholeness of the individual; the mental disturbances eventually take an unaffordable toll on the individual’s physical and biological existence. The curious company doctor’s effort in Heart of Darkness to take the cranial measurement of each person that heads to the other parts of the world is a clear expression of this notion. Conrad uses Marlow, his narrator, to illustrate this modern phenomenon.
The different physical states Marlow perceives in Jim before and after the latter’s life among the natives emphasize the effect of one’s mental state on his physical being and the urgency of perceiving the individual as a whole.

It was not so much his fearlessness that I thought. It was strange how little account I took of it: as if it had been something too conventional to be at the root of the matter. No. I was more struck by the other gifts he had displayed. He had proved his grasp of the unfamiliar situation, his intellectual alertness in that field of thought. There was his readiness, too. Amazing. . .He was not eloquent, but there was a dignity in his constitutional reticence, there was a high seriousness in his stammerings.

(Lord Jim, 182)

The narrator’s persistent observation of the characters’ movements also functions as a literary tool to disconnect the reader from the story in order to engage him/her in philosophical deliberation. It encourages the reader to acquire a similar observant attitude towards the stories, the narrators, and the other characters for a better understanding and more reliable judgment. Having a storyteller whose random interruptions in his narrative make it easier for the reader to take up the role of a close observer emphasizes the individual’s capacity for self-rejuvenation. This storytelling technique also warns the reader not to confuse the storyteller’s perspective with that of the author.

In addition to reflecting Jim’s mental state, the physical changes Marlow notices in Jim also illustrate the different social environments he has been in: the first one is the European and the second is the native. The only possible description of Jim in the European setting is that of a misfit. Kurtz’s portrayal as an extremist by the journalist
who visits Marlow towards the end of the story seems to let the reader make a similar claim against him as well.

Kurtz’s extremity and Jim’s inability to fit are not their tragic flaws. For Conrad, these features are the inevitable outcomes of their stressful lives in a strictly indifferent and oppressive social system. Relying on the narrator as the only source of information without questioning him and his background can force the reader to see them as character flaws. Thus, any psychological examination of Conrad’s characters, disregarding their sociological circumstances will favor the narrators over the heroes and heroines. Karl prefers the narrator to the hero because of the first’s strong sense of self-control. However, the juxtaposition of Marlow’s socially secure position against Kurtz’s insecure one in Europe explains how these two characters react to social injustice and change: the latter’s disappointment and the former’s inertia.

Relying on the narrator’s early judgments in identifying the Conradian individual has created a superficial distinction between his characters. His narrators and his heroes have been viewed in terms of polarities: the Marlow-Kurtz polarity in *Heart of Darkness*, the Marlow-Jim polarity in *Lord Jim*, and many others. This mistakenly formed polarities between these characters affected the interpretation of the other binary oppositions in Conrad’s stories: those between winners and losers, fit and misfit, moderate and extreme, rational and irrational, normal and strange, and finally responsible and irresponsible. His early critics used the first term of each opposition to describe the narrator and the second and socially unacceptable one to identify the protagonist.

Many of Conrad’s critics have used Marlow’s metaphor of going over the edge to analyze and differentiate between the characters. His narrators pull their feet back while
his protagonists do not hesitate to go over the edge. Their jumps to the other side allowed the critics to unanimously label the heroes as irrational, irresponsible, and extreme. Eventually, the protagonists whose attempts are described as socially unacceptable become the representatives of the wrong and the evil while the narrators who seem to abide by social rules and regulations represent the right and the good. Marlow the narrator has received praise for his moral courage to control his desires. Kurtz, Jim, and the other heroes have been criticized for their will to power, Nietzschean and ruthless in its thrust. Many critics have seen their so-called tragic flaws and personal weaknesses as the source of the heroes’ strong senses of wish fulfillment. The sociological roots of these issues are yet to be rendered.

Instead of investigating sociological and political roots of these so-called personality weaknesses and flaws, some critics chose to draw analogies between Conrad’s life and his stories. The most famous examples of this critical tendency appear in the works of Frederick Karl and Daniel R. Schwarz, Conrad’s biographers. Schwarz’s view is that Kurtz is the eloquent artist whereas Marlow is the self-doubting side of Conrad. According to Karl, however, Kurtz is not eloquent at all. He believes that the disparities between the narrator and the protagonist—“between Marlow’s moderation and Kurtz’s anarchy,” for instance—are not unlike divisions that existed within Conrad’s himself. Furthermore, some critics point to the undeniable resemblance between Conrad’s failed protagonists and Conrad’s father, Apollo Korzeniowski, to claim that they are romantics and self-delusive. Freund advises the reader that one must read the story of Conrad’s parents, especially his father, in order to understand Conrad fully. He believes that his parents’ “tragic” history was their “legacy” to their orphaned son:
skepticism and compensating romanticism. The description of Conrad’s father as a “self-betrayed visionary” has been used to describe Kurtz, Jim, Almayer, and even Mrs. Verloc. The careful selection of the words “self-betrayal” and “visionary” seems to indicate that Conrad’s heroes who are traditionally associated with his father are doomed to a similar tragic end: self-betrayal and self-destruction. These words also resonate Plato’s solution for those who cannot work for the betterment of the republic: A citizen should work or die.⁸

Martin Bock’s book *Joseph Conrad and Psychological Medicine* is the most recent effort to link Conrad’s protagonists and their psychological dilemmas to Conrad’s own personality and life.⁹ Bock talks about Conrad’s actual medical experiences in detail and explores how these experiences affected his character portrayals and stories. The examples and the descriptions he uses reminds one of the earlier interpretations of these portrayals. While discussing the psychological dimension of *Heart of Darkness*, Bock focuses on the same old issue of restraint and loss of self-control, following the footsteps of his predecessor Frederick Karl. He claims that Marlow consciously employs a “rhetoric of restraint” while Kurtz is morally insane. Jim is a romantic in isolation. Bock claims that solitude and seclusion, with their associated illnesses, neurasthenia, agoraphobia, and claustrophobia, are imprinted in many of Conrad’s characters. All these claims demonstrate that Conrad, as an alienated modern individual, wanted to find a way out of these psychological disorders from which he himself and many Europeans suffered. In this sense, Conrad turned the process of writing into a process of healing.

The biographical and psychological dimensions of Conrad’s stories are undeniable. Yet, the examination of the socio-economic roots of the problems Conrad’s
characters face can prove that neither Conrad nor his protagonists are self-betrayed visionaries. They are not social outcasts because they are able to act as social beings once the system does not treat them as machines. They are individuals whose original social system has pushed them to the margins as a result of their personal views.

The main reason for Marlow’s hesitation to go over the edge is not his sound judgment, as Karl claims. It is either his more privileged social status, compared to the protagonists’ or his inertia. Although he is dissatisfied with what goes around him, he does not have to struggle to get his wishes fulfilled because his social position allows him to deploy the available means and prestigious people he knows as intermediaries to receive what he needs. This socially unjust practice becomes evident when his aunt easily gets him a job by using her social connections. He has certain rights and privileges which make him feel secure and stable. However, this is not the case with many of Conrad’s protagonists. Kurtz’s extremism and strong will to power has always been used as the reason for his downfall. Jim’s flaw is his unachievable dreams of heroism. The issue of social injustice becomes more apparent in Mrs. Verloc’s case. Her sense of insecurity is the result of the social and familial obligations imposed upon her by society rather than her delicate and self-delusive femininity. The practice of social discrimination and injustice becomes increasingly unbearable in her case not only because of her social status but also because of her gender. Through her suicide, she crosses over the edge. By this metaphoric move—going over the edge—all these characters reject their externally-imposed social roles by expressing their social discomfort and disobedience and by challenging the authority.
The same metaphor of going over the edge seems to be applicable to the creator of these stories because of his interest in these social misfits and their inexplicable experiences. He uses individuals from lower classes as his protagonists and those from higher classes as his narrators, implying that change will come from down up.

Unlike his contemporaries, Conrad believed that interaction and reconciliation between the opposite genders, between different social classes, and various cultures, is inevitable. Although he seemed to face very serious problems in the case of reconciling different social classes, he accomplished success in the other two areas. Reconciling the opposite genders in Western culture was very challenging, especially in a Western setting. The most successful and peaceful reconciliation occurs when the disappointed Western individual interacts with the native. Since such a process between different classes within the Western culture was almost impossible, immigration becomes a necessary step to take in this process. In Conrad’s world, the route of immigration goes from West to East, completely opposite of the direction conventional notion of immigration suggests. Because of Western media’s presentation of West as the center of civilization, the idea that West has to move towards East sounds incredibly absurd even more than a century later. It is not difficult to imagine how toilsome it would be for Conrad to get his reader comprehend and accept the idea that West has to turn towards the natives for help.

Although in some cases, selfish and material concerns initiated these eastward journeys, it eventually provided most of immigrants with a better idea of themselves and the world. In this sense, Conrad’s protagonists are immigrants, not exiles, because they decide to leave their home countries without any intentions of coming back. This concept
of traveling was very unusual for his era. Most of the Westerners who “chose” to leave home had the intentions to come back and settle in their homelands after achieving their goals—personal gain, adventure, or fulfillment of their royal duties. Besides this group of Westerners who made the choice to go aboard, there were those who had to leave because of their criminal records, their religious beliefs, or their racial orientations.

Conrad’s protagonists do not belong to the second group because they are not criminals; their racial and religious beliefs are not the reasons for their departure. Although they seem to fit in the first group, they differ in terms of their plans for the future. They are individuals who feel the absence of some of the essential values in their lives and decide to seek them in other locations. Their motives to leave are in complete contradiction with those of the other Europeans. The following example describes the difference between Conrad’s protagonists and their contemporaries. It involves Conrad’s contemporary writer and critic, E. M. Forster and his colonial novel, *A Passage to India.*

The novel evolves around two different social systems and peoples: the British and the Indian. The events mostly take place in India, and yet Indian presence is weak. There is a clear-cut separation between these two groups: the Indians are the colonized and the British are the colonizers. Satya Mohanty uses the “Bridge Party” scene to describe the tension between these two cultures:

In Forster’s *A Passage to India,* Mrs Turton, the wife of the collector, faces a difficulty of which she is barely conscious. “You are superior to [the Indians], anyway,” she tells Mrs. Moore and Adela, who have just arrived from England and are keen to be introduced to the Indians who
have been invited to the “bridge Party.” “Don’t forget that. You’re superior to everyone in India except one or two the ranis, and they’re on an equality.” Competent in her role as the gracious host, Mrs Turton shakes hands with a group of Indian women and says “a few words of welcome in Urdu.”

Mrs. Turton learned the lingo, but only to speak to her servants, so she knew none of the politer forms and of the verbs only the imperative mood, which indicates that her effort was merely self-serving and imperialistic.

Language becomes another tool in this power struggle. Thus, any interaction between these cultures was a chance for the European to display his power and strength to the Indian. The British were trying to teach the Indians that they should abide by the white men’s law while the Indians were either looking for loopholes to attack their oppressor or trying to impress their masters to get some personal benefits. This was nothing but a power game where each side is exerting every means available to have the upper hand. This was the common mentality of the era: race-conscious, separatist, color-conscious, non-compromising. Even those who sensed the need for a change did not believe that it could take place. Forster was one of them.

The British strongly emphasized the impossibility of change for different reasons. They used it to empower their own people by reminding them of their superiority and power. They also used it to remind the Indians of their inferiority and weakness and to warn them against any rebellion. The Indians kept this point in mind to be able to survive. Consequently, the interactions between the members of these groups could not bring about any sincere, let alone intimate, relationships. The tension created by this
overwhelming reality is prevalent throughout the novel. Almost all of Forster’s British characters willingly went to India as part of the colonizing force because of their beliefs that truth resided in the West and that they had to teach it to the savage. They claimed that this was the only way to get rid of the darkness and savagery of the natives. Any effort to bring the two groups together faced failure. The idea of success in this novel is identical with the fulfillment of European mission of civilizing the natives. The British characters use every opportunity to express their desire to go back home after they have fulfilled their duties. Their lives in India is always transitory.

The only character who shows an attempt to reconcile the differences between the West and the natives is Forster’s young Indian man, Aziz. Eventually, he fails and faces legal charges because of an alleged sexual assault to a British woman who seems to display some philanthropic tendencies. There is only one British character, Fielding, who believes that Aziz is innocent. At personal level, Forster tries hard to indicate some hope for future, but his efforts are no avail. At the end, there is no indication of a change of any kind: both parties are fighting for power: one in the position of the master while the other is the oppressed servant. The future of the Indians is the indefinite governance by the British while the British who are now serving in India will enjoy a better life when they return to their home country. The implication is that although the life in India is transitory for the British characters, the life under British rule seems ever lasting for the Indians.

Although Forster is highly critical of British colonialism and praises the few who reach out to the Indians, he limits their interactions with the Indians because of his belief that India must first become independent before such individuals as Fielding who believes that Aziz, the accused Indian, is innocent, can engage themselves in close
relationships. Forster admits that there are limits to any interracial relationship in a colonial situation. With this acknowledgement, Forster’s story does not invoke much hope for future. Forster does not allow those few who can reach out to the “Other” to enjoy the same amount of freedom of speech and action he allows to his other European characters in a European setting. In spite of his critique of British colonialism, he gives in to the status quo.

Unlike Forster, Conrad believes that any individual effort to connect the two cultures is the initial step towards the ultimate social freedom. If the few who can reach out to the “Other” do not act upon what they know, things will not change. The established view will become more prevalent and push those few to the margins. Conrad initiates his criticism of the established view by allowing his characters to express their personal opinions about the European dream of civilizing the world. When Marlow goes to say goodbye to his aunt, he describes the general view as well as his own personal view on the issue of colonialism:

One thing more remained to do—say goodbye to my excellent aunt. I found her triumphant. I had a cup of tea—the last decent cup of tea for many days—and a room that most soothingly looked just as you would expect a lady’s drawing-room look, we had a long quiet chat by the fireside. In the course of these confidences it became quite plain to me I had been presented to the wife of the high dignitary, and goodness knows to how many more people besides, as an exceptional and gifted creature—a piece of good fortune for the Company—a man you don’t get hold of every day [. . .] I t appeared, however, I was also one of the Workers, with a capital, you
know. Something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle. There had been a lot of such rot let loose in print and talk just about that time, and the excellent woman, living in the rush of all that humbug, got carried off her feet. She talked about “weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways,” till, upon my word, she made me quite uncomfortable. I ventured to hint that the Company was run for profit.

(Heart of Darkness, 79)

Conrad offers some information about how these Western men, mostly young, are convinced to believe that they are the ones who can pull these primitive natives out of their miserable darkness. His portrayal of Marlow explains how the narrator, as a young boy, got interested in these newly discovered parts of the world. The famous paper media of his time plays a significant role in this process of recruiting the youth by triggering their passion for success, curiosity, and adventure.

In Marlow’s case, his curiosity as a young boy gets him interested in these places. He describes his passion for maps and dark points on it with the following words:

Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there. The North Pole was one of these places, I remember. Well, I haven’t been there yet, and shall not try now. The glamour’s off. Other places were scattered about the Equator, and in every sort of latitude all
over the two hemispheres. I have been in some of them, and … well, we won’t talk about that. But there was one yet—the biggest, the most blank, so to speak—that I had a hankering after. (Heart of Darkness, 73)

As an adult, Marlow evaluates his innocent dream of exploring these dark spots. His dream was an outcome of the then-popular political agenda sponsored by the governing classes: discovering new places.

In his analysis of Conrad’s 1923 essay “Geography and Some Explorers,” Robert Hampson refers to Marlow’s passion for maps and claims that for Marlow these places did not exist until mapped by Europeans. He adds that this “colonial solipsism” was typical of the era. He describes how the discoveries of some of these blanks spaces were made. Hampson also suggests that there were some colonial interests behind this motivation:

This “fascination” with maps obviously differs from the scientific desire for cartographic accuracy: it is rather a matter of projection. Where the Enlightenment project aims at a different kind of mastery through the gradual accumulation of precise detail, this aims at mastery through imaginative domination.  

Although Marlow’s desire to discover those dark spots seems to be naïve, the overall intention of his society was to expand and take control of resources that were either not available or very scarce at home. The main justifications for this agenda were that the natives were uncivilized and that they would not know how to use their resources properly. Therefore, the West had to protect the natives from their own evil selves, lest
they would destroy themselves. The following words indicate that the maps were used as objects of reverie and as stimuli to the imagination:

True, by this time it was not a blank space any more. It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery—a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness. But there was in it a river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with his head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land. And as I looked at the map of it in a shop-window, it fascinated me as a snake would a bird—a silly little bird. Then I remembered there was big concern, a Company for trade on that river. Dash it all! I thought to myself, they can’t trade without using some kind of craft on that lot of fresh water-steamboats! Why shouldn’t I try to get charge of one? I went along Fleet Street, but couldn’t shake off the idea. The snake had charmed me. (Heart of Darkness, 73)

This was how Marlow made his decision to discover the world. The maps of those dark places in a shop-window ignited so many dreams in his mind. The ultimate target group of the propaganda and the incentive to get this group to act were well chosen.

The imagery Marlow uses in this quote is very significant: the river, connecting West and East, is described as a snake with all its connotations while the young man, the explorer for that matter, is only a silly and innocent bird. Thus, the indication is that the charm the river offered to him was of an evil nature; it was sinister as well as dangerous.
Such descriptions could be enough to label Marlow an imperialist. Yet, his thoughts after his visits to some of these dark places illuminate his present stand on the same issue that is opposite to his initial one.

In the first part of his statement, Marlow mentions that he wanted to go to North Pole but he will not try it now because the glamour is over. This could mean two different things: from the post-colonial view, it could be the confession of an imperialist who has exploited enough to quench his thirst for adventure. Alternatively, perhaps, someone else has already discovered that spot, and its charm has disappeared. However, it could also mean that the boy who dreamt himself as the explorer of the dark spots on the map has come to realize that the human mind can be the darkest and evillest place of all. Man first has to discover his own nature as well as his natural inclinations that have long been repressed and ignored.

His experience in those dark spots has also taught him that it could be very dark and fatal if the human mind transgresses beyond its capacity and its natural state. In addition to this realization, he also finds out that these places are completely different from what he was told. He comes to accept Conrad’s belief in the equality of all human beings. He has seen that these places have their own histories and civilizations. His observations have initiated this thought process that has provided him with self-knowledge and social awareness. His ability to tell stories becomes his medium of informing and educating others about these blank spaces of the world.

The paradox between Marlow’s passion for maps and the actual objective behind this scientific project refers to a significant dichotomy between the real thing and its representation. The “large shining map” Marlow notices at the company headquarters in
Brussels is emblematic of this opposition; it is marked with “all the colours of a rainbow” (*Heart of Darkness*, 76). Hampson claims that this is a map of political dominion, not of geography. He adds that the map represents the “scramble for Africa among the European powers with the different colors marking out areas of domination and control” (Hampson, 38). Marlow’s narrative unveils the main objective behind the notions of disinterestedness, objective representation, rationality, and progress: Europe’s strong will to absolute power over the rest of the world.

Later in his narration, he talks about how he was shocked when he saw similarities between the Western man and the native. Nonetheless, the young man faced the whole truth and his dream shattered once he began to experience the real thing. This is how he explains his discovery of the truth:

> The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled for, of a conquered monster, but, there--there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were--No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it--this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity--like yours--the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you--you so remote from the night of first ages--could comprehend. And why not? The mind
of man capable of anything--because everything is in it, all the past as well as all the future. What was there after all? Joy, fear, sorrow, devotion, valour, rage--who can tell?-but truth-truth stripped of its cloak of time. Let the fool gape and shudder-the man who knows, and can look on without a wink. But he must at least be as much of a man as these on the shore. He must meet that truth with his own true stuff--with his own inborn strength. Principles? Principles won’t do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags--rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No; you want a deliberate belief.

(Heart of Darkness, 110)

His initial feelings about what he has seen are different from those of the other Europeans who traveled to those lands: disillusionment with European imperialism and betrayal. He comes to accept these peoples’ humanity, although he calls it ugly.

He is not so proud of what he is either. He becomes aware of the fact that his acquisitions, principles, and his clothing blindfolded him to view the white man as very civilized and advanced by ignoring the innate inclination towards the evil in the human mind. Then, any serious thought of what the human mind is capable of is enough to shatter one’s self-esteem and self-image. It is undeniable that these thoughts can pull an individual into the depths of pessimism and existential despair. The tone of his narration oscillates between pessimism and optimism. Marlow, Karl’s emblem of Europeanness, skeptically questions the European worldview and its validity. The denial of the existence of good and evil within the human soul is the most serious flaw of the Western civilization. For such a misleading notion brings along many personal and social problems: self-deceit, self-indulgence, self-assertion, racial prejudice, social
discrimination, injustice, and many others. Unfortunately, all these distorted self images will create either merciless tyrants such as Gentleman Brown and Cornelius or disillusioned and self-questioning individuals like Kurtz, Jim, and Marlow. Although Marlow seems to be in the middle, his inexplicable interest in the protagonists and his story telling techniques bring him closer to the second group.

Marlow’s observations always refer to the outward image of the individual, following the erroneous social practice of relying on appearances. What Karl praises Marlow for--his constant effort to restrain himself--eventually forces him to prioritize the external features over the internal ones. As a creature of his time, Marlow has learned to conceal his own feelings and emotions by focusing on the apparent and the tangible. Although he uses this approach as a defense mechanism and a survival tool, he becomes the victim of new fears and phobias. With this approach, he is able to divert the social attention away from himself, but he cannot get rid of the fear of being exposed. However, once revealed, reality claims its right over the individual. He is not the only protagonist who suffers from this social dilemma.

Victimized by the same social practice, Mrs. Verloc believes that her husband is a reasonably good man because he carries himself around as a gentleman and does not mind living in the same house with her mentally slow brother. When she finds out that her seemingly nice husband did not hesitate to use her brother to reach his evil goal, she brings both her husband’s and her own life to an end.

Linda Dryden’s juxtaposition of the traditional idea of the English gentleman with Conrad’s interpretation of this idea clearly shows the unbridgeable gap between reality and its European representation. Dryden believes that although “Jim’s self-identifies as
an English gentleman,” to his “contemporary audience his behavior exposed him as a
betrayer of the code and a fraud.” The ironic nature of Gentleman Brown’s name does not
require any explanation after all She sees Gentleman Brown as a direct repudiation of the
code. Brown exposes the imperial endeavor as the illegitimate and intrusive enterprise it
actually was. Furthermore, Dryden claims that Conrad’s treatment reveals that the “idea
of the English gentleman and the romantic illusions of imperial heroism are insubstantial
because they are rigid codes of conduct and ideas imposed from without. A moral
grounding is required for such notions to have real meaning.” 13

The paradox between the dying black boy and the European man in white in
Heart of Darkness is the perfect example of this imperial dilemma. It is emblematic of
the horrific atrocities the human mind that has learned to rely on the representation and
the external can cause. The colors white and black play a significant role in this picture.
The boy deserves to die because, for a European, his skin color indicates danger and evil
intention. His skin, the external aspect of his being, becomes the symbol of his inner
world. The color white, on the other hand, connotes an inner world that is free of
blemishes and imperfections. The death scene of the black boy does not affect the
European man in white as much as Marlow. For the European, the white has to eliminate
the black to guarantee its future. Therefore, there is no need for remorse or repentance.
Marlow’s discomfort at the scene and afterwards is the expression of his disapproval of
this imperialistic practice.

From the onset, young Marlow’s “innocent” desire for adventure turns into a
painful spiritual journey of self-knowledge. He becomes a witness to the atrocities and
crimes committed under the banner of humanity in those places. In his Shamanism,
Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing, Michael Taussig lists some of the horrific crimes committed by those Europeans and describes the means used to conceal their selfish goals. Taussig’s book mainly focuses on South America. He also explains how the ‘wild man’ kept his sanity amidst this terror and was able to begin the process of healing. The wild man’s struggle to heal is similar to the Conradian protagonist’s effort to rehabilitate and to Thiong’o’s personal journey of decolonization. Timothy Mitchell, on the other hand, describes the systematic colonizing that took place in Egypt. These are just some of the documentary books that unveil this dark era in the recent history of the world.

Once Marlow sets foot on the land of the Other, he cannot avoid the horrifying scenes these distorted minds have caused:

Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees, leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the altitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair. Another mine on the cliff I 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.

They were dying slowly—it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals. They were nothing earthly now—nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation, lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recess of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they
sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. These moribund shapes were free as air--and nearly as thin.

(Heart of Darkness, 85)

One can argue that the story of these moribund shapes might not be historically accurate and therefore cannot be true accounts, but the description is very strong and real. This depressing and heart-breaking description also sheds light upon the nature of the international trading laws and contracts that were in use at that time. Those laws were defined and enforced by European powers and they were dying not of natural causes but of the brutalities committed by their white masters. Once the native workers who were not valued more than machines or animals were out of service, they could be discarded or left to crawl away and die. The legal contracts, favoring the company owners over the workers, were obviously not binding to protect the lives of the workers, especially native workers, at all. The absence of international trading rules and regulations demonstrates that this distorted and disruptive philosophical inclination permeates its evil into every aspect of life and causes systemic damage.

Marlow’s depiction of the scene moves from the general to the particular with the very personal description of a dying black boy. This is one of the most illustrative and vivid depictions of the “black death caused by the white silly birds.”

Then, glancing down, I saw a face near my hand. The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree, and slowly the eyelids rose and the sunken eyes looked at me, enormous and vacant, a kind of blind, white flicker in the depths of the orbs, which died out slowly. The man seemed young--almost a boy--but you know with them it’s hard to
tell. I found nothing else to do but to offer him one of my good Swede’s ship’s biscuits I had in my pocket. The fingers closed slowly on it and held—there was no other movement and no other glance. He had tied a white worsted round his neck—Why? Where did he get it? Was it a badge—an ornament—a charm—a propitiatory act? Was there any idea at all connected with it? It looked startling round his neck, this bit of white thread from beyond the seas. (Heart of Darkness, 85)

Although Marlow tries to dissociate himself from the scene and the people—either as, a result of his cultural baggage or as a tactic to keep his audience interested—his words and narrative technique give him away. This image pushes Marlow to deal with issues that the paper media that inspired him to explore the blank dots on the map kept hidden. He now sees the horror of European imperialism with his own eyes. The innocent bird of the past shockingly becomes to realize that the whole idea of civilizing the rest of the world is far from being sincere and humane. It is true that he does not do much to correct it, although he sees the real situation.

However, this inertia does not make him an advocate of either corporate governance or imperialism. While Marlow the young man does not bring out any changes or help the dying shapes, Marlow the narrator uses his storytelling talent very carefully to convey his message to his immediate audience as well as to his future readers. At times there are glimpses of the cultural baggage in his narration. Once he immerses himself in the course of the story and breaks away from his cultural acquisitions and principles, his real feelings, yearnings and ideas emerge. After describing this young black boy’s death, Marlow begins to ponder about the white thing around the black boy’s neck. Then, he
introduces a European character in white. His presence seems to answer Marlow’s question about the white thing. This man in white is not only in complete contrast with the previous scene but he is also the cause of that scene, at least in part. This connection would be very difficult to make if Marlow did not keep wondering about the white thing around the black boy’s neck, strangling him to death.

The order in which Marlow presents his descriptions helps the reader get the correct idea of what is happening as well. This man in white is emblematic of the indifference and inhumanity performed by the companies that are more concerned about their contracts than the human loss. The ivory company makes profit at the expense of many human lives. Here is how Marlow meets this man in white, as a representative of those white-outside-dark-inside beings:

I didn’t want any more loitering in the shade, and I made haste towards the station. When near the buildings I met a white man, in such an unexpected elegance of get-up that in the first moment I took him for a sort of vision. I saw a high starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca jacket, snowy trousers, a clean necktie, and varnished boots. No hat. Hair parted, brushed, oiled, under a green-lined parasol held in a big white hand. He was amazing, and had a pen-holder behind his ear. (*Heart of Darkness*, 86)

The more Marlow the narrator talks about his first meeting with this man in white, the more cynical his overt criticism gets:

I shook hands with this miracle, and I learned he was the accountant, and that all the book-keeping was done at this station. He had come out for a
moment, he said, ‘to get a breath of fresh air.’ The expression sounded wonderfully odd, with its suggestion of a sedentary desk-life.

*(Heart of Darkness, 86)*

Marlow confesses that he respected the man because “in the great demoralization of the land” this man “kept up his appearance.” Yet, the juxtaposition of this depiction of an immaculately white shape against the images of dying black people indicates bitter criticism rather than sympathy towards the white man.

The new environment is challenging the innocent young man’s imperialistic dreams. There are only two reactions he can show: expressing his disillusionment and disgust at the horror around him, or denying reality and immersing himself in the mission he was sent for—to help the company increase its ivory production. For Marlow, terrified by what he has seen, the first reaction is completely new and very unusual. The second is familiar because it is widely practiced, and he himself is observing such a practice in this white man’s attitude. This is only a snapshot of how Europeans behaved in the lands of the “Other”: oppressive, destructive, indifferent, and self-indulged.

*Lord Jim* offers another presentation of this widely practiced inhumanity. When Jim begins to work on the Patna, there are four other whites besides him. The ship is carrying Arab pilgrims. However, there was no interaction between them: “The five whites on board lived amidships, isolated from the human cargo.” For most of the crewmembers, the passengers were not different from the other types of cargo. Although these humans are paying for their trips as regular clients, their foreign cultural background is enough to turn them into ‘cattle’ in the eyes of the German skipper *(Lord Jim, 9)*. The four out of the five whites on the ship do not hesitate to jump out of the ship
when they find out that the ship is about to sink, without warning the pilgrims. Jim is the only one who senses the wrongfulness of that action. He hesitates and yet cannot help jumping, giving in to his fear of death. However, his conscience does not let him forget and eventually forces him to confess during the court trial. The inner struggle Jim experiences before and after his jump separates him from the rest of the white crew on the ship as well as many other members of the colonizing power.

Almayer is the only Conradian character in the four novels that presents a completely imperialistic practice toward the natives. Although the same claim has been made for Kurtz because of the terrifying image of the heads on the posts around the Inner Station, there are many other images suggesting the opposite. The native’s farewell meeting on the shore before Marlow takes Kurtz away and the latter’s willingness to give up his attack upon Marlow’s ship are some of them. It is not definite that he came to the Congo for ivory and power and yet along the way he has come to realize and accept the truth. Marlow, on the other hand, realizes the truth but cannot approve of it, at least openly.

Kurtz’s physical weakness when Marlow finds him in the Inner Station is symbolic of the painful mental journey the modern individual makes into the depths of his soul. Almayer, on the other hand, does not show any indication of change in his belief or practice. He believes in the supremacy of the white and sees the natives as primitive and inferior. His mistreatment of his native wife is the most obvious example of his imperialistic mindset. At the end, his belief in his superiority and his dream of a better life in Europe with his half-native daughter bring his downfall. He is the only one who goes through all the existential dilemmas the critics wrongly identified in the other
protagonists. He is the only one that creates his own values and reality. His rejection of
the native, represented by his wife, as his equal, is “his folly.” He could have had a happy
and fulfilling life with his native wife and his daughter. Conrad does not allow him to
achieve his dream because it would be a confirmation of the imperialistic view of man.

Of course, this is only a portion of the world Conrad depicts: the West’s
imperialistic relationship with the ‘Other. Conrad also focuses on whatever is happening
in Europe, especially in Britain. From a Conrad’s perspective, things are not that
different: oppression and indifference to human suffering are widespread since
selfishness has become the ultimate human motivation. While the natives are being
exploited in their own land, the members of lower classes are suffering from oppression
and exploitation back home. The majority of Conrad’s characters belong to the lower
middle classes. They have to strive hard for the opportunities Marlow can easily obtain.
Although they seem to share the same childhood imagination, they cannot go far in the
achievement process because of the social and economic impediments and conditions set
between them and their dreams.

As a young boy, Jim pictures himself as a hero who travels around the world and
rescues people from pirates and many other types of danger. Compared to Marlow’s more
scientific attitude toward the New World, Jim’s is very romantic and old-fashioned. One
can easily claim that his idea of the world is not as sophisticated as Marlow’s. In Jim’s
case, saving people is part of his dream. Marlow likes to discover on his own; he is more
like Robinson Crusoe: self-sufficient, self-confident, persistent, and opportunistic. Jim’s
dreams are more romantic than realistic:
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 uncovered reefs in search of 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, as unflinching as a hero in a book.  

(Lord Jim, 3)

This quotation also refers to another means used by imperialistic propaganda, literary works. The map, displayed in the shop window, fascinated Marlow while literature affected Jim’s imagination to romantic deeds.

He lost himself in this imaginary world:

He loved these dreams and the success of imaginary achievements. They were the best parts of life, its secret truth, and its hidden reality. They had a gorgeous virility, the charm of vagueness, philtre of an unbounded confidence in itself. There was nothing he could not face.  

(Lord Jim, 14)

The dreams of young Marlow and Jim are inspired by the same philosophy, but through different media. However, their experiences follow different paths, due to their different social positions. At the end, though, both of them are shocked to the point of inertia when they have come to witness that their dreams, hollow at the core, are shattered under the weight of inevitable real life situations. Marlow follows the dreams of his curious nature;
Jim gets a chance to perform the heroic deeds he has been dreaming. Yet, both feel disappointment and disillusionment, painfully realizing the emptiness of their dreams.

This is where their paths diverge: Marlow can move on with his life as it was although he himself will not be able to be the same. Jim, on the other hand, faces an injustice, and his whole existence is being tortured under an unjust trial. Thus, he does not have any other choice but to leave his homeland in search of another community. It seems that he wants to correct his first mistake and begin the process of healing by leaving. Now, he is alone and heading for something unclear and unknown. This is how Jim’s eastward journey begins. Moreover, he never comes back to where he was born, not because he is not strong enough to accept the truth, but because he finds a place where he is welcomed and allowed to exist as an immigrant. The intolerance, loneliness, indifference, and injustice Jim experienced in his homeland are replaced with understanding, family and friends, concern for others, and fairness. Jim’s reaction to Marlow’s question if he will come back expresses his unwillingness to return because all his ties with his culture and family are severed.

Another famous Conradian immigrant is Kurtz of *Heart of Darkness*. As with Jim, he comes from a lower middle class but has a strong desire to achieve things that are not expected from his status: he wants to marry a girl from a higher class in his home country. Unlike Jim and Marlow, Kurtz shows attempts to fight against injustices, and yet when he cannot overcome them at home, he leaves to get away from these social problems. Although he had the intention of coming back, he changes his mind during his stay in the Congo. What he experiences in the land of the ‘Other’ is an unbearable spiritual disintegration. He sees the beast in himself coming loose over the defenseless
natives and torture them. Once he realizes that he is expected to repress his natural inclinations such as love, he can no longer perform his “normal” task. He becomes an obstacle for his company and therefore needs to be replaced. This is where Marlow appears; he is to take over Kurtz’s position as the manager of the company’s ivory business in the Congo because the latter has lost his sanity and gone native. However, Kurtz does not receive such a terrifying treatment as the black workers do because of his race and his powerful position among the natives. He knows the ways the West operates and can prevent them from reaching ivory by fighting them back.

Marlow, on the other hand, does not react to what he sees in the same manner as Kurtz does. Obviously, he is the only Conradian character who actually returns to his own country. The rest either chooses the life among the natives over the life that they had back home or dies dissatisfied in the land of the Other. Thus, in most cases, their eastbound journeys are one way only because there was not much at home for them to come back. Although Kurtz has his Intended in England, he will not be able to go back to his former self and life after his Congo experience. Marlow does not have to worry about what would happen if he comes back. His social status and powerful contacts will accommodate him.

Almayer is the only protagonist who leaves his country and wants to come back. He is also the only exile and the real outcast among these three protagonists because he does not get a positive reception either from his original society and cannot accept the natives as his equals. He is the real victim. His insistence on stereotyping the natives prevented him from having healthy interaction and communication with his own family, his native wife and his half-native daughter. This social isolation eventually contaminates
the harmony and well being, mental as well as physical, of the individual. His mistake is his belief that he can buy happiness and make his daughter share his dream of a comfortable life in Europe. He thinks that he can forget his miserable life among the natives, although his own daughter is the living reminder of it. He has lost his touch with reality and with his own self.

These new discoveries and inventions over-stimulate the human mind and ignore the mental aspect of human existence unnourished. This is how Conrad describes this human condition:

The intellectual stage of mankind being as yet in its infancy, and States, like most individuals, having but a feeble and imperfect consciousness of the worth and force of the inner life, the need of making their existence manifest to themselves is determined in the direction of physical activity. The idea of ceasing to grow in territory, in strength, in wealth, in influence--in anything but wisdom and self-knowledge--is odious to them as the omen of the end. Action, in which is to be found the illusion of a mastered destiny, can alone satisfy our uneasy vanity and lay to rest the haunting fear of the future--a sentiment concealed, indeed, but proving its existence by the force it has, when invoked, to stir the passions of a nation. It will be long before we have learned that in the great darkness before us there is nothing that we need fear. Let us act lest we perish--is the cry. And the only form of action open to a State can be of no other than aggressive nature.\textsuperscript{15}

The cultural pressure for action and power endangers man’s well-being as a whole.
Eventually the cooperation between the brain, representing the human body, and the heart, representing the human soul, breaks apart.

The body is no longer composed of social groups forming its various limbs and organs. It exists apart from its people, as a sort of machinery [...] Individuals are not parts of the body, but uniform particles that flow within it. The body’s mechanical parts serve to channel, regulate, and set in motion these moving particles.16

As opposed to this chaotic image of disconnected particles flowing in the body, Shakespeare describes an organic setting where the individual recovers his wholeness and becomes the building block of a coherent and harmonious body as well as a society.

The most dramatic expression of the interrelatedness of the individual’s wholeness with social stability is in Menenius’ tale in Shakespeare’s Coriolanus:

There was a time when all the body’s members
Rebelled against the belly; thus accused it:
That only like a gulf it did remain
I’ the midst o’ the body, idle and inactive,
Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing
Like labor with the rest: where the other instruments
Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,
And mutually participate, did minister
Unto the appetite and affection common
Of the whole body. The belly answered […]
To the discontented members, the mutinous parts
That envied his receipt; even so most fitly
As you malign our senators for that
They are not such as you […]
‘True is it, my incorporate friends,’
‘That I receive the general food at first
Which you do live upon; and fit it is,
Because I am the storehouse and the shop
Of the whole body. But, if you do remember,
I send it through the rivers of your blood,
Even to the court, the heart, to the seat o’ the brain;
And through the cranks and offices of man,
The strongest nerves and small inferior veins
From me receive that natural competency
Whereby they live. And […]
though all at once cannot
See what I do deliver out to each,
Yet I can make my audit up, that all
From me do back receive the flour of all,
And leave me but the bran…
The senators of Rome are this good belly,
And you the mutinous members; for, examine
Their counsels and their cares, digest things rightly
Touching the weal o’ the common, you shall find
No public benefit which you receive
But it proceeds or comes from them to you,
And no way from yourselves.¹⁷

This organic tale emphasizes that a well-functioning social system has to sponsor a sense of solidarity and shared meaning between its members regardless of their class, color, and race. However, in modern societies, there is no body politic, only individuals who have come together voluntarily and can separate voluntarily without maiming themselves.

The following three classic images compare these two contradictory conditions of man as a social being: the modern and the ancient. The emphasis on the wholeness of man as body and soul in the ancient model guarantees a healthy social environment. This model also stresses that there has to be a preexisting frame determining the relations between individuals, between men, between men and women, between the rulers and the ruled.

There are three classic images of the polity that clarify this issue. The first is the ship of state, which is one thing if it is to be forever at sea, and quite another if it is to reach port and passengers go their separate ways. They think about one another and their relationships on the ship very differently in the two cases. The former case is the ancient city, the latter, the modern state. The other two images are the herd and the hive, which oppose each other. The herd may need a shepherd, but each of the animals is grazing for itself and can easily be separated from the herd. In the hive, by contrast, there are workers, drones, and a queen; there is a division of
labor and a product toward which they all work in common; separation from the hive is extinction. The herd is modern, the hive ancient.\textsuperscript{18}

Conrad’s depiction of the native society is very similar to the description of the ancient city and the hive. The definition of man as part of a group is more appropriate than that of the herd in which each animal takes care of its own needs. Conrad realizes that separating the individual from his social environment will disorient and disintegrate him. The freedom in the herd gains primacy over community, family and even nature without which the individual cannot survive. The need for communal and family life is not part of the modern city because there is nothing to connect its inhabitants to one another, except financial interest.

Conrad depicts two scenarios that can take place in the absence of communal and family life. The individual’s ego without the checks and balances provided by the social environment will perform incredibly selfish acts at the expense of others. Alternatively, it will push an individual with a limited capacity and emotionally vulnerable nature so much so that he will break down and fall into despair and sorrow. His self-centered dreams will eventually clash with reality. While Brierly, Gentleman Brown of \textit{Lord Jim}, and Mr. Verloc and his revolutionist friends in \textit{The Secret Agent} present the first group, Mrs. Verloc, Kurtz, and Jim belong to the second. The horrific scenes Marlow describes in \textit{Heart of Darkness} are also clear examples of the horrific crimes this freedom can cause. Consequently, not only the physical but also the mental health of a human being will receive serious damage. The disconnected human body cannot function well and becomes dangerous to the others.
Timothy Mitchell claims that this disconnection and disharmony the modern individual goes through is the outcome of the conscious effort of the political authority to keep the masses under control. He calls this imperialistic effort as the process of “capturing the bodies of a population” by dividing the whole being into two separate concerns. In Mitchell’s terms, the brain represents the body while the heart represents the soul. He uses a quote from the report of a French military officer in Algeria:

In effect the essential thing is to gather into groups this people who is everywhere and nowhere; the essential thing is to make them something we can seize hold of. When we have them in our hands, we will then be able to do many things which are quite impossible for us today and which will perhaps allow us to capture their minds after we have captured their bodies. (Mitchell, 67)

While this officer is referring to the natives of Algeria, his description of how to colonize them is what Conrad believes happens back home through the modes of suppression and tutoring.

The lives of these characters--Marlow, Kurtz, Almayer, and Jim--are emblematic of how these two modes work upon the exterior of the body and finally shape the individual’s mind. Since this is the situation in Europe, Conrad knows that the restoring human worth and dignity can only be possible through taking those vulnerable individuals out of this environment and placing them in another one. The new locale has to allow them to interact with other cultures and learn from their experience before the merciless crimes of the first group contaminate it. Therefore, he chooses those who have suffered social injustices or who are critical of Western social system as his main
characters. The land of the Other is where Conrad believes the restoration and rejuvenation of such individuals can take place. Although he realizes that the moral decay of the natives has begun because of the violent existence of such whites as Gentleman Brown, the social bond among the natives is still intact.

Conrad’s depiction of the decaying condition of the modern individual has two immediate functions: first, it justifies the reasons for his protagonists’ immigration overseas. Secondly, it prepares the reader for the mental journey he/she has to make while reading the second part of the stories. The change in setting is how the second part of each story begins. The main image of this section is the modern individual among the natives. In this new place, the mentally disturbed and spiritually unnourished modern individual will come across a set of values that will help him accept reality as it is. However, the recognition of the shortcomings and defects of European social system is just the very beginning of what Conrad wants to accomplish. He attempts to initiate a process of mental metamorphosis of the Western mind, which is similar to what Thiong’o recommends for the natives.

In his *Decolonizing the Mind*, Thiong’o explains how the native needs to get rid of the mental leashes placed in his mind and body by the white colonizers. He asserts that the main reason for the destruction of the natives is the preprogramming of the native mind by European colonizers. He claims that the white men brainwashed the native so well that the native is not able to get rid of his sense of inferiority even though he won back his political independence. Following the footsteps of his oppressor, the native, especially the rich and educated one, has become the oppressor of his own community. Behind this subconscious oppression is the desire to imitate his Western teacher who
disconnected him from his native language and eventually his culture. Agreeing with
Conrad that literature is a very powerful tool to establish any philosophical or political
agenda, Thiong’o claims that the native mind was the main target of the West. He adds
that the West exposed the native to mental distortion to guarantee political and social
changes. Thiong’o claims that the initial step of this mental oppression was to sever the
native’s ties with his past and culture. Once this connection disappeared, the native mind
would turn to the West for help. After making it vulnerable and dependent, the white man
was able to fill the native’s mind with his own words and stories of those good white
men who came to civilize the native’s ancestors.

Thiong’o also uses language, along with literature, as a medium of liberation in
his effort to decolonize the native mind. He believes that the native has to return to his
own language and his own roots to be free from European bondage. He asserts that
present and future generations have to revive and practice the oral literature of their
ancestors so that they can reconnect with their own past and hand this heritage down to
their successors. Thiong’o’s idea of decolonizing the mind does not involve any
interaction between the native and the white man; on the contrary, it encourages a
complete separation. His main objective is the empowerment of the native through his
return to his own culture.

Conrad, on the other hand, does not seem to believe that the decolonization
process of the Western mind can be achieved by connecting it with its past because the
past contributed to the present disorder. The London of *The Secret Agent* is emblematic
of the West’s chaotic present. The traditional notions and practices are incapable of
empowering the modern individual in his daily struggle. Mrs. Verloc’s mother, as a
representative of the past, cannot help her children either. On the contrary, taking care of her becomes a responsibility of Mrs. Verloc, who does not have anyone else to turn to for help but her own imagination.

Jim’s relationship with his father is very crucial to Conrad’s discussion because it shows that the modern individual cannot turn to his past for help. Although he is representing both parental and religious authority, Jim’s father appears to be an indifferent and intolerant patriarchal figure. Spiritually and traditionally disconnected, the Western individual has to look for other alternatives in his struggle for tranquility and stability. Therefore, Conrad’s decolonization process of the Western mind begins with the change of the setting. The new setting will also help it realize the enormity of the evil and torture it can cause if it continues to exist in this distorted mental state. The horror Marlow describes and Kurtz utters before he dies is the work of this unstable and spiritually dead Western mind. Since every individual is suffering from this mental decay at differing levels, the healing cannot take place at the same environment and at the same level.

After these initial steps-the mental trial and the attempt to change the environment--the modern individual will experience different life styles and social practices so that he can personally get involved and observe the difference. Since the level of exposure to mental distortion is different for each individual in the first part, their experience in the second part will be at differing levels as well. As has been mentioned before, the discomfort and alienation the protagonists face is more intense and unbearable than that the narrators go through. Naturally, in order to benefit from their experience, the protagonists have to go through a process that is similar to the one that took place at
home in terms of intensity and volume. The hero has to be more involved with his new social group than Marlow. Kurtz puts his philosophical views in practice while Marlow stays as an observer.

Looking at the passers-by out from his window and commenting is Marlow’s way of expressing his philosophy of life. His distinctive characteristic, his reliance upon the physical traits of things and people, prevents him from having active involvement with the natives. Therefore, his transformation begins with his detailed description of what is around him. Marlow’s detailed description of Kurtz’s mistress has attracted enormous amount of negative criticism because of its sexual connotations, disregarding the fact that the narrator is someone who perceives things through their external features. Conrad’s portrayal of Marlow displays the advantages and disadvantages of this European practice of reliance on the physical. One of the disadvantages is that it forces the individual to suppress his/her feelings and emotions, which eventually encourages the individual to deny his emotional part all together. Disintegrated, the individual will keep himself away from his society as a preventive measure. While Marlow’s obsession with the external is his way of protecting himself, it also slows down his transformation by limiting active participation. In order to initiate the necessary mental change, the individual has to rely on his visual perception that replaces the empirical involvement the heroes enjoy.

The appearance of the native woman marks the beginning of Marlow’s mental transformation. His description of the native woman demonstrates the disadvantages of such an obsession with the physical. It shows the difficulty Marlow faces when he is challenged by a phenomenon that defies his reliance on the visual. He was able to detach
himself from the dying black shapes with the appearance of the white man. However, he can no longer continue in the same manner.

The challenge this native woman presents is something Marlow never had to deal with in Europe because the female is almost non-existent in Conrad’s European settings. Their sexuality becomes their most significant characteristic in this patriarchal society. As a creature of his time and society, Marlow perceives women from this purely masculine and biased perspective. Confronted with an unusual woman who rejects Marlow’s stereotypical description, he becomes frightened and paranoid. This also describes how the imperial powers were able to justify their interest overseas: by using the external features of the natives in order to create fear and tension in their European minds. The constant presentation of the native as unfamiliar and uncivilized, coupled with the constant emphasis on the imminence of native intrusion, turned the individual’s sense of vulnerability and insecurity into paranoia. The window between him and others in Europe and the impersonal objectification of the dying black shapes that served as buffer zones and gave him a sense of security do not work in this new condition. Stripped of his traditional means of self-preservation, Marlow feels afraid and vulnerable. Now, he has to look at things from a different angle.

Marlow’s reliance on the physical becomes advantageous for him and for the reader especially when he describes Kurt and Jim. In the case of the former, Marlow’s only source of information about him until their first meeting has been his conversations with the other company officers that have worked with the protagonist. His reaction to those stories comes out as anger, disrespect and mistrust towards Kurtz. Only after seeing him, this man becomes tangible and real. Before that, he was only a voice. Marlow’s
earlier reactions are now replaced by compassion, concern and understanding. Marlow’s new impression of the protagonist after meeting him in person negates his first negative one.

As a novelist, Conrad tries to assure that the decolonization process the reader will undergo through his reading experience should be similar to the one Marlow is going through. Thomas Moser, describing Conrad’s decolonization process as “fictional transformation,” claims, “Marlow in the jungle is like the reader in the text.” He concludes, “Marlow’s journey of self-knowledge must be doubled by our own”. He also states that by holding back information and moving back and forth in time Conrad catches up and involves his reader in a moral situation, makes the reader’s emotions follow a course analogous to that of the characters.20

For both the narrator and the reader, the consequence of the mental process will be closer to the protagonists’ experience with the difference that neither Marlow nor the reader has the opportunity to get immediate access to experience. They can only assume the role of an observer, rather than a participant. Unlike the curious company doctor, Marlow and the reader are able to observe these transformations on site: Marlow sees the protagonists change and through Marlow, the reader will observe both the heroes and the narrator change. Similar to the curious doctor, they know that those who go to the jungle will come back transformed:

The old doctor felt my pulse, evidently thinking of something else the while. ‘Good, good for there,’ he mumbled, and then with a certain eagerness asked me whether I would let him measure my head. Rather surprised, I said Yes, when he produced a thing like callipers and got the
dimensions back and front and every way, taking notes carefully. He was an unshaven little man in a threadbare coat like a gabardine, with his feet in slippers, and I thought him a harmless fool. ‘I always ask leave, in the interests of science, to measure the crania of those going out there,’ he said. ‘And when they come back too?’ I asked. ‘Oh, I never see them,’ he remarked; ‘and moreover, the changes take place inside, you know.’ He smiled, as if at some quiet joke. ‘So you are going out there. Famous. Interesting too.’ He gave me a searching glance, and made another note. ‘Ever madness in your family?’ he asked, in a matter-of-fact tone. I felt very annoyed. ‘Is that question in the interests of science too?’ It would be,’ he said, without taking notice of irritation, ‘interesting for science to watch the mental changes of individuals on the spot, but…’

(Heart of Darkness, 78)

Although ominous in nature, the doctor’s words give a true account of what happens once the individual leaves home: mental transformation. Even Marlow, the least affected by his Congo experience due to his self-protective shield, comes back as a changed man.

The depiction of the discomfort and disillusionment the modern individual feels in Europe is Conrad’s way of preparing the narrator and the reader for the mental struggle they will go through in the second half. Although the lack of immediate and personal experience puts the reader and the narrator into a disadvantageous position, the stories will keep their desire for active participation in such experience alive and eventually will bring forth some action. In Marlow’s case, he chooses to tell what he has seen to others. What the reader is going to do depends upon his/her social background.
In Thiong’o’s case, being part of the native side of the equation, he chooses to mobilize his own people for freedom and self-search. The minimum response to Conrad’s vision can be an attempt to analyze one’s own self and surroundings before judging the others. The Conradian journey of self-knowledge, then, does not end in existential dilemmas or in nihilism. On the contrary, it restores the individual’s innate value as a human, accepts the suppressed and the emotional as part of human nature, reunites the reason with the soul, and eventually brings peace and happiness in his life. The physical symbol of such a union is the sacred relationship of mutuality and compassion between a man and a woman.

Connecting with its other half, the Western individual will liberate itself from the negative effects of the overly rated notions of Western superiority and right to power. Both the white and the native will be liberated from the Western oppression with the native’s help. The following chapter explains how Conrad brings his decolonization process of the Western mind to a successful end, working through a number of binary oppositions that represent the essential elements of the Western social structure and its native counterpart.

To conclude, Conrad’s philosophical discussion begins with the depiction of the alienated modern individual in a morally deteriorating social setting. It also expresses the urgency of the need for a new environment to revive the dying soul of the modern individual. The new setting will help him compare and contrast what he had with what he can have. However, for such a transformation to take place, personal willingness to change and a certain level of social awareness are essential. In the absence of these two characteristics, one cannot differentiate between what is right and wrong. Such a person
will not be able to comprehend the importance of his/her experience beyond the physical aspects of it, whether it is financial gain or the attainment of a powerful social status. By describing the individual as alienated and disconnected in the first part of his novels, Conrad’s decolonization process works at three different levels: the first involves the protagonist while the second focuses on the narrator. The last engages the reader. As an artist and philosopher, Conrad is able to describe the first two in detail but he can only set the stage for the third. Although it is up to the reader to participate in the process, it is inevitable that there will be some difference in his/her attitude towards life.
PART TWO

I) MODERN VERSUS NATIVE

Though it is from the East that the sun rises,
showing itself bold and bright,
without a veil, it burns and blazes with inward fire
only when it escapes from the shackles of the East and West.
Drunk with the splendor it springs up out of its East
That it may subject all horizons to its mastery
Its nature is innocent of both East and West,
Though in origin, true, it is an Easterner.

Muhammad Iqbal, Javid Nama

In the previous chapter, the aim was to show that Joseph Conrad was not an author whose ultimate interest was to create an aesthetically complete work of art. He was interested in ideas and perspectives on more sophisticated and complicated issues, mainly related to different cultures and their worldviews. His access to more than one culture provided him with the necessary knowledge and experience to accomplish the difficult task of helping those who did not have this opportunity understand the world better. This chapter will focus on the way Conrad, as a responsible author, incorporated his philosophical ideas into his stories. After describing the pitiful condition of the modern individual and implying the possibility of a spiritual rehabilitation, Conrad
initiates the healing process by sending his male protagonists on one-way trips to the land of the Other.

The following pages will demonstrate the only way the mentally disturbed and emotionally neglected soul of the modern individual can find and taste happiness and peace. In the first part of his stories, Conrad also claims that Western understanding of life and human being is the source of this spiritual decay. After establishing the philosophical grounds of his argument, he moves onto the next step of putting forward a tangible solution. At this point, his philosophical discussion has to rely upon concrete examples and symbols so that the confused target can benefit from the experience because philosophy, by definition, does not focus on empirical principles or practical arts. This is where Conrad puts his literary talents in use.

The novel, as a literary genre, seems to be the best to combine these two different fields of study--philosophy and literature--together in a useful way. It allows the novelist to tell his story while including his worldview. The novelist can use his characters to express his philosophical or political views through their conversations with each other or the reader. In some cases, the author uses his narrator to express his/her viewpoint. Sometimes the main character assumes this role and tells his/her own story in a manner that implies his/her creator’s worldview. Conrad, however, uses both his narrator and his protagonist within one story to present different viewpoints of his time as well as his own.

While acknowledging the impact of Conrad’s style on his own work, Ngugi Thiong’o claims that Conrad use of multiple voices helps the reader have a more accurate understanding of the story and the characters:
The shifting points of view in time and space, the multiplicity of narrative voices, [...] the delayed information that helps the revision of a previous judgment so that only at the end with the full assemblage of evidence, information, and points of view, can the reader make a full judgment—these techniques had impressed me.¹

Conrad’s narrators have long been mistakenly viewed as the voice of their creator. This traditional approach has ignored the fact that the narrators’ views are prone to change as well because of their peculiar positions as observers and characters with limited active participation in the stories. The existence of changing opinions and differing attitudes is more complicated in Conrad’s stories, especially in those that are orally narrated to a live audience. The narrators’ views as characters can easily be confused with their views as narrators. In addition to the different points of view of the characters, the point of view of the same character can change, depending on the age, experience, setting, and circumstances. However, de-centering the point of view by including various viewpoints within one story does not abrogate the authorial intention.

Conrad’s inclusion of differing worldviews within one text does not feature any existentialism. His purpose behind narrative relativism is not to stress the meaninglessness of existence or to claim that there are no absolute values. In his meditations on Conrad’s territoriality, Najder asserts that although Conrad believes in cultural relativism, he rejects moral relativism on the basis that all human beings are equal but not the same. In the midst of these different voices, Conrad believes that there has to be a wise voice to guide the individual, lest he/she will be disoriented and fall apart. This is what most of Conrad’s characters experience and observe in their Western
environment. Conrad’s main objective is to help the individual hear that perceptive voice. He picks them up at a time when they are lost and transfers them to another locale where they can hear the voice of wisdom in the absence of others. The description of the other voices enables the individual to appreciate his experience in the absence of them. The shift of the setting allows Conrad to bring this other locale and its culture to the attention of his characters and his reader. As soon as his protagonist, narrator, or reader enters this new setting, he comes face to face with a different philosophy of life.

There is no notion of existentialism or relativism in this new culture- Islamic or other-because of their beliefs in the existence of a Creator who guides them and in the wholeness of the human being, composed of two parts--the body and the soul. Another significant aspect of their culture is their belief that things are known through their opposites. The opposites must be accepted and dealt with accordingly. The recognition of binary oppositions is essential to their worldviews. The uniqueness of their value system lies in their ability to reach a “bipolar unity” between the conflicting aspects of human existence. If the human being is composed of two opposing parts and can hold both within one physical form, the value system has to appropriately include the opposites.

The main difference between this culture and its Western counterpart lies in their contradicting reactions to this reality. The first group admits the opposites as part of human existence and tries to form a balance between them while the second denies and suppresses the opposites. This biased approach to life is the source of the existential dilemmas the individual severely suffers from. From Western religious point of view, the physical aspects of human being have to be suppressed so that the human soul can achieve absolute morality by following the example of his savior--Jesus. Modernism, on
the other hand, brings another bias into the picture by focusing only on the human body. In both cases, the human being has to give up one side in favor of the other. In her psycho-textual reading of *Heart of Darkness*, Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan mentions that one of the characteristics of the modern individual is his effort to become God. Since God is dead, man’s connection with anything spiritual or unseen becomes irrelevant. His sense of the world and himself is limited to their physical features. His physical body becomes the center of his attention. In spite of the fact that his body is mortal, the individual dreams of immortality.

Man’s ironic project of becoming God leads him into the heart of darkness, to an absent center and to the recognition that his search for meaning is impossible. Once meaning is ever suspended and ends are no longer available, man creates his own truth and values. Man’s desire to become God prevents him from having a center that he can turn to when he is in need. This “telos” of modern man--the project of becoming God--cannot accept the possibility of a “bipolar unity” between the conflicting aspects of human nature--man is created and fallible whereas God or the Supreme Being is eternal and perfect.

The notion of man’s dualism does not receive any recognition from such a viewpoint. The individual’s denial of his soul has affected his life with his own nature and his relationship with the world to a great extent. His denial of God eventually turned into a tendency to develop certain hierarchies that reject anyone or any idea that indicates the fallibility and limited power of man. The individual’s unhesitant rejection of the dual nature of man has replaced the God-fearing man’s unwilling acceptance of it. For Conrad, who detects all these ironies in the individual’s life, the rehabilitation process
has to begin with an effort to reconnect the alienated individual with his own self and with the reality that man has limited power.

By initiating a philosophical discussion on the human condition, Conrad begins to de-center the traditionally self-evident and absolute grounds of Western knowledge. It also aims at dismantling the usual patterns of interpretation and implanting new practices of thinking. After deconstructing these Western notions of self, Conrad commences his reconnection process that is similar to what Muhammad Iqbal’s metaphor suggests at the very beginning of this chapter: the sun is an Easterner in origin but cannot exist without West. In order to re-rise, it has to go to East. Presenting the native’s perception of man, Conrad introduces the individual who has lost his connection with his past, his own self to a new way of understanding that knows how to reconcile the dualisms of man.

Since Conrad’s characters go through these processes of de-centering and reconnecting, their viewpoints change accordingly. Conrad brings different perspectives and cultures together in his work so that the individual--the hero, the narrator, or the reader--can have the opportunity to compare and contrast. The desirable outcome of Conrad’s effort is to make the individual realize that he can taste peace and happiness once he can reconcile his existential dilemmas by accepting the truth as it is. At the end, Conrad’s literary effort is to convey a message of hope and optimism to his readers. In his note on Maupassant in *Notes on Life and Letters*, Conrad himself claims that “there is both a moral and an excitement to be found in a faithful rendering of life.”

The reason behind Conrad’s use of multiple perspectives is completely different from what J. H. Miller suggests in his deconstructive reading of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. For Miller, a literary text cannot be confined to a particular meaning because
it harbors multiple meanings. By explaining how futile it is to confine a work of art within the boundaries of a specific genre, Miller claims that Conrad’s novel is “not only parabolic but also apocalyptic.” He uses his own act of decoding the story to reemphasize the notion of the undecidability of a text:

The final fold in this folding in of complicities in these ambiguous acts of unveiling is my own complicity as demystifying commentator. Behind or before Marlow is Conrad, and before and behind him stands the reader or critic. My commentary unveils a lack of decisive unveiling in *Heart of Darkness*. I have attempted to perform an act of generic classification, with all the covert violence and unreason, since no work is wholly commensurate with the boundaries of any genre. By unveiling the lack of unveiling in *Heart of Darkness*, I have become another witness in my turn, as much guilty as any other in the line of witnesses of covering over while claiming to illuminate. My *Aufklärung* too has been of continuing impenetrability of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.4

Miller’s description of *Heart of Darkness* both as a parable and as an apocalypse places the novel within the boundaries of a new genre that challenges the traditional ones and yet forms a new one.

Conrad uses binary oppositions as a literary medium to enfold his message. Therefore, unveiling the binary oppositions in his texts becomes essential to understand the alternative he offers. He puts forth his solution while questioning the established norms of thinking. Conrad initiates the transformation of the individual through the process of decentering the traditional value system. In other words, the
deconstructionist’s attempt to expose the invalidity of the dominant--Western--worldview is the first step of Conrad’s decolonization process.

In addition to his critique of Western perception of the world, Conrad depicts the dangers of leaving the individual with the question of moral or ethical relativism. He sees another kind of alienation for the Western individual in this philosophy due to its reluctance to move forward after the identification of multiple meanings. In the same note on Maupassant, Conrad states that the artist should offer a moral in his/her story since a reader has some ethical interest in a work of imagination. Therefore, the second part of his stories involves a reconstructive effort to empower the individual with the experience and hope of reconnecting and belonging. His process of decolonization, then, includes both deconstruction and reconstruction.

Through their journeys to the land of the natives, Conrad’s protagonists commence the reconstructive stage of their mental transformations. The idea of immigration, in itself, represents a binary opposition; it has two ends: a departure port and a destination. In Conrad’s novels, these ends represent two different social systems: Western society is the departure port while its native counterpart is the destination. His discussion on these social systems juxtaposes their perceptions and practices of collective ritual, game, and marriage. John G. Cawelti’s statement explains why it is important to look at these social systems in terms of these collective qualities. Cawelti uses these social characteristics to express his view on popular literature. He bases his argument on two binary oppositions: the first between convention and invention, the second between form and formula. His discussion about conventions and inventions provides the
explanation why Conrad feels the need to focus on two social systems while he could mention only one of them. Cawelti believes that

All cultural products contain a mixture of two kinds of elements; conventions and inventions. Conventions are elements which are known to both the creator and his audience beforehand—they consist of things like favorite plots, stereotyped characters, accepted ideas, commonly known metaphors and other linguistic devices, etc. Inventions, on the other hand, are elements which are uniquely imagined by the creator such as new kinds of characters, ideas, linguistic forms.\(^5\)

After making these distinctions, he explains the way they function within a culture:

Convention and invention have quite different cultural functions. Conventions represent familiar shared images and meanings and they assert an ongoing continuity of values; inventions confront us with a new perception or meaning which we have not realized before. Both these functions are important to culture. Convention help maintain a culture’s stability while inventions help respond to changing circumstances and provide new information about the world. \(^{(\text{Cawelti, 118})}\)

Cawelti also points to one of the difficulties Conrad’s critics have been facing. Since Conrad is not necessarily a strict follower of conventions or of inventions, it is very difficult to classify him. Therefore, each critical approach seems to be incomplete in its presentation.

Cawelti is also right when he states that ‘most works contain a mixture of convention and invention.’ While he uses Homer and Shakespeare as examples of the
writers who mixed conventional elements with inventions, one can easily add Conrad to this list. The second part of Cawelti’s discussion on conventions and inventions is also very relevant to Conrad’s vision:

The same thing is true on the individual level. If the individual does not encounter a large number of conventionalized experiences and situations, the strain on his sense of continuity and identity will lead to great tensions and even to neurotic breakdowns. On the other hand, without new information about his world, the individual will be increasingly unable to cope with it and will withdraw behind a barrier of conventions as some people withdraw behind a barrier of conventions as some people withdraw from life into compulsive reading of the detective stories. (Cawelti, 118)

This seems to be Conrad’s portrayal of the individual in a European setting where inventions are ruthlessly wiping off conventions. In the absence of conventions, the modern individual needs some other values and conventions to follow.

Conrad describes two typical European efforts to meet this need. The first type invents something new to adhere to such as professional ethics. Brierly is the best example of such an attempt. The second recognizes the dilemmas and problems but falls into denial because he/she does not know how to deal with these issues. In both cases, escapism seems to be the solution. Most of Conrad’s Europeans are the literary embodiments of this limited and escapist effort. They cause damage to themselves and to others when they refuse their shortcomings and begin to use different ways to get away. Brierly hides behind his professional perfectionism while Mrs. Verloc refuses to “look into things.” Jim uses his active imagination as an escape and Gentleman Brown finds
satisfaction in exploiting and deceiving others. Each case is a manifestation of this subconscious effort to invent a stable core to evolve around since they do not have any shared values.

Cawelti’s second binary opposition is between formula and form. He defines formula as a conventional system for structuring cultural products and form as an invented system of organization. In his terms, the new perception Conrad offers combines invention with convention in order to free the alienated Western individual through the de-centering process and expresses the need for a different set of conventions by initiating the reconstructive one. The mixture Conrad achieves in his work is similar to what Cawelti thinks T. S. Eliot does in “The Waste Land:”

The Waste Land makes the distinction even sharper for that poem contains a substantial number of conventional elements—even to the point of using quotations from past literary works—but these elements are structured in such a fashion that a new perception of familiar elements is forced upon the reader. (Cawelti, 119)

The difference between Eliot and Conrad appears in their sources of reconstruction. The conventional elements in Eliot’s work are retrospective although a new perception is expected to come out. Conrad, on the contrary, does not sentimentalize and rely upon Europe’s past or traditions. He turns his attention away from Europe towards the native. The sense of familiarity with the conventions that Eliot views as an essential step in his empowerment of the modern individual is not part of Conrad’s vision because he sees it as limiting and impractical. Unlike Eliot, Conrad, in his healing process, relies upon a system of new social practices that are unusual and unknown to the Western mind.
The elements of a social structure Cawelti describes in his study of formula stories are very helpful in comparing and contrasting cultures:

My argument, then, is that formula stories…are structures of narrative conventions which carry out a variety of cultural functions in a unified way. We can best define these formulas as principles for the selection of certain plots, characters, and settings, which possess in addition to their basic narrative structure the dimensions of collective ritual, game, and dream. To analyze these formulas we must first define them as narrative structures of a certain kind and then investigate how the additional dimensions of ritual, game and dream have been synthesized into the particular patterns of plot, character and setting which have become associated with formula…compare them, and also to relate them to the cultures which use them. By these methods I feel that we will arrive …at new insights into the patterns of culture. (Cawelti, 123)

This study will combine Cawelti’s third dimension--dream--with the dimension of marriage because it evolves around gender relationships and helps a society construct its understanding of dreams. Marital relationships also reflect the choice of a culture between conventions and inventions. The interactions between the male and the female connect the world of dreams to the real one by keeping the imagination centered. Healthy marital relationships fulfill the individual’s need for a bipolar unity as well: both personal and social, external and internal. These three dimensions of communal life also represent the three branches of any social system: the legislative, the executive, and the judicial.
II) Cultural Ritual

The first set of binary oppositions to explore will be within the dimension of social or cultural ritual. The lack of homogeneity and shared meanings in modern societies has given way to different cultural rituals. In earlier Western social structures, religious ritual articulated and reaffirmed the primary cultural values. In most non-Western cultures religious ritual still plays a similar role in determining the cultural values. Since modern societies do no longer rely on such principles or values, they have to come up with some other values and rituals so that people can live together and feel somehow connected. In the absence of a central value system, modern social structures rely upon judicial, military, and sporting activities to replace these collective rituals. The main objective of these new adjustments is to prevent the freed but disconnected individual from questioning or protesting against the system.

Rousseau describes this new social order through contracts.¹ Being a tangible document, a contract replaces the human being’s dependence upon revelation and promise. Since the individual’s connection with his Creator has dissolved, the reliance on divine intervention and help in difficult times becomes impossible. Eventually, the individual’s sense of security has turned into a life-threatening fear of distrust and vulnerability. ‘Alija ‘Ali Izetbegovic’s distinction between a society and a community further explains modern social structures’ reliance on contractual agreements:
A difference should be made between society which is an external group of individuals gathered on the basis of interest, and community which is an internal group of people brought together on the basis of the feeling of belonging. A society is based on material needs, on interests; a community is based on spiritual needs, on aspirations. In a society, people are anonymous members connected or divided by interests; a community, people are brothers, connected by common thoughts, trust, and simply by a feeling that they are one. Society exists because it makes it easier to acquire benefits or ensure our survival...²

He concludes that since man lives in a society to benefit, it can only be ruled “by the laws of the fittest, laws of subjection, exploitation, or at its best, laws which share the interest.”

A community, on the other hand, knows “justice, mutual help, solidarity, and brotherhood.” Therefore, in a society to guarantee the sharing of the interest there has to be a tangible evidence of an agreement or a contract to prevent undesired outcomes. Since fear and mistrust towards one another have replaced the trust and honesty between people, the system has to depend upon external means to maintain order. Making values and meanings relative, in a sense, opens the terms of a contract to reinterpretation as well. Ironically, contractual agreements have become the way of executing social justice.

In this respect, another binary opposition plays a significant role in the whole phenomenon: the written as opposed to the oral. The agreements made in a faith-based social order do not have to depend upon written documents. Any agreement between individuals is also an agreement between the Creator and His creation. There is no need for a written contract between the Creator, whether it is God or the Supreme Being, and
man since the former is omnipresent and omniscient. The three monotheistic religions of the world are based upon oral covenants between their prophets and the Creator. As a peculiar aspect of these faith-based social orders, oral agreements are as binding as written contracts. The written becomes significant for the interactions between the members of the community.

Since the laws are ordained through the oral covenants between the prophets and the Creator, or between the shaman and the Supreme Being in polytheistic cultures, there is no possibility of the reinterpretation of the terms of the contract by the participants. Consequently, religious communities founded their social structures upon these orally transmitted, very rarely recorded, divine rules and principles. If there is no written agreement in terms of social interactions, the testimonies of a certain number of witnesses are sufficient enough to apply the relevant rules and principles, which is by itself requires close social relationships. Therefore, the notion of a contract in these communities is completely different from the modern understanding and application of it. While oral and written contracts are both included in native social systems, European social system does not seem to pay much attention to oral agreements.

The idea of a contract is very significant in terms of three social interactions: intra-communal, inter-communal, and marital interactions. The cases that will exhibit social and cultural rituals of these two social settings will be from Lord Jim, Heart of Darkness, and Almayer’s Folly. The absence of shared values eventually has wiped away all the communal rituals in which members of a community collectively come together. The only interactions among the members of modern societies are mainly business transactions. Conrad seems to indicate that the rules and regulations determining the
nature of business transactions are not dependent upon the criteria of capability, educational readiness, and experience. Any person who comes from a higher social class and has influential contacts can make his dreams come true. Marlow’s aunt finds him a job through her connections:

I had an aunt, a dear enthusiastic soul. She wrote: “It will be delightful. I am ready to do anything, anything for you. It is a glorious idea. I know the wife of a very high personage in the Administration, and also a man who has lots of influence with,” etc. etc. She was determined to make no end of fuss to get me appointed skipper of a river steamboat, if such was my fancy.  

(Heart of Darkness, 74)

Having the right contacts becomes the quickest and easiest way of success. This discriminatory attitude presents itself in the way these transactions carried out as well.

The authorities were evidently the same opinion. The inquiry was not adjourned. It was held on the appointed day to satisfy the law, and it was well attended because of its human interest, no doubt. There was no incertitude as to facts-as to the one material fact, I mean. How the Patna came by her hurt it was impossible to find out; the court did not expect to find out; and in the whole audience there was a man who cared. Yet, as I’ve told you, all the sailors in the port attended, and the waterside business was fully represented. Whether they knew it or not, the interest that drew them there was purely psychological-the expectation of some essential disclosure as to the strength, the power, the horror, of human emotions. Naturally, nothing of the kind could be disclosed. The
examination of the only man able and willing to face it was beating
futilely round the well-known fact, and the play of questions upon it was
as instructive as the tapping with a hammer on an iron box, were the
object to find out what’s inside. However, an official inquiry could not be
any other thing. Its object was not the fundamental why, but the superficial
how, of this affair.  

(Lord Jim, 41)

This is how the Patna trial was set and carried out. Marlow, as an individual within this
system, is not satisfied with the judicial setting or the trial.

He criticizes the application of laws during Jim’s trial and questions the authority
presiding over it:

The young chap could have told them, and, though, that very thing that
interested the audience, the questions put to him necessarily led him away
from what to me, for instance, would have been the only truth knowing.
You can’t expect the constituted authorities to inquire into the state of a
man’s soul…Their business was to come down upon the consequences
and, frankly, a casual police magistrate and two nautical assessors are not
much good for anything else. The magistrate was very patient. One of the
assessors was a sailing-ship skipper with a reddish beard, and of a pious
disposition. Brierly was the other. Big Brierly.  

(Lord Jim, 41)

There is not much trust and hope in the accuracy or reliability of the trial, at least this is
what Marlow implies in his words. The verdict, made in such a setting cannot be just or
accurate either.
The main judicial concern, however, is to bring the case to a closure for the legal system and the audience. Since Jim chooses to be the “scapegoat” by confessing, the authority, represented by Brierly and the other two, has to convict Jim without considering the human aspect of the case and the accuracy of his testimony.

Brierly’s reaction to the whole situation and his suicide after the trial are of great significance for the discussion of the European legal system because he represents both legal and business authorities. The information Marlow provides about him raises questions about the legal system and its priorities:

He had never in his life made a mistake, never had an accident, never a mishap, never a check in his steady rise, and he seemed to be one of those lucky fellows who know nothing of indecision, much less of self-mistrust. At thirty-two he had one of the best commands going in the eastern trade…He was acutely aware of his merits and of his rewards. I liked him well enough, though some I know--meek and friendly men at that--couldn’t stand him at any price. I haven’t the slightest doubt that he considered himself vastly my superior.

*(Lord Jim, 42)*

From the professional perspective, Brierly does seem to be the right person to be part of the legal authority to determine the destiny of Jim and the rest of the crew because of his expertise. However, what he himself told Marlow about Jim at the end shows his biased and superficial understanding of the human aspect of his own craft.
For Brierly, who never had to make a choice between his life and others, the repentance or denial of a mistake does not make a difference and both receive the same punishment. Following is the conversation between him and Marlow during the trial:

“Why are we tormenting that young chap?” he [Brierly] asked. This question chimed in so well to the tolling of a certain thought of mine that, with the image of absconding renegade in my eye, I answered at once, “hanged if I know, unless it be that he lets you.” I was astonished to see him fall into line, so to speak, with that utterance, which ought to have been tolerably cryptic. He said angrily, “Why, yes. Can’t he see the wretched skipper of his has cleared out? What does he expect to happen. Nothing can save him. He’s done for.” We walked on in silence a few steps. “Why eat all that dirt?” he exclaimed, with an oriental energy of expression…I[Marlow] pointed out to him that the skipper of the Patna was known to have feathered his nest very well, and could procure almost anywhere the means of getting away. (Lord Jim, 48)

Brierly does not think that Jim is doing the right thing by confessing because for this rigid and merciless man there is no way out once you have committed a mistake. He believes that the only way out for Jim is to get lost. He cannot comprehend why Jim has confessed. He cannot see anything but a tragic life for Jim because he turned himself in. The ultimate irony about the whole court trial is that the skipper of Patna has cleared out although he was one of the five white crewmembers who left the ship, without warning the passengers--the pilgrims.
When Marlow mentions to Brierly that Jim probably does not have any money to go anywhere, the latter responds: “Well, then, let him creep twenty feet underground and stay there! By heavens! I would” (*Lord Jim*, 48)! Marlow’s challenging reaction to this inconsiderate statement provokes Brierly to utter outrageous words that display the incapacity of the system and its supporters in dealing with moral issues:

I don’t know why his tone provoked me, and I said, “There is a kind of courage in facing it out as he does, knowing very well that if he went away nobody would trouble to run after him.” Courage be hanged!” growled Brierly. “That sort of a courage is of no use to keep a man straight, and I don’t care a snap for such courage. If you were to say it was a kind of cowardice now-of softness. I tell you what, I will out up two hundred rupees if you put [another hundred and undertake to make the beggar clear out early tomorrow morning. The fellow’s a gentleman if he ain’t fit to be touched-he will understand. He must. This infernal publicity is too shocking: there he sits while all these confounded natives, seerangs, lascars, quartermasters, are giving evidence that’s enough to burn a man to ashes with shame. This is abominable why, Marlow, don’t you think, don’t you feel, that is abominable; don’t you now come-as a seaman? If he went away, all this would stop at once. (Lord Jim, 49)

Brierly definitely sees Jim’s confession as very humiliating both for Jim and for himself since they are in the same fellowship of the craft.

In addition to his professional dignity, Brierly also feels that his own sense of dignity as a human being is humiliated. His indication is that covering up mistakes is the
best way to deal with them, which disregards the judicial value of finding out “the whole truth, nothing but the truth.” Jim would have been better off and cleared out as well if he had chosen to be quiet. The value system that allows such a misleading and misconstrued approach in forming legal decisions will definitely lose the trust and respect of its members. Marlow’s reaction to Brierly’s attempt to get money out of his pocket to send Jim away exemplifies the former’s mistrust and disrespect for this merciless and senseless system. Since the denial and admittance of a mistake are equal in the eyes of the system, there is no need to seek the truth. It is sacrificed for the sake of professional dignity.

Professional ethics come first and foremost in Brierly’s world. Even an unwilling digression from it is disgraceful and deserves punishment. The intolerance, indifference, and mercilessness the system exhibits in terms of legal issues and professional ethics are manifestations of the system’s frustration with those who cannot adjust to these new laws and rules of engagement. This becomes more apparent in its treatment of the weak, the repentant, and the people of other cultures. The skipper knows how to get away while Jim is exposed to legal and social injustices. The unfair and inhumane aspect of Brierly’s work ethics becomes evident when he describes his foreign clients as objects. He is not that different from the German skipper because they both view the pilgrims on the Patna as commodities rather than as human beings. He talks about professional decency and trust but he cannot see any difference between those pilgrims and “a full cargo of old rags in bales” (Lord Jim, 56).

As a sign of his hypocrisy, he continues to claim that Jim’s confession brings shame to Jim himself and to the professional field as a whole. Since Jim’s confession, not
necessarily the jump, also implies a breach in his business contract, Brierly cannot tolerate the confession. As long as professional decency is intact, mistakes can be covered up. In the following words, he openly exemplifies the superficiality and anti-humanness of the system. The system is not established to protect and help human beings; on the contrary, human beings must guarantee its continuation by not erring. They have to abide by its rules and regulations although it does not guarantee any protection or rights to its members for their truthfulness. The continuation of the system takes priority over the truth and becomes an end rather than a means to establish the truth. This is how Brierly verbalizes these aspects of the system:

“The worst of it,” he said, “is that all you fellows have no sense of dignity; you don’t think enough of what you are supposed to be.” …This is a disgrace. We’ve got all kinds amongst us-some anointed scoundrels in the lot; but, hang it, we must preserve professional decency or we become no better than so many tinkers going about loose. We are trusted. Do you understand?-trusted! Frankly, I don’t care a snap for all the pilgrims that ever came out of Asia, but a decent man would not behaved like this to a full cargo of old rags in bales. We aren’t an organized body of men, and the only thing that holds us together is just the name for that kind of decency. Such an affair destroys one’s confidence. A man may go pretty near through his whole sea-life without any call to show a stiff upper lip. But when the call comes…Aha!…If I…” (Lord Jim, 49)

At the end, the authority that minimizes human dignity and the truth for the sake of professional decency finds Jim guilty and clears the rest out.
Jim mentions this unfortunate reality to Marlow with the following words: “I couldn’t clear out,” Jim began. “The skipper did—that’s all very well for him, I couldn’t, and wouldn’t. They all got out of it in one way or another, but it wouldn’t do for me” (*Lord Jim*, 57). He would not insist on his innocence because it would be wrong. While Jim strikes Marlow as a sincere, truthful, and honest person, he knows that the rest of the crew preferred lying and public opinion to their self-esteem. They do not feel any guilt. As long as they are alive and free in the eyes of the system, they can continue their lives as they used to do.

Besides its incapacity to deal with the truth, the system does not show any attempt to compensate those whose lives were endangered by this crime. They—the pilgrims—will not get any recognition from the system because of their racial orientation. The guilty verdict for Jim after his confession would endanger the system’s image as an invincible power. However, its acceptance of the not-guilty pleas from the others exposes the system as well as the pilgrims to future exploitations and misjudgments. As an example, the skipper will continue to endanger others’ lives, especially if they are not of his race and color, and will get away with it.

The pursuit and expression of truth also becomes irrelevant in this social system as a result of its reliance on the majority opinion. Jim is the only one out of the five who confesses. His public expression of the truth is not enough to charge the other four because they pleaded not guilty. While the rest do not care about moral consequences of their actions, Jim cannot ignore his moral obligation. When such a person as Jim challenges the system by confessing, the system’s preference of the majority opinion disables the authority from making the right decision. In their article “We Are Trusted:
Conrad and the Blue ‘Star’ Line,” Crosbie Smith and Phillip Wolstenholme state that Marlow was able to see what the court could not: Jim is different from the rest of the crew:

In contrast to the public inquiry and its demand for “facts” of an “objective” nature, Marlow in his parallel but private inquiry avers that what matters is not the bulkhead’s strength, but the “facts” as Jim interprets them at the time. Marlow’s trust in Jim’s version of events depends on his conviction that the younger seaman is “one of us,” rather than “one of them”—the alcoholic second officer or the racist and grotesque captain.3

Smith and Wolstenholme claim that Marlow trusts Jim’s version of the story because the latter’s pedigree differs from those of the rest of the crew. Jim’s gentlemanly credentials enhance his credibility. And yet Jim’s confession also proves that he is different from the rest because he was aware of his wrong behavior even while abandoning the ship and the pilgrims. His public confession is a sign of his effort to purge his own soul from the strong sense of guilt and to initiate a healing process. It also implies that he has learnt from his mistake. However, the judicial system is able to detect or reward such morally high behavior as Jim’s confession.

Once justice becomes relative and superficial in its treatment of truth and falsehood, the notion of equality becomes irrelevant. The pilgrims will never receive the justice they deserve because they are not seen as humans. Hypocrisy and racism prevail and become values in such a social system. Whoever can get away with such mistakes will become successful in their effort to survive. However, with Jim, the situation is
completely opposite. He has to repent to be cleared out in his own moral world regardless of the fact that he is the one the court found guilty. The most unfortunate aspect of this social injustice is that punishment falls upon the truth and its pursuers: Jim’s “certificate is gone, his career broken and he has “no money to get away,” or “no work to obtain” (Lord Jim, 58). He is alone, miserable, and helpless.

Although Jim is in such a miserable situation, the one who suffers most from this trial is Brierly. He is the real victim because he believes that human being can reach perfection as long as he tries his best in what he is doing. Like Marlow, he shows the tendency to focus on the external aspects of a matter. Brierly exhibits an extreme attitude towards his profession, which by itself becomes his cultural ritual. Jim’s confession, however, forces this perfect man to face the truth about human nature: human being is not perfect, especially when challenged with hardships. He wants Jim to disappear because seeing him punished disturbs Brierly’s conscience and reminds him of his own fallibility.

Jim’s part in the trial serves as a microcosm of the human condition when extreme circumstances open up the “normally sealed conventions of community, trust, and instinct for survival” (Smith and Wolstenholme, 47). For Brierly, who has never undergone “the trial of a fiendish and appalling joke” (Lord Jim, 96), it is shameful to think that he might react the same way as Jim did if he faces a similar challenge. The idea itself is enough to disturb his conscience.

Right after the trial appears an inexplicable irony: Brierly commits suicide. This is what Marlow thinks of this unexpected suicide:

No wonder Jim’s case bored him, and while I thought with something akin to fear of the immensity of his contempt for the young man under
examination, he was probably holding silent inquiry into his own case. The verdict must have been of unmitigated guilt, and he took the secret of the evidence with him in that leap into the sea. If I understand anything of men, the matter was no doubt of the gravest import, one of those trifles that awaken ideas-start into life some thought with which a man unused to such a companionship finds it impossible to live. I am in a position to know that it wasn’t money, and it wasn’t drink, and it wasn’t woman. He jumped over the board at sea barely a week after the end of the inquiry, and less than three days after leaving port on his outward passage; as though on that exact spot in the midst of waters he had suddenly perceived the gates of the other world flung open wide for his reception.

(Lord Jim, 43)

Agreeing with the early interpretations of Brierly’s suicide, Smith and Wolstenholme point out that

Brierly’s seafaring life is a yardstick of rational and trustworthy order that proves as fallible and illusory as the young officer over whom he is called to sit in judgment. As Tony Tanner, has pointed out Brierly’s recognition in the light of Jim’s predicament, that the high ideals and heroic deeds of his own life were mere illusions, hallmarks of the instabilities of life itself, arguably drove him over the taffrail. (Smith and Wolstenholme, 48-49)

The humiliation caused by the idea of common humanity between the perfect and the imperfect is what pushes Brierly over the edge.
Unlike Kurtz and Jim, who cross over the edge, Brierly takes his step down, not to the other side. His rejection of the existence of the other side implies his imperialistic view of the natives and his denial of human frailty. He is “the self-betrayed visionary.” Unlike Marlow, who is aware of the other side but is not ready to cross over, Brierly denies its existence and expresses his denial through his suicide. For him, human nature is always good and impeccable. Like Almayer, he ends his own life tragically because he is not ready for a journey of self-knowledge. When he realizes that he cannot avoid confronting the truth, he does not hesitate to give up his life.

The unjust and hypocritical treatment Jim receives from Western judicial system is also what he gets from his society at large. His father is a minister, representing the religious authority, and yet he is not the person Jim turns for guidance and help. Although we never hear from the father directly and personally, he is present throughout the story. Brierly mentions that Jim’s father will be devastated when he finds out about his son’s confession as well as his jump. In addition to his own fame and dignity, Brierly wants Jim to get away to save the latter’s family reputation and dignity. Jim cannot go home to his family because he knows, “I can never face the poor old chap…I could never explain. He wouldn’t understand” (Lord Jim, 58).

As a parental figure and a representative of religious authority, Jim’s father appears to be too judgmental and unforgiving. He is the only parental and familial figure in the first part of the story, which indicates that Western family structure is based on patriarchy. Neither Jim nor anyone else mentions his mother. Her absence means the lack of nurture and protection a family should provide for children. The lack of healthy relationships between family members cuts the individual’s connection with the past,
distorts his present, and endangers his future. The lack of paternal support and compassion shows that Jim’s decision to leave for Patusan is the only reasonable thing to do.

Instead of playing their traditional roles as sources of help and hope to their members, especially to those who are facing difficulties, the institutions of religion and family harshly pushes these unfortunate ones to the margins. Jim’s case implies that Western social system does not only oppress and exploit people of different cultures, but it also deals with its own members in a similar manner. The members have to perform their socially determined roles and images in order to keep their memberships. The social institutions of mercy and forgiveness such as family and religion seem to have well adjusted to the new system and have acquired the rigidity, intolerance, indifference, and hypocrisy of the other social, political, educational, and legal institutions. After Conrad describes incidents, either indicating or displaying these negative aspects of the system and its institutions, he describes another group of individuals who believe and do the opposite. Nonetheless, they are only a minority.

The person who saves Jim from this miserable situation and enables him to start all over again belongs to this minority. He offers an alternative perspective on the Patna case. He is a wealthy and respected merchant. Marlow seeks his advice and help to find a way to end Jim’s suffering while “waiting above ground” because he believes that Stein is one of the most trustworthy men he had ever known. Stein collects butterflies, which implies his connection with nature and his capacity to find a way of dealing with the problems of all these social and cultural changes. His worldview is not as limited as that of Brierly or of Jim’s father, and yet he comes across as a man who is following
Melville’s footsteps. Like Melville, who returned to the sea because of the disappointments he experienced among his own kind, Stein turns to other forms of creation.

His words suggest that he sees the white man as defective and unreliable. He describes the white man as the destroyer of nature to satisfy his greed and selfishness. He expresses his view of the West and the white man when he is telling Marlow about a rare butterfly he has lately caught:

“Marvellous!” he repeated, looking up at me. “Look! The beauty—but that is nothing—look at the accuracy, the harmony. And so fragile! And so strong! And so exact! This is Nature—the balance of colossal forces. Every star is so—and every blade of grass stands so—and the mighty Kosmos in perfect equilibrium produces—this. This wonder; this masterpiece of nature—the great artist. …

“Man is amazing, but he is not a masterpiece,” he said, keeping his eyes fixed on the glass case. “Perhaps the artist was a little mad. Eh? What do you think? Sometimes it seems to me that man is come where he is not wanted, where there is no place for him; for if not, why should he want all the place? Why should he run about here and there making a great noise about himself, talking about stars, disturbing the blades of grass?…”

(Lord Jim, 152)

He presents a worldview based upon the notion that the human being does not belong to this world. Having lost his original place, man struggles in this world to fit and yet brings destruction and suffering upon himself as well as his environment because of his
uncontrollable desire for power. For Stein, man is a stranger in this world. He is one of the few Conradian characters who have been to the other side of the world and come back. Therefore, his insights appear to be sounder than those of the other characters are. His life among the natives was the source of his happiness and peace but the existence of a greedy and dissatisfied white man--Cornelius--forced him to leave.

When he asks Marlow the reason for his visit, Marlow gives an ironic answer: “To tell you the truth, Stein […] I came here to describe a specimen.” The irony becomes more vivid when Stein asks if the specimen is a butterfly. Marlow says, “Nothing so perfect…A man!” After Marlow tells him Jim’s story, Stein comes up with the right diagnosis: “I understand very well. He is romantic.” These two gentlemen look at Jim’s case as if a doctor were examining his patient. When Marlow asks, “What is good for it?” Stein’s reply is that “there is only one remedy”! Before he gives the prescription, he summarizes the modern dilemma man faces in his effort to understand: “How to be.”

“We want in so many different ways to be,” This magnificent butterfly finds a little heap of dirt and sits on it; but man will never on his heap of mud keep still. He want to be so, and again he wants to be so…” “He wants to be a saint, and he wants to be a devil-and every time he shuts his eyes he sees himself as a very fine fellow-so fine he can never be […] In a dream.” And because you not always can keep your eyes shut there comes the real trouble--the heart pain--the world pain. I tell you, my friend, it is not good for you to find you cannot make your dream come true, for the reason that you not strong enough are, or not clever enough.
Stein does seem to admit that man is composed of two contradicting aspects: he harbors both the good and the bad.

Philosophically, he believes that a possible balance between these two characteristics cannot take place in a European setting, except in a dream. Unlike Brierly, Stein does not believe in perfection. He expresses the futility of individual’s effort to be perfect. The former’s adherence to professional ethics suggests his belief that man can achieve perfection if he follows a code. Brierly himself strictly follows the code of the sea. Stein, on the other hand, does not think that man can become perfect because of his dissatisfied self. They represent the two sides of William James’s pragmatism. The difference between them and James is that James accepts that both sides can be reunited:

Most of us expect good things on both sides of the line. Facts are good, give us also a lot of facts; principles are good, give us then a great number of principles, too. The world is beyond doubt a unity if considered in one way, but it is also multiple, if considered in another way. It is one and a multitude at the same time. We shall accept, therefore a kind of pluralistic monism. Everything is determined of course, but our will is free; a kind of determinism of free will would be the most appropriate philosophy. Evil of individual entities cannot be denied, but the whole cannot be evil; and in this way, practical pessimism can be linked with metaphysical optimism.  

(Lord Jim, 156)
James’s pragmatism displays man’s natural inclination toward dualism. According to his philosophy, the dilemma that tortures the modern individual is that he needs both spirituality and empiricism but these two are hopelessly separated.

Once Stein’s yearning for reconciliation between man and nature is combined with Brierly’s empirical view, man can regain his wholeness. This is exactly what Brierly could not face: the fact that human beings have weaknesses contradicts and challenges his belief in perfection. Although Stein’s obsession with butterflies implies that he has given up hope on man’s capacity to achieve tranquility in his second residence—the earth, Stein still sees a way out: to “follow the dream, and again follow the dream—and-so-ewig-usque ad finem” (*Lord Jim*, 157). Stein is aware that Jim follows a dream and cannot survive in the West unless he gives it up. His view that man does not belong to this world also indicates his belief in the existence of another world, which also explains why Stein still lives while Brierly has committed suicide. The latter seeks perfection here in this world because he does not know or believe in another world. As a result of his belief in another world, Stein is able to make it possible for Jim to go to a place where the latter can understand the meaning of life: Patusan.

He chooses this new setting because he has been there and experienced the difference. After finding the remedy for Jim—living in Patusan—Stein describes himself as a romantic and a follower of dreams as well: “And do you know how many opportunities I let escape; how many dreams I had lost that had come in my way” (*Lord Jim*, 158)? It is definite that Stein’s Patusan experience has changed his perspective of life. The following excerpt describes the process of his mental transformation:
The only woman that had ever existed for him was the Malay girl he called “my wife the princess”, or, more rarely in the moments of expansion, “the mother of my Emma”. Who was the woman he head mentioned in connexion with Patusan I can’t say; but from his illusions I understood she had been an educated and very good-looking Dutch-Malay girl, with a tragic or perhaps only a pitiful history, whose most painful part no doubt was her marriage with a Malacca Portuguese who had been clerk in some commercial house in the Dutch colonies. I gathered from Stein that this man was an unsatisfactory person in more ways than one, all being more or less indefinite and offensive.  

(Lord Jim, 161)

It is a love story. The reason for Stein’s correct diagnosis of Jim’s situation is his experience of a companionship with a woman.

Stein had a taste of paradise in Patusan and can now see the uselessness of man’s struggle for ultimate power and control. Man can become happy once he learns to accept his emotions and desires as part of his nature and fulfill them in the best way possible: love and family. He knows that man’s merciless and cruel effort to achieve happiness by acquiring wealth, social status, professional perfectionism, and fame is not going to satisfy him since all of these can only meet his material needs. Stein knows that Jim’s job in Patusan will bring him into contact with Jewel, the daughter of Stein’s “princess,” who will play a significant role in Jim’s transformation in spite of her unsatisfied Portuguese father--Cornelius.

Although Marlow’s purpose of getting this job for Jim was “to get him out of the way; out of his own way, be it understood” (Lord Jim, 55), it will initiate a spiritual
healing process for Jim because he is not going there just to earn money or to exploit. The process in which Conrad prepares Jim for his job overseas is very special. First, he goes there to live without having any intention to come back. When Marlow mentions coming back, Jim responds with another question: “Come back to what” (Lord Jim, 174)? His voyage is one way. His journey to this native land is not different from the journey of an immigrant away from his own country. This is not an exile, nor an escape. He cannot adjust to the new laws of his social system; therefore he leaves for a place where he will be part of a community rather than being at the margins or a specimen—a romantic. Jim’s life in Patusan, challenging Najder’s statement that Conrad’s protagonists remain outsiders (Najder, 1), displays that he lives among the natives as one of them.

Does Stein’s remedy work? The answer is yes. When Marlow visits Jim in Patusan, Jim describes the environment as ‘peaceful.’ He is welcomed and trusted by the natives. Thus, the new chapter in Jim’s life depicts an alternative way of existing. His life among the natives is in complete contrast with his life back home. The racial, cultural differences do not prevent the natives and Jim from trusting each other. Jim or Tuan Jim as they call him, expresses the peace and calmness he sees in the natives’ daily lives:

“He confessed to me that he often watched these tiny gleams go out one by one, that he loved to see people go to sleep under his eyes, confident in the security of tomorrow. “Peaceful here, eh?” he asked. He was not eloquent, but there was a deep meaning in the words that followed. “Look at these houses; there’s not one where I am not trusted. (Lord Jim, 181)

Marlow himself also notices the positive changes this new social environment brought into Jim’s life. In Patusan, Jim is more self-confident and at ease. It is even evident in his


“Now and then, though, a word, a sentence, would escape him that showed how deeply, how solemnly, he felt about that work which had given him the certitude of rehabilitation. That is why he seemed to love the land and the people with a sort of fierce egoism, with contemptuous tenderness.

(Lord Jim, 182)

Another positive aspect of Jim’s life in Patusan is his relationship with a female, Jewel. Surprisingly, the only environment in which the female is actively present is Patusan. The significant role the female plays in this social system is in complete juxtaposition with the absence of the female in Western social settings. When he describes Doramin, the leader of Patusan to whom Stein sent Jim, Marlow has to mention his wife who sits next to her husband. Marlow cannot ignore her presence although he feels uncomfortable. When she asks about Jim and his family, especially about Jim’s mother, Marlow cannot answer not because he does not want Jim’s secret to be known, but because he neither knows nor has cared to find out about her. Jim’s mother has not been mentioned until Doramin’s wife asks about her.

Since the second half of the novel depicts a different social system, it is now time to examine how the native society deals with legal, professional, and social issues. The idea of family is definitely more inclusive and plays a crucial role in social life. There are certain roles assigned to each gender, but both genders have respective legal, social, and political representations. Representing the female population of Patusan, Doramin’s wife sits next to her husband and has a right to involve in the affairs of the community. Looking from a political angle, she can even accompany and assist her husband when he
is dealing with international affairs. She is there when her husband is talking to Marlow, a foreigner. From a feminist perspective, this might not be enough to describe the native woman as free. Yet, compared to their Western counterparts, the native women have presence in their social environments and bring the idea of balance into social life. In the absence of the female, the patriarchal Western system is intolerant, indifferent, and merciless.

The native society seems to be based upon such values as trust, honesty, and justice. Therefore, the modern notion of contracts does not play a crucial role in this social system. There is no need for a piece of paper to turn a promise or a commitment into a contract because the Creator is All-Seeing and All-Hearing. In the case of failing, there are divinely ordained measures to be taken. These measures have to be reminded to the participants at the time of the agreement not during the execution process.

The contracts or agreements can be oral or written. When Jim comes to Patusan, he presents Stein’s ring to Doramin. Since Stein and Doramin have a long history of personal and business relationship, based upon trust and mutual respect, Doramin does not hesitate to welcome and embrace Jim. Once Jim is accepted into the community, he has to abide by its laws and regulations. Since he obeys the laws, natives give him the same rights as they do to any other member. Although he belongs to a different race, he can obtain any position within the system as long as he proves that he is sincere and capable enough to hold it.

Jim is trusted with the security and safety of the land and its people. This is something a native would not be able to achieve in the Western society until recently. Western discrimination towards the Other is not present in this native surrounding. As
long as a person proves that he is trustworthy and truthful, he/she is accepted and given rights. The relationship between Stein and Doramin also shows the importance this culture gives to friendship and brotherhood. Stein’s ring becomes the symbol of such a bond. Instead of an impersonal object like paper, a very personal item becomes the medium of interaction between these two people.

What happens after Gentleman Brown, a renegade European sailor, comes to Patusan is symbolic of the way the governing body of this social system sets and executes laws. Representing their families, the leaders of the community come together to discuss what they need to do in the case of an emergency. This inclusive social participation is not part of the Western social system because there is no homogeneity and therefore no easy concessions. The natives listen to what Jim, as one of their leaders, has to say and put their trust in his plan. When Doramin expresses his concern over Jim’s plan, Jim offers his own life as guarantee. The process, along with its possible consequences, is defined and accepted by both sides just before the process begins. Although everyone expresses their concern and discomfort with Jim’s decision that Gentleman Brown “should have his way clear back to the sea,” Jim still has to convince them by exhibiting his concern for the community as a whole.

As a leader, Jim’s first priority should be his community’s welfare. Putting his life as guarantee is emblematic of Jim’s concern for his people:

He loved the land and the people living in it with a very great love. He was ready to answer with his life for any harm that should come to them if the white men with beards were allowed to retire. They were evil-doers, but their destiny had been evil, too. Had he ever advised them ill? Had his
words ever brought suffering to the people? he asked. He believed that it would be best to let these whites and their followers go with their lives.

*Lord Jim*, 182

The people he loves accept his plan and decision. The reason for Jim’s decision that Gentleman Brown should get a clear way is neither their common racial origin nor his recurrent sense of guilt. Jim is already a member of the native community and his confession was his way of getting rid of his so-called “tragic” sense of guilt. As Sewlall states that Conrad uses confession as a healing agent, Jim’s confession was his attempt to initiate the process of redemption. Jim’s main reason for letting Brown go is his concern for his people’s safety and welfare. After his meeting with Patusan community leaders, he tells his wife, Jewel, that there is no sleep for him until his people are safe.

Jim makes two agreements in this difficult situation: one with Gentleman Brown and one with the native community. The agreement Gentleman Brown and Jim make requires Gentleman Brown to leave the town without hurting anyone after Jim gets his community to agree to let Brown go. Jim does his share of this agreement: he convinces his people to give Brown a clear way out. The agreement between Jim and his community allows Brown to go and yet it requires that Jim justify any human loss. Jim puts his own life as a guarantee in this contractual agreement between him and the native community. He abides by the terms of the agreement all the way through. Unfortunately, Jim’s agreement with the natives is dependent upon the one with Gentleman Brown. If Jim’s first oral contract is breached, then Jim will have to give up his life.

In order to guarantee victory, Gentleman Brown breaks his promise by commanding his men to open fire after he receives what he demanded from Jim: a clear
way out. For him, victory is an end by itself, not a means to achieve a higher or nobler end. Because of his survival instinct, he does not think about the moral aspect of the issue. If breaking his promise or breaching the agreement brings victory, he will not hesitate to do so. His notion of success involves the use of any means possible, moral or not. For Jim, victory cannot be coupled with such a base human instinct as survivalism. He keeps his promise, lest it would be immoral.

Since Gentleman Brown has killed Doramin’s son, Jim should be ready to give up his life and he does so without any hesitation. It is definite that there is a tragic tone to the scene of Jim’s death. However, from the sociological or legal perspective, there does not seem to be any injustice or unfairness involved. Compared to the guilty verdict Jim gets because of his sincere confession in England, this situation appears to be more honest and more just. This finale is significant in two ways: First, it shows that Jim is not an imperialist with selfish and exploitative intentions. He lives among the natives and dies as one of them. He abides by their laws and never defies the authority although he has the opportunity to do so. He follows the terms of the oral agreement he made with them. At this point, Conrad puts Jim’s idea of death against the Western perception of death: he prefers death for a nobler cause than a life with no obvious purpose. He lives and dies as a hero among the people who gave him the chance to make his dream come true. If Jim had any imperialistic intentions, he would have left with Gentleman Brown as Cornelius did.

Secondly, Jim’s life in Patusan is emblematic of the reconciliation between the conflicting aspects of human nature: to realize one’s dream while keeping the reality in perspective. The individual’s fate is not decided by three people who themselves are not
able to deal with reality. The individual has to take responsibility for his/her deeds and face the consequences although it means death. What happens to Jim in Patusan seems much closer to justice and truth than what happens to him in the European court. For the native social system requires its members to seek justice and truth in any case and under any conditions.

In this context, Brierly and Doramin appear to be counterparts, representing these two contradictory social systems. Brierly has difficulty accepting Jim’s public confession because it involves self-evaluation and confrontation with the truth. Doramin, on the other hand, knows that he has to accept it and bear the consequences although it causes suffering and sorrow. It is a truism to say that justice prevails in the second case. Conrad implies that the execution of justice can only be performed by a system whose notion of justice is not relative. The native’s understanding of justice does not allow personal opinions and emotions to interfere with legal and moral issues. It follows a law whose principles and regulations are not man-made. This organic unity minimizes the disagreements and conflicts between people. In his Colonizing Egypt, Timothy Mitchell describes the Islamic methodology of studying law:

Learning was a part of the practice of law, and it was from this practice, rather than from any set of codes or structures, that it took its sequence and its form.

The process of learning always began with the study of the Quran, the original text of the law (indeed the only original text, the only text which could not be read in some sense as interpretation or modification of an earlier writing). The student then moved on to the
hadith, the collections of sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad which interpret and extend the Quranic doctrine, and then on again to the major commentaries upon the Quran and to the other subjects dealing with its interpretation, such as the art of its recitation and the study of variant readings. 4

Everything else evolves around the authoritative text. Having a reliable center creates a sense of coherence and unity within a single person as well as within a social entity.

Mitchell also describes how a legal decision is made according to Islamic jurisdiction:

The sequence of learning was also the sequence of scholarship. A scholar at al-Azhar, we are told, would prepare a legal opinion, a lesson, a disputation, by placing all the books which discussed the question he wanted to elucidate on a low table in front of him, arranging them in sequences radiating from the middle: ‘at the center is the original text (matn), then the commentary (sharh) on this text, then the gloss on the commentary (hashiya) and finally the explication of the gloss (takrir). 5

This process of scholarship is very homogeneous due to its constant reference to the center. The social system, using this methodology in its governing branches, will be homogeneous and center-oriented. Neither a group nor an individual will be able to decide what methodology or practice they will follow. Harboring many different perceptions and practices within its constitution, the Western social system seems to make itself vulnerable to a social chaos at a larger scale.
Such a chaos would have prevailed in Patusan if Doramin did not kill Jim. Being the main leader of the community, Doramin has social responsibilities and obligations to meet. He has to make sure that his society will be safe by overseeing that the laws are being justly executed and obeyed. Holding the highest social position, he should be the first one to follow the law. Since Jim made a public agreement with the Patusan community, he has to follow it through in order to prove that the system is reliable, just, and strong enough to defend and protect its members, especially during a war. Otherwise, the feelings of insecurity and confusion will take over and weaken them against their enemy. Doramin’s responsibilities as a statesman take priority over his paternal ones.

For the same reason, Jim did not escape death. He could have joined Gentleman Brown and Cornelius if he wanted to get away. He gives up his life not because of his dramatic realization that he cannot escape his tragic destiny, initiated by his fatal jump off the Patna. In the British court, Jim behaved as an honest individual and confessed. Yet, his values were not concentric with those of the system or of other individuals such as Brierly and the other crewmembers of the Patna. In Patusan, however, he cannot act as an individual any more because he is part of an organic community and has to perform his duties as a member. Since he holds a leadership position, he has to make sure that community is not in danger. If he escaped, panic and chaos would have taken over and caused a bigger human loss. Like Doramin, who sacrificed his son for the sake of his community, Jim sacrifices his life to perform his duty towards his community by staying back and facing death.

While he acts as a moral individual in the European court in the absence of a center value system, he acts as a real statesman in Patusan because he has a coherent
community to which he can give his allegiance. Before the time comes to face Doramin, Jewel pleads with Jim. She believes that Jim can escape. Even Jim’s Malay friend and assistant Tamb’ Itam begs him to, “Fight!” Jim’s answer is “What for?” When Tamb’ Itam mentions to fight for their lives, Jim claims, “I have no life” (*Lord Jim*, 304). The lives of Gentleman Brown and his men are reminders of the life Jim would have had if he had escaped—the life of a base and evil man. As a responsible leader, Jim has to do what his position requires for him. He does not have a life if it means to separate himself from his community and become a lonely individual again.

Juxtaposing the native adherence to collectivity and social stability against Western idea of individualism, Conrad stresses the human being’s need for a communal life. As a result, Conrad, unlike Melville, comes back to land after experiencing the serious and horrific consequences of total freedom the sea allows him to have. Agreeing with Aristotle, Conrad believes that man outside society is a beast. Both accept that man wishes to be a god by disconnecting himself from society, but he turns into a beast. At the end, if a human being gives his allegiance to the Western society he has to be ready to play the impossible role of becoming a merciless, murderous, and selfish god. Since the system does not have an organic unity as a governing body in its legislative, executive, and judicial branches, man has to learn to survive on his own and to fight. This is what Kurtz does until he meets the native community of the Inner Station.

Kurtz is another manifestation of Conrad’s severe critique of Western social system. This protagonist’s life is emblematic of the society that pretends to allow the individual to have freedom of choice and speech. Unexpectedly, he will face punishment if his choices collide with the system’s choice for him. As a member of a class that is
lower than his Intended, he exhibits an effort to transgress the upper boundary of his class. He is allowed to voice his opinion and attract others’ attention as long as he does not act upon his ideas. He faces social discrimination and stereotyping as soon as he attempts to act upon what he knows and believes: he is an extremist. His execution of his right to be a free individual paradoxically turns him into a social outcast. This European practice of social discrimination is challenged by the native’s practice of justice.

After living in both the European and the native social systems, Kurtz realizes that the execution of justice is possible in the second social environment. The scene on the shore before Marlow takes him away is the only scene in which the natives appear as a community. They are there to say farewell to one of theirs, defying Marlow’s racially biased words:

> When the next day we left at noon, the crowd whose appearance behind the curtain of trees I had been acutely conscious all the time, flowed out of the woods again, filled the clearing, covered the slope with a mass of naked, breathing, quivering, bronze bodies…In front of the first rank, along the river, three men, plastered with bright red earth from head to foot, strutted to and fro restlessly…they shouted periodically together strings of amazing words that resembled no sound of human language; and the deep murmurs of the crowd, interrupted suddenly, were like the responses of some satanic litany. (Heart of Darkness, 149)

The three men in the front must be the leaders of the native community, who show their loyalty to Kurtz. They stand in the front, challenging the death the white man can bring upon them with his guns.
Their confrontational presence, along with that of the native woman, is emblematic of their social solidarity. If the natives were oppressed by Kurtz, so-called their murderous god, they had the opportunity to take revenge. One day before his departure, Marlow finds Kurtz in the woods with a “black figure” whom Marlow describes as “some sorcerer, some witch-man.” This figure could have killed Kurtz because the latter “was not much heavier than a child” (*Heart of Darkness*, 149). The meeting between him and the black figure seems to be a final meeting between the shaman and a community member who is about to die.

The conversation between the Russian and Marlow after they brought Kurtz on board also explains the protagonist’s situation better. The Russian is a friend of Kurtz’s and seems to help him in his fight against the other company employees who want to kill both. When Marlow informs the Russian that he overheard the manager express his desire to hang him, the latter’s response is very informative about what is really happening in the Congo. “I had better get out of the way quietly,” he said earnestly. “I can do no more for Kurtz now, and they would soon find some excuse. What’s to stop them? There is a military post three hundred miles from here.” Marlow cynically advises him, “perhaps you had better go if you have any friends amongst the savages nearby.” The Russian’s reply is that he has plenty friends among the natives because he is not there to take what belongs to them. He describes the natives as simple people.

Although the apparent reason for the Russian’s confession is to inform Marlow that Kurtz ordered the attack on the streamer and to prevent the company employees from murdering Kurtz, it also provides information about Kurtz’s situation. Since Marlow and the other whites survived the attack, the Russian knows that Kurtz’s life and his own are
in danger. The white employees of the company already hate these two and can kill them easily. Informing Marlow, the Russian wants to make sure that Kurtz will be safe. After this conversation, the Russian leaves with the natives who are waiting for him in a canoe nearby. His loyalty to Kurtz and his close relationship with the natives suggest that Kurtz is not hated as much among the natives as among the white company employees.6

Kurtz’s effort to stop Marlow from taking him back to Europe shows his social choice. Again, his choice clashes with that of the ivory company. He is being re-victimized by the same hypocritical system. He is never allowed to practice his freedom of choice and speech. The whole thing appears to be a game. There are two players: the social system and the individual, or the corporate interest and personal interest. Therefore, there have to be a winner and a loser. The system wins because its will to power encompasses both the individual and his mind. Those who challenge its power suffer social alienation, torture, hatred, and elimination. However, the willingness on the part of so-called outcasts to die is the sign of their effort to protect their newly adopted communities from greater damage. If Kurtz continued to attack Marlow’s boat, it would have endangered the lives of many natives. Instead, he sacrifices his own life for the community. He leaves the Russian back to accomplish his mission. He seems to be the loser in this power game but he makes sure that his team will get little damage until they get enough power to strike back. The right moment for the final move is yet to come.
III) Game Playing

You may be able to tell better, since the proverb has it that the onlookers see most of the game.

Marlow in *Lord Jim*, (p. 164)

The constant attempt to overcome the rival brings us to the second set of binary oppositions that reflect the dimension of game and its significance in a social system. Walter Goldschmidt, an anthropologist believes that game theory provides us with a way of looking at human behavior so as to find what the goals are. Put another way, game theory assumes the goals to be known and with this knowledge calculates its strategies. Social anthropologists examine the strategies and through these calculate the great unknown in exotic cultures: the values.¹

Game theory can help us come up with certain conceptual apparatus to understand the values behind certain forms of behavior. Although the main objective of game theory was imperialistic and exploitative in nature, this study will use it to discuss its significance in Conrad’s decolonization process, especially at the reconstructive stage.

Once the alienated self enters into the native environment, he has to compare and contrast the cultural practices of this new social setting with those of his original society to make his choice. Games are communal practices with a personal touch. Although a game seems to be more individualistic than social, the way the individual plays the game
is an obvious indication of his/her culture. Individuals can present their own skills and talents within a team and yet the strategies through which they present their talents are culture-bound.

In his article on popular literature, John Cawelti states, “homogeneous cultures possessed a large repertory of games and songs which all members of the culture understood and could participate in both for a sense of group solidarity and for personal enjoyment and recreation.”2 Since modern cultures are not homogeneous, they need to find ways of achieving solidarity through different means. According to Cawelti, the modern day game playing evolves around sports and literature. His description of the western as a game deserves this study’s attention because it proves that adventure literature had a fixed formula whose main aim was to eliminate the “Other” by turning him into a villain. He claims that this is where popular literature has gotten the inspiration. Cawelti claims that

one of the interesting ways of defining a western is as a game: a western is a three-sided game played on a field where the middle line is the frontier and the two main areas of play are the settled town and the savage wilderness. The three sides are the good group of townspeople who stand for law and order, but are handicapped by lack of force; the villains who reject law and order and have force; and the hero to lend his force to the good group and to destroy the villain. Various rules determine how this can be done; for example, the hero cannot use force against the villain unless strongly provoked. Also like games, the formula always gets to its goal. Someone must win, and the story must be resolved.”3
The good is always represented by the white man while the bad is either the native or the white men who have gone native.

Goldschmidt’s words show that the application of the game playing described by Cawelti is not as simple as it sounds. The anthropologist believes that it implants in the mind of the white the feelings of hatred and rage towards the native so that it can willingly engage in both offensive and defensive attacks. The ultimate goal is to win. Cawelti’s description is useful in detecting the similarities and differences between Conrad’s work and the works with which it has been associated. The goal of adventure tales is always to make the Western power prevail over the primitive native culture that represents a negative and sinister threat against the civilized world. Once the masses are persuaded to believe in the invincibility and ever-lasting moral dignity of the white man, they will easily participate in destroying the native. Since the good and bad are predetermined, the rules of engagement will be decided by the “good”. Whatever makes the good successful will be allowed.

Once viewed from this perspective, game playing appears to be very innocent, sincere, and necessary for the betterment of the world at large. Cawelti’s understanding of game theory is challenged by that of George Orwell, who sees a different agenda in these seemingly simple and innocent game playing strategies, performed by the powerful nations. Orwell claims that there cannot be fair game if one side has to win.

the notion of playing the game according to the rules always vanishes.

People want to see one side on top and the other side humiliated and they forget that victory gained through cheating or through the intervention of the crowd is meaningless […] Serious sport has nothing to do with fair
play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence; in other words it is war minus the shooting. Consequently, the idea of fair game disappears and the pursuit of power becomes an end. The victory, achieved at any cost, becomes the ultimate goal, regardless of the means. Cawelti and Orwell discuss the notion of game playing as manifestations of cultures. Goldschmidt, on the other hand, focuses on the idea that studying a culture’s notion of game playing has been a political tool to find strategies to conquer different cultures.

As Goldschmidt expresses it, one can calculate the unknown in exotic cultures by means of game theory. Although this can be a great contribution to cross-cultural studies, this statement has implications that anyone with selfish interests can easily come up with counter-strategies to overpower any society just by examining its games. Game theory, however, can be very beneficial once its objective is to learn more about other cultures in order to plant the seeds of tolerance, mutual respect, and international justice. The imminence of its dangers should not be underestimated in this humanistic effort of achieving peace worldwide. With his effort to juxtapose the native culture against Western one, Conrad undertakes a similar task with a clear understanding of its possible consequences. In order to minimize the possibility of misuse, he presents both sides as genuinely as he can.

Since Conrad depicts the native culture and its Western counterpart in a clash, the application of game theory will be limited to the strategies they follow in terms of war and fighting. Following the order of Conrad’s depiction, this section will focus on the overly self-confident and self-imposing Western culture first. In the arena of games and
fighting, it follows the same approach used in professional and legal areas. Once the achievement of success and power becomes the ultimate goal of the individual, failure in any form and shape needs to be eliminated. The passion for power and success invades every area of life and implements the competitive spirit in every individual. Orwell describes this phenomenon as “the lunatic modern habit of identifying oneself with large power units and seeing everything in terms of competitive prestige.”\(^5\) Once these strong feelings of rivalry and victory are aroused, wars break up.

Daphne Patai, in her article “Gamesmanship and Androcentrism in Orwell’s 1984,” describes the second step in the imperialistic understanding of game and power. She claims that the pursuit of power needs a supply of opponents to continue. According to her, the reason for opponents is that

\[
\text{power requires resistance; we do not speak of power over others when resistance is not present. Lack of resistance may show that power has become institutionalized, has transformed into authority, but mere authority is not enough [...] There must be resistance--so that the powerful, in overcoming it, can experience the thrill of their power.}
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Second, it stands to reason that the greater the resistance, the sharper the pleasure in overcoming it.  

(Patai, 857)

The same strategy also dominated the adventure literature that affected Jim’s dreams and the maps that formed Marlow’s imagination. In Marlow’s case, even the geographical locations, described as a snake, seem to present a threat to his land; therefore, those places need to be discovered and subdued to eliminate the threat they pose. The “light” literature Jim read instructed him to put himself in a situation where he faced some evil
force that needed to be conquered by a victorious hero. This evil force can be the wind, the sea, the pirates, anything, or anyone that challenges the system.

The notion of elimination is very central to Western idea of game playing. The loser must be eliminated to achieve a complete victory, following the example of Platonic state of perfection where “the useful is the noble and the hurtful is the base.” That is why Brierly wants to bury Jim twenty feet under the ground. For Jim cannot play the game according to the rules and becomes part of the hurtful. Brierly cannot understand why Jim prefers to “eat all that dirt” because “nothing can save him.” This case clearly displays that lying can be part of one’s effort to win a game and leaves Gentleman Brown as the winner.

Brown’s only intention is not only to exploit but also to eliminate whatever is between him and his target. He is a threat to the system as well because of his readiness to fight and eliminate for his own sake. Brown and Jim represent two opposite reactions to this systemic emphasis upon survivalism. Some members will show violent and corrupt resistance while the rest will express their disapproval through passive and honest resistance. The first group will not hesitate to challenge the system by fighting back, while the second will go through the disintegration of the self if they cannot leave. In the case of those who can get out, they will look for alternatives as do Jim and Kurtz. In the end, both groups are victimized by the system’s unrealistic demands from the individual: ultimate self-sufficiency and strong desire for power.

This unfair game playing turns the first group into excellent manipulators and the other into pursuers of justice. While Gentleman Brown uses mischievous and devious means to become successful in any given situation, Jim acts as a hero, physically and
morally stern, and spreading the virtues of honesty, and loyalty. The result of a confrontation between the members of both groups is not difficult to guess. The manipulator will eventually find a way to bring the follower of virtue down because the second cannot use any immoral or illegal means. The game Gentleman Brown plays with Jim brings a double-fold success to the former. He gets what he wants and destroys his opponent whom he describes as “a fool” (*Lord Jim*, 280).

Kurtz’s case presents another obstacle in this power game between the system and its members. He enjoys certain amount of freedom until he realizes that his freedom is relative and ephemeral. He will lose it as soon as he challenges the system by demanding social changes. Marlow tells us that the reason for Kurtz’s immigration is that he was denied the hand of his Intended, who belongs to a higher class. Her family does not approve of a proposal from a man who is not their equal.

I had heard that her engagement with Kurtz had been disapproved by her people. He wasn’t rich enough or something. And indeed I don’t know whether he had not been a pauper all his life. He had given me some reason to infer that it was his impatience of comparative poverty that drove him out there. (*Heart of Darkness*, 160)

If he rejects this social rule and fights back, he will become a rebel that needs to be eliminated in order to maintain the established law and order.

Any person with Kurtz’s characteristics will protest against this social injustice. The information Marlow receives from Kurtz’s cousin and his description of the latter as a voice throughout his narration imply that Kurtz will not use violence but his artistic talents—his pen and his voice in his resistance:
but another fellow, calling himself Kurtz’s cousin, appeared two days later, and was anxious to hear all the details about his dear relative’s last moments. Incidentally he gave me to understand that Kurtz had been essentially a great musician. ‘There was the making of an immense success,’ said the man who was an organist, I believe, with lank grey hair flowing over a greasy coat-collar. I had no reason to doubt him; and to this day I am unable to say statement what was Kurtz’s profession, whether he ever had any—which was the greatest of his talents. I had taken him for a painter who wrote for the papers, or else for a journalist who could paint—but even the cousin (who took snuff during the interview) could not tell me what he had been—exactly. He was a universal genius—on that point I agreed with the old chap.6

Although Marlow’s description of the cousin makes him look unreliable, it offers some explanation about Kurtz’s personality and his life: Kurtz was an artist. This implies that he cannot accept oppression and will show effort to make changes in society at large through his art.

In addition to the seemingly less reliable cousin’s words, Marlow obtains more information from a journalist who comes to inquire about Kurtz:

Ultimately a journalist anxious to know something of the fate of his ‘dear colleague’ turned up. This visitor informed me Kurtz’s proper sphere ought to have been politics ‘on the popular side.’ He had furry straight eyebrows, bristly hair cropped short, an eyeglass on abroad ribbon, and, becoming expansive, confessed his opinion that Kurtz couldn’t write a bit-
‘but Heavens! How that man could talk! He electrified large meetings. He had faith—don’t you see?—he had the faith. He could get himself to believe anything—anything. He would have been a splendid leader of an extreme party.’ ‘What party?’ I asked. ‘Any party,’ answered the other. ‘He was an—an—extremist.’ Did I not think so? I assented. Did you know, he asked, with a sudden flash of curiosity, ‘what it was that had induced him to go out there?’ ‘Yes,’ said I, and forthwith handed him the famous Report for publication. 7

In this portrayal, Kurtz appears as a successful and active political figure affecting large groups of people. Thus, his effect upon the natives does not have to depend upon violence and torture. His linguistic efficiency seems to be enough to get them believe and accept him. These characteristics are helpful once the reader’s main effort is to understand Kurtz’s situation rather than to pass judgment hastily. The words, praising him as a speaker, also point to Conrad’s reversal of the traditional writing/speech dichotomy.

The reasons for Kurtz’s departure cannot be limited to his desire for more money. He has political, artistic, and social aspirations. Within the standards of Western social system, he will not be able to achieve them. The gap between the information Marlow receives about Kurtz and the interpretations of such critics as Frederick Karl offers shows the danger of relying upon interpretations that have overlooked Conrad’s binary oppositions. This is how Frederick Karl concludes his essay on Heart of Darkness, praising Marlow for his Englishness and defaming Kurtz for his Nietzschean will to power:
What makes this story so impressive is Conrad’s ability to focus on the Kurtz-Marlow polarity as a definition of our times. European history as well as the history of individual men can be read more clearly in the light of Conrad’s art; for he tells us that the most dutiful of men, a Marlow, can be led to the brink of savagery and brutality if the will to power touches him; that the most idealistic of men, Kurtz-interestingly not ‘a’ Kurtz--can become a sadistic murderer; that the dirty work of this world is carried out by men whose reputations are preserved by lies. Conrad’s moral tale becomes, in several respects, our story, the only way we can read history and each other. Hannah Arendt’s definition of the “banality of evil,” the nihilism of the average man, is fully relevant. It is a terrible story. Unlike Marlow, who possesses threads of heroism, we fail to confront it and prefer to acquiesce in our humiliation. (Karl, 136)

Arendt’s definition of “banality of evil” reflects Socratian view of the individual: “The useful is the noble and the hurtful is the base.” The word evil, in the place of hurtful, gives the latest definition a religious and moral touch. Thus, Karl seems to believe that anyone who is average is included in this banal group because he/she lacks proper moral restraint to deny the banal and evil part of his/her nature. He praises Marlow for his effort to delay the process of facing, let alone accepting, the truth. The reason for Marlow’s delay is his Englishness that, as Karl claims, saves him from becoming another Kurtz -- “an elongated image of wasted power and fruitless endeavor, the humanitarian become inhuman.”
Interestingly enough, Karl also comments about the journalist’s words. Here is how Karl deciphers them:

   When a journalist informs Marlow that Kurtz would have been a “splendid leader of an extreme party,” Marlow understandably asks, “What party?” “Any party,” his visitor answers, “he was an--an--extremist” With that Conrad presents his grandest insight into the politics of our time—totalitarian politics but democratic politics as well. The absence of social morality, the desire to rise at everyone’s expense, the manipulation of the whole peoples for purely selfish ends, the obsession with image and consensus, and personal power, the absence of meaningful beliefs, the drive for advancement and aggrandizement without larger considerations, the career built on manipulation and strategies, not ideas: these are the traits that have characterized the leaders of our age, that have become the expected burden of the ruled in our country [...] Too often power is vested in the chameleon, the politician who claims to be all things to all people.10

Although Karl classifies Kurtz as an average man, the information Marlow receives from the people who knew the hero before he went abroad proves the opposite. Kurtz is not an average person, according to the above descriptions: he is an artist, a musician, a journalist, a painter, a public speaker, a politician, and even an extremist. Since Kurtz’s journalist colleague views him as an extremist, the word needs more explanation.

   Taking into account the information Marlow receives from these two people, one can easily infer that he was against the British class system and showed effort to change it publicly and personally. His intention to marry the Intended becomes the symbol of this
effort. His journalist colleague seems to believe that Kurtz’s desire to marry a girl, richer than him, is a sign of his extremism. So are his political and social aspirations for a society where upper mobility is impossible. The image the system imposes upon Kurtz is that of a “murderous god, a madman.” This unfair description is also an indication of the system’s effort to get rid of its opponent who challenges it by exposing its weaknesses and mistakes. The reader’s approval of the system’s description of Kurtz as an evil person will remove one more obstacle between the system and the victory.

Comparing Kurtz to “a politician who claims to be all things to all people” does not seem to be a fair judgement. If the reader accepts the allegation that Kurtz is an extremist, he/she has to realize that an extremist cannot be “all things to all people”. For an extremist obsessively follows only one idea, right or wrong. What makes him extreme is his strong attachment to that idea alone, not the lack or abundance of ideas. Thus, Kurtz, so-called extremist, cannot be “a chameleon” since he is supposed to be obsessed with one idea. In political terms, he seems to be an activist rather than a politician. Marlow appears to be a better politician than Kurtz; for he mostly observes without being involved and getting hurt. Then, he narrates what he has seen.

He knows how to play the game and how to withdraw if he thinks he will lose. In this sense, the motive behind Marlow’s behavior is similar to Gentleman Brown’s: their instinct for survival. Marlow uses the means of detachment as his survival strategy while Gentleman Brown’s strategy is survival by any and every means available. The characteristics Kurtz displays, on the other hand, are similar to Jim’s: they have a set of certain rules and ideas to follow as long as they can. For them, the outcome does not justify the means. Therefore, survival becomes secondary in their list of goals; their
primary purpose in life is to find peace and tranquility through meaningful human interactions, not contaminated with superficial and distrusting game-playing rules. Life is ever more serious and complicated than a game between two opposing teams.

This constant rivalry between the powerful and the weak occurs at many different levels: between two individuals, between an external power and an individual, or between two social circles, between two values systems, and even within one soul. The competition between two systems is the most devastating because of the amount of human loss it can cause. The rivalry between Jim and Gentleman Brown occurs at different levels: it is between two individuals, between two value systems, and even between two opposing aspects of the human soul—the good and the evil. It is more destructive because it is also a physical fight between two groups of people. The most striking aspect of this rivalry is that it takes place between two white men: one still considers himself a member of the European society while the other is part of the native society. Therefore, the second’s notion of game playing has changed according to the value system of his new culture. His outcast status, given to him by his previous society due to his adherence to the truth, also indicates that he cannot play the game if it is not a fair one. On the other hand, his opponent does not care about the quality of the game except for the result—he needs to make sure he will win.

The first move of the game comes from Brown: to make Jim, his opponent, feel insecure about himself by asking questions about the reasons for his existence in this “hell-like” place. Here is the first question Brown asks Jim: “What is it you’ve found here that is so d--d precious?” Then, he keeps challenging Jim with similar psychological games:
“We aren’t going into the to wander like a string of living skeletons dropping one after another for ants to go to work upon us before we are fairly dead. Oh, no! […] What do you deserve? you that I find skulking here with your mouth full of your responsibility, of innocent lives, of your infernal duty? What do you know more of me than I know of you? I came here for food. D’ye hear?--food to fill our bellies. And what did you come for? What did you ask for when you came here? We don’t ask you for anything but to give us a fight or a clear road to go back whence we came.”

(Lord Jim, 283)

With his questions, Brown tries to cause discomfort and confusion in his opponent’s mind so that the latter becomes weak and vulnerable. After this move, Brown tries to conceal his real intentions and to soften his opponent’s heart. He claims that they are in Patusan because they need food.

He attacks his opponent from many different fronts. He further tries to overpower Jim by implying that he might share the same destiny since they are away from their homes:

“Have we met to tell each other the story of our lives?…Suppose you begin. No? Well, I am sure I don’t want to hear. Keep it to yourself. I know it is no better than mine. I’ve lived--and so did you though you talk as if you were one of those that should have wings so as to go about without touching the dirty earth. Well--it is dirty. I haven’t got any wings. I am here because I was afraid once in my life. Want to know what of? Of a prison. That scares me, and you may know it--if it’s any good to you. I
won’t ask you what scared you into this infernal hole, where you seem to have found pretty pickings. That is your luck and this is mine—the privilege to beg for the favour of being shot quickly, or else kicked out to go free and starve in my own way.”  

(White, 284)

Brown brags to Marlow about how smart he was to challenge Jim with his rhetorical questions. He feels successful and proud as a predator does when it corners its prey. Brown keeps referring 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 their hearts” (White, 287). Relying on these words, many critics have reached the conclusion that Brown cleverly forces Jim to remember his past and revives the sense of guilt and shame the latter has been trying to forget. This could have been relevant if Jim flashed back. Brown’s cleverness is neither honest nor acceptable. It is simply a strategy to get what he wants. He presents himself as a hungry man who faced mistreatment and injustice. In his speech full of guilt mongering and finger pointing, Brown tries to initiate a negotiation with Jim. He pretends that he is asking only for food and a clear way without a fight. Jim, although has the upper hand, behaves the way a party who takes part in an agreement does and promises Brown a clear way out.

After getting his honest opponent to promise, Brown does not intend to keep his word. On the other hand, Jim believes Brown and accepts the terms Brown sets during their meeting:

It is evident he [Jim] did not mistrust Brown; there was no reason to doubt the story, whose truth seemed warranted by the rough frankness, by a sort of virile sincerity in accepting the morality and the consequences of his
acts. But Jim did not know the almost inconceivable egotism of the man which made him, when resisted and foiled in his will, mad with the indignant and revengeful rage of a thwarted autocrat. But if Jim did not mistrust Brown, he was evidently anxious that some misunderstanding should not occur, ending in collision and bloodshed. *(Lord Jim, 293)*

As soon as he convinces the people of Patusan to let Brown go, Jim sends a message to Brown, trying to be an honest player:

> “You get the clean road. Start as soon as your boat floats on tide. Let your men be careful. The bushes on both sides of the creek and the stockade at the mouth are full of well-armed men. You would have no chance, but I don’t believe you want bloodshed.” *(Lord Jim, 294)*

Nevertheless, Jim chooses the wrong person to carry his message to Brown because Cornelius is the least reliable to have such a crucial responsibility. However, Jim’s decision to send Cornelius to his opponent seems very reasonable and responsible because Cornelius “could speak English, was known to Brown, and was not likely to be shot by some nervous mistake of one of the men as a Malay” *(Lord Jim, 294)*. Cornelius’ hatred for Jim makes him help Brown carry out his sinister plan and cause unnecessary bloodshed. Again, the game turns ugly and deadly because of the selfish and dishonest actions performed by one of the opponents.

After reading Jim’s message and furiously tearing the letter into pieces, Brown utters the words of revenge: “He thinks he has made me harmless, does he” *(Lord Jim, 295)*? Once he gets out of Patusan safely, he orders his men to begin shooting. Brown’s
accomplice in this revengeful game of cheating, Cornelius knows the area very well and helps Brown escape after killing Dain Waris.

They both broke their promises. Although Brown knows that having Cornelius, not an easy opponent to discard, with him can be very dangerous in future and yet he allows him to stay for the time being because he needs his guidance to get out of Patusan unharmed. Cornelius, on the other hand, is aware that he will face death if he stays back. He also knows that he can stay with Brown as long as the latter needs him. Once his usefulness is no avail, he can try to escape and survive since he knows the area better than Brown. Both of them know the game well and take advantage of every opportunity they can get.

Nothing would happen to these white men for breaching their agreements at any rate. Since they cause damage to the native society, no one will question about or hold them responsible for what they did. Although Jim was found guilty for endangering the lives of the pilgrims on the Patna, the deaths Brown caused will be unnoticed. Such evil-natured individuals as Cornelius and Brown know how to exploit others in the absence of justice and international law. The system’s indifferent and selfish approach to others manifests itself in the behavior of its members.

Although the natives know that white men can play sinister and inhumane games, they cannot know what the next game is going to be. Furthermore, native cultures do not allow their members to go beyond the boundaries of their laws and rules. Games or battles have to be performed within the permissible rules of engagement. In any case, promises have to be kept and the conditions of an agreement have to be strictly followed. That is the road to success in Jim’s world. When Jim is making the agreement with
Brown, he cannot rely on the assumption that the man he is dealing with is not an honest opponent.

Darwin’s survival-of-the-fittest jungle theory becomes the most significant rule of the Western understanding of game playing. Since the attainment of power becomes an end, rather than a means, it becomes lawful to eliminate anything and everything between the individual and his goal. Thus, Orwell’s analysis of modern game playing in terms of aspects of military combat and political machinations and his description of it as “a lunatic modern habit” appear to be accurate and well diagnosed. Surprisingly enough, Darwin’s theories of human evolution as well as social evolution just appear in time to confirm the validity and success of these violent and inhumane games of the white man. According to Darwin, the power game is simply the order in nature and humans cannot go against it because they are part of nature.

Animal life can continue in this natural order by getting rid of its weak ones. However, the application of the same rule to a human society has many undesirable and unexpected consequences. In his *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom describes how the modern American society suffers from this perspective. Once the notion of survivalism becomes prevalent, it turns individuals against each other. They become enemies, or threats to each other’s freedom. Bloom mentions that this shift from the commitment to society to self-centeredness has changed the whole cultural spectrum by separating man from his Creator, his community, his family and finally destroying his inner wholeness:

Throughout the whole tradition, religious or philosophic,
man had two concerns, the care of his body and the care of his soul, expressed in the opposition between desire and virtue. In principle, he was supposed to long to be all virtue, to break free from the chains of bodily desire. Wholeness would be happiness; but it is not possible, at least in this life. Machiavelli turned things upside down. Happiness is indeed wholeness, so let’s try the wholeness available to us in this life. The tradition viewed man as the incomprehensible and self-contradictory union of two substances, body and soul. Man cannot be conceived as body only. But if the function of whatever is not body in him is to cooperate in the satisfaction of bodily desire, then man’s dividedness is overcome. Simple virtue is not possible, and love of virtue is only an imagination, a kind of perversion of desire effected by society’s (i.e. others’) demands on us. But simple desire is possible. (Bloom, 174)

Brown’s Machiavellian approach to life is in complete opposition to Jim’s pursuit of virtue. Both approaches represent the old philosophic discord over the attempt to define man: the contradiction between the effort to “tame and perfect desire by virtue” and the eagerness to ‘find out what desire is and to live according to it.”

In his character portrayals, Conrad participates in this long debate. His rejection of following the desire is obvious. His attempt seems to be on the way to tame and perfect desire by virtue. He does not believe that desire can be denied, either. He seems to think that love of virtue is not imaginary if the right social setup is available. This alternative social environment has to be dependent upon trust, commitment, and attachment rather than contractual mistrust, indifference, and unfair games. Although
Brierly seems to be closer to Jim rather than Brown in this respect, his desire for perfection does not rely on virtue; instead, his has the false notion that desire is enough to achieve both personal and social goals. However, Jim’s trial made Brierly realize that his belief in self’s natural capacity to achieve self-preservation and civility provides a short-term solution to man’s existential dilemma. Brierly is the living example of Lockean natural man who, Bloom says, identical to Locke’s civil man because Locke believes that man can be concerned with his own self-preservation and at the same time be law-abiding and productive. Bloom agrees with Rousseau: “Locke, in his eagerness to find a simple or automatic solution to the political problem, […] illegitimately selected those parts of man he needed for his social contract and suppressed all the rest.” Bloom’s description of the bourgeois as the measure of the price paid by Lockean man further explains Brierly’s condition: He cannot afford to look into his real self.

Thus, all these modern rituals and games are manifestations of these soul-denying, self-gratifying views of man. Machiavellian or Lockean, man follows his desire in denial of his spiritual existence. Then, the worldly life is what man has and must prolong in every possible way. What Brown wants to accomplish is to indulge himself in self-satisfaction while Brierly gives up life when his high opinion of self is challenged by the reality of a “bottomless basement” beneath him.

Comparing Western value system with that of the natives, Conrad evokes some hope for those who are not obsessed with their survival at the expense of their sanity and dignity. The natives are not so concerned about their survival. Therefore, they do not waste their time to figure out different ways of staying alive. They believe that there is reward for them in the next world as long as they stay on the right path in this world. The
belief in the Hereafter is no longer part of modern culture. Therefore, the life on this world becomes the only thing to cherish for such characters as Brierly, Cornelius, and Gentleman Brown.

The lack of concern for others, be it the opponent or the clients, shows that mercy is not a part of such a system, either. Although it allows the guilty to be innocent until their guilt is proven, it has to let the guilty loose if his/her guilt cannot be proven in the courtroom. The indifference and harshness the individuals show towards each other is an outcome of their constant struggle for more power. The sense of connection eventually becomes irrelevant to the individual’s existence because it prevents him from fulfilling his desires. The most fulfilling desire for a self-centered man is the joy of a victory won against other men. This strong sense of selfishness will inevitably cause social disintegration and destruction:

The souls of the young people are in a condition like that of the first men in the state of nature-spiritually unclad, unconnected, isolated, with no inherited or unconditional connection with anything or anyone. They can be anything they want to be, but they have no particular reason to want to be anything in particular [...] There is no necessity, no morality, no social pressure, no sacrifice to be made that militates going in or turning away from any of these directions, and there are desires pointing toward each, with mutually contradictory arguments to buttress them.11 The concern for self-satisfaction and the desire to win are the reasons behind the unfair
game of Gentleman Brown. Marlow also talks about his meeting with Gentleman Brown. During their conversation, Brown expresses the joy he had when he deceived Jim and the natives:

It was then that Brown took his revenge upon the world which, after twenty years of contemptuous and reckless bullying refused him the tribute of a common robber’s success. It was an act of cold-blooded ferocity, and consoled him on his deathbed like a memory of an indomitable defiance.  

(Lord Jim, 299)

This brings us to another difference that separates the Western culture from the native one: the dimension of dream. Since the coordination between the brain and the heart is broken, the brain is free of any constraints and restrictions that would keep it in touch with reality. When Marlow compares Jim and Dain Waris, he points to the gap between their self-images. The distinction Marlow notices between these two young men points to another difference between the West and the native in terms of their opposing perceptions of imagination and dreams.

Jim is the young white male whose dreams are endless and bottomless. On the contrary, Dain Waris is the young native man whose dreams cannot go outside the absolute framework set by his Creator. He can still imagine heroic deeds and accomplishments. Yet, he cannot believe that he is invincible and infallible forever.

That brave and intelligent youth (who knew how to fight after the manner of the white men) wished to settle the business on hand, but his people was too much for him. He had not Jim’s racial prestige and the reputation of the invincible, supernatural power. He was not the visible, tangible
incarnation of unfailing truth and of unfailing victory. Beloved, trusted, and admired as he was, he was still one of them, while Jim was one of us. Moreover, the white man, a tower of strength in himself, was invulnerable, while Dain Waris could be killed. (Lord Jim, 268)

Western culture forces the individual to become his own god and seek unlimited power while the native culture follows the instructions and orders of one God who is the only owner of the ultimate power.

The imagination of the individual in the first culture focuses on the pursuit of power by formulating and practicing games and rituals that will make its dreams come true. On the contrary, for the latter, dreams are revelations from God or the Supreme Being through which the Creator conveys his messages, warnings, or glad tidings to His creation. Man can never imagine challenging the divine authority, let alone replacing it. Following the laws ordained by God, the native does not picture himself or herself free from his religious, social, and personal responsibilities. Although it sounds to weaken the individual and make him/her susceptible to failures, it empowers them by keeping them in touch with the reality of their humanness.

In the midst of all these war games, Marlow is capable of keeping himself away from going over the edge by assuming a passive role—the role of a spectator. The difficulty of deciding which side he supports appears to be the result of his passive role. However, at certain moments, he cannot control his emotions. In these rare moments, one can see Marlow’s opinion about these games. The reason for his constant effort to conceal his feelings and detach himself from his surrounding is his fear of becoming vulnerable and of getting hurt. His visit to his aunt before he leaves for the Congo shows
that he does not want to be associated with those who believe in the civilizing mission.

With the description of the dying images he talks about after he arrives in the Congo, Marlow separates himself from the white men who are destroying the natives. He appears to identify himself with the heroes--Kurtz and Jim, and yet he shows tremendous effort to hide it.

In his game of self-concealment, he uses the strategy of distancing himself from the protagonist by declaring him either a character from the past or a misfit.

He was a youngster of the sort you like to see about you; of the sort you like to imagine yourself to have been; of the sort whose appearance claims the fellowship of these illusions you had thought gone out, extinct, cold, which, as if rekindled at the approach of another flame, give a flutter deep, deep down somewhere, give a flutter of light [...] of heat!  (Lord Jim, 32)

The word “youngster” is Marlow’s popular word to describe Jim. Whatever Jim represents for Marlow appears to be old and extinct. In the following excerpt, he expresses his admiration for Jim but with the word “symbolic”, he puts a widening gap between the hero and himself.

‘And there I was with him, high in the sunshine on the top forest, the secular gloom, the old mankind. He was like a figure set up on a pedestal, to represent in his persistent youth the power, and perhaps virtues, of races that never grow old, that have emerged from the gloom. I don’t know why he should always have appeared to me symbolic. Perhaps this is the real cause of my interest in his fate.  (Lord Jim, 194)
An intimate relationship between a man and a woman is something Marlow has never talked about until this point in his narration. He still tries hard to detach himself from Jim by calling him a romantic. He describes this relationship as a romantic love story:

The conquest of love, honor, men’s confidence—the pride of it, the power of it, are fit materials for a heroic tale; only our minds are struck by the externals of such a success, and to Jim’s successes, there were no externals. \((Lord Jim, 166)\)

With the following words, Marlow begins to talk about Jim’s love:

This brings me to the story of his love.

I suppose you think it is a story that you can imagine for yourselves. We have heard so many such stories, and the majority of us don’t believe them to be stories of love at all. For the most part we look upon them as stories of opportunities: episodes of passion at best, or perhaps only of youth and temptation, doomed to forgetfulness in the end, even if they pass through the reality of tenderness and regret. This view is mostly is right, and perhaps in this case, too…Yet I don’t know. \((Lord Jim, 202)\)

He uses this cynical view of love and intimacy as a boundary between Marlow the mature and Jim the youngster.

Coupled with his passiveness, his self-distancing strategy helps Marlow to hold a middle position between those who are concerned with their survival and those who sacrifice their lives to protect their communities and values. At the end, he is the survivor,
along with the main female character whose presence reveals Marlow’s real self. His impassioned description of Jewel is one of the few manifestations of his real feelings. He obviously feels attracted toward the feminine and yearns for a similar intimate relationship:

But do you notice how, three hundred miles beyond the end of telegraph cables and mail-boat lines, the haggard utilitarian lies of our civilization wither and die, to be replaced by pure exercises of imagination, that have the futility, often the charm, and sometimes the deep hidden truthfulness, of works of art? Romance had singled Jim for its own-and that was the true part of the story, which otherwise was all wrong. He did not hide his jewel. In fact, he was extremely proud of it.

It comes to me now that I had, on the whole, seen very little of her. What I remember best is the even, olive pallor of her complexion, and the intense blue-black gleams of her hair, flowing abundantly on her shapely head. Her movements were free, assured, as she blushed a dusky red. While Jim and I were talking, she would come and go with rapid glances at us, leaving on her passage an impression of grace and charm and a distinct suggestion of watchfulness. Her manner presented a curious combination and audacity. Every pretty smile was succeeded by a look of silent, repressed anxiety, as if to put to flight by the recollection of some abiding danger. At times she would sit down with us and with her soft cheek dimpled by the knuckles of her little hand […] Her tenderness hovered over him like a flutter of wings. She lived so completely in his
contemplation that she had acquired something of his outward aspect, something recalled him in her movements, in the way she stretched her arm, turned her head, directed her glances. Her vigilant affection had an intensity that had made it almost perceptible to the senses; it seemed actually to exist in the ambient matter of space, to envelop him like a peculiar fragrance, to dwell in the sunshine like a tremulous, subdued, an impassioned note. \( \textit{Lord Jim, 208} \)

After this long and detailed introduction of Jewel, Marlow realizes that he is running into the danger of being associated with Jim and his romantic love story.

As a narrator who appears to be very objective, he interrupts his story to remind his audience that he is just telling the story as he observed it:

I suppose you think that I, too, am romantic, but it is a mistake. I am relating to you the sober impressions of a bit of youth, of a strange uneasy romance that had come in my way. I observed with interest the work of his-well-good fortune. He was jealously loved, but why she should be jealous, and of what, I could not tell. \( \textit{Lord Jim, 208} \)

He feels uneasy since romance is what he personally yearns but publicly cannot approve of. The sudden outbursts of Marlow’s long-suppressed emotions and romantic inclinations challenge his constant effort to cover up the internal by centering the attention on the external.

Half a page later, he forgets and falls back into the romantic mode when he describes the walks Jim and Jewel take:
I saw her and Jim through the window of my room come out together quietly and lean on the rough balustrade--two white forms very close, his arm about her waist, her head on his shoulder. Their soft murmurs reached me, penetrating, tender, with a calm sad note in the stillness of the night, like a self-communion of one being carried on in two notes.

(Lord Jim, 208)

Such emotional eruptions prove that Marlow is interested in Jim because Jim is the embodiment of what he lacks: youth, energy, dreams, passion, and freedom of expression, action, and love. That is also why Kurtz does not want to leave the Congo where he has come to find out the real meaning of his existence--a being with two mutually dependent parts: a soul and a body. The needs of both parts can be fulfilled as long as he shows willingness to accept them as parts of his being. Patusan is the locale that allows Jim to become a whole being again through a mutually committed relationship with Jewel.

The tranquility and peace Jim and Jewel feel in each other’s presence is the solution Conrad offers to the alienated modern individual in the midst of a chaotic world. Neither Gentleman Brown’s dirty war game nor Marlow’s self-concealment game can reach the level of peace and fulfillment Jim and Kurtz experience as the naturalized citizens of their native cultures. They do not feel the constant stress, pressure, and insecurity of concealing their emotions and worrying about finding winning game playing strategies.
IV) Companionship: A Taste of Paradise

Marriage…is a solution aiming to answer the problem of how to reconcile one’s spiritual desires and one’s physical needs; of how to save chastity without rejecting love, and how to put in order the sexual love of an animal which can become a man but not an angel. This aim is in its essence…

‘Alija ‘Ali Izetbegovic, *Islam between East and West*

For Conrad, the relationship between Jim and Jewel is more than a romantic love story. It is an essential step to achieve reconciliation between the individual’s desire for self-satisfaction and his need for stability. Conrad believes that the disintegration of family relationships separated man from his social surroundings and pushed him into complete isolation. This seclusion either intensified man’s selfish desires or created an impotent human being lost in self-denial and social alienation. Eventually, the possibility of separation becomes a fact when everyone begins to imagine how he/she will do without those whom he is with: parents, spouses, or children. The relationship between Jim and his father illustrates that the father and the son do not have any intention to stay together. There is no communication or willingness to communicate from either side. The connection between the father and the son has completely dissolved. Jim knows that his father will not understand him because the father lives in his own world where such an
immoral act as endangering the passengers lives by irresponsibly jumping off the ship cannot be forgiven.

All of Conrad’s protagonists have dissolving or already-severed family histories. In Kurtz’s case, his mother is already dead. He is “all alone” and so are Mrs. Verloc, her husband, and Almayer. Those who are willing to keep their families together, however, are the female characters. The most symbolic of such sacrifices is that of Mrs. Verloc. She is the sole caretaker of her mother and her mentally disabled brother. She spends her life to accommodate these two family members even at the expense of her own happiness. This unbearable responsibility pushes her into an emotionally and sexually displeasing marriage.

Her situation is more pathetic than those of the other characters. She cannot ignore her responsibility and at the same time does not know how to integrate her mother and her brother into her marriage that turns out to be nothing but a setup for Mr. Verloc to conceal his real identity. The idea of concealment appears as a recurrent theme in Conrad’s novels. The damage this act causes becomes more severe and socially destructive when married couples keep their real identities and intentions as secrets from each other. The tragedy prevails when Mrs. Verloc finds out that her husband is a merciless secret agent who plays dirty games.

Another family relationship that comes to a miserable end takes place in *Almayer’s Folly*. The reason for Almayer’s marriage to the Malay woman is his strong desire for material gain. He does not have any interest in keeping his marriage together once he achieves his personal goal:
For Almayer was uneasy, a little disgusted, and greatly inclined to run away. A judicious fear of the adopted father-in-law and a just regard for his own material welfare prevented him from making a scandal; yet, while swearing fidelity, he was concocting plans for getting rid of the pretty Malay girl in a more or less distant future. (Almayer’s Folly, 22)

His wife, on the other hand, is looking for companionship and love: “She, however, had retained enough of conventional teaching to understand well that according to white men’s laws she was going to be Almayer’s companion and not his slave, and promised to herself to act accordingly” (Almayer’s Folly, 22). Although her expectations are very reasonable, her husband’s are completely selfish, hypocritical, and unjust. Under these conditions, marriage cannot continue.

Because of Almayer’s selfishness and hypocrisy, their marriage collapses. His oppressive and violent treatment of his wife reaches to an unbearable point when he abducts their daughter and sends her away to get Western education. He is planning a different future for their daughter that completely excludes the mother. He underestimates the fact that their daughter is half-native. He wants his daughter to follow his dream of living as a rich and respectable person in Europe.

He did not want to meet her with empty hands and with no words of hope on his lips. He could not take her back into the savage life to which he was condemned himself. He was also a little afraid of her. What would she think of him? He reckoned the years. A grown woman. A civilized woman, young and hopeful; while he felt old and hopeless, and very much like those savages around him. (Almayer’s Folly, 27)
All these negative family images indicate that Conrad does not see any hope in repairing these severed family ties and essentially selfish and abusive relationships. However, his vision cannot accept the assumption that the alienated modern individual has to learn to live in this existential loneliness. He sees the impossibility of relying upon the Western family institution for help. Yet, once the individual is mentally capable of going beyond the cultural and racial boundaries, some hope evokes. Conrad knows that his dream cannot come true without the active participation of the female. If the male and the female communicate with and relate to each other, they can form a healthy community.

The family of the native chief Doramin, Stein’s war-comrade, provides the alternative family image Conrad’s vision encompasses. It is organic and tightly connected. Doramin’s wife is an integral part of the family. The family becomes complete with their son Dain Waris, Jim’s friend who dies at the end of the story. Their expectations from one another are reasonable because the rights and responsibilities are again predetermined. The social framework is designed to eliminate serious problems and disagreements that rise due to personal opinions. The rights and responsibilities are interdependent. Therefore, the parents’ expectations from their children have to be in line with the way they have raised them. It is the same between spouses: mutual respect and a fair balance between the rights and the responsibilities.

As parents, Doramin and his wife would like to see their only son succeed but they do not leave him when he fails. They exhibit the same parental care to save Jim’s life when he gets hurt right after his arrival in Patusan. This scene establishes a very significant binary opposition in Conrad’s representation of the differences between the European society and its native counterpart. This is the first time a female character is
actively present in the story: Doramin’s wife, a native woman. It is also the first time that
the notions of affection, concern, and care for another person without pity appears. The
motherly care Doramin’s wife gives to Jim, on the other hand, seems to have rejuvenating
effects on Jim:

“The old woman,” he said, softly, “made a to-do over me as if I had been
her own son. They put me into an immense bed-her state bed-and she ran
in and out wiping her eyes to give me pats on the back. I must have been a
pitiful object. I just lay there like a log for I don’t know how long.”

‘He seemed to have a great liking for Doramin’s old wife. She on her side
had taken a motherly fancy to him…” (Lord Jim,187)

The physical suffering Jim experiences from the shot is symbolic of his painful need for
compassion and the pats Doramin’s wife gives him on the back are symbolic of the
healing process that will take place in Jim’s life.

These pats are also the only signs of physical contact Jim ever receives. Since the
first woman with whom Jim interacts is a motherly figure, it indicates that the physical
contact he desires is not necessarily sexual; it involves compassion and care for another
human being. Jim’s suffering was not only from his realization that he had weaknesses
and shortcomings but it was also from the intensified solitariness he experienced after his
repentance. He tells Marlow that he wants at least one person to listen to him. He is the
perfect illustration of the ‘social solitary’ Bloom describes:

People can continue to live while related to the dead beloved; they cannot
continue to be related to a living beloved who no longer loves or wishes to
be loved. This continual shifting of the sands in our desert--separation
from places, persons, beliefs--produces the psychic state of nature where reserve and timidity are the prevailing dispositions. We are social solitaries. (Bloom, 118)

In Patusan, however, he is loved, respected, and trusted. He experiences physical and spiritual fulfillment. These—love, respect, and trust—are the values that make one’s life worth living and even sacrificing when necessary.

The description of Jim’s “marital walks” with Jewel is the evidence of this fulfilling tranquility and happiness female companionship brings into Jim’s life. This is what the old man tells Marlow about these walks:

He [the old man] had been told of a tall girl, whom the white man treated with great respect ad care, and who never went forth from the house unattended. People said the white man could be seen with her almost any day; they walked side by side, openly, he holding her arm under his-pressed to his side—thus—in a most extraordinary way. (Lord Jim, 206)

These walks are emblematic of the happiness and satisfaction Jim experiences in Patusan.

Kurtz shows a similar effort to start a family in England, but gets discouraged by the class-conscious and stagnant social system. His need for companionship, however, does not disappear. The painting Marlow sees in the Central Station is the evidence of his need for love and care:

Then I noticed a small sketch in oils, on a panel, representing a woman, draped and blindfolded, carrying a lighted torch. The background was sombre—almost black. The movement of the woman was stately, and the effect of the torchlight on the face was sinister.
It arrested me, and he (the manager) stood by civilly, holding an empty half-pint champagne bottle (medical comforts) with the candle stuck in it. To my question he said Mr. Kurtz had painted this-in this very station more than a year ago-while waiting for means to go to his trading-post. (Heart of Darkness, 95)

The woman in the picture must be his Intended because he did not meet his native wife until later. However, Marlow describes the native woman through words, similar to those he used in his description of the picture.

With the picture, Kurtz uses his artistic talent to express his desire for female companionship. This is what he finds in the Inner Station. The social injustice and rejection he experienced in England has obviously turned him into an angry and violent man, as the other company employees describe him. Yet, his last words imply that he has confronted his own weaknesses. The violence and destruction he caused can be a manifestation of his frustration that his desire for love and care is still unfulfilled. However, Kurtz’s charismatic personality and final words single him out: “The horror! The horror!” Marlow’s interpretation of these words is the confirmation of the wide gap between the real person and the traditional image given to him—a madman, full of revenge and hatred towards the rest of the world:

I was within a hair’s breadth of the last opportunity for pronouncement, and I found with humiliation that probably I would have nothing to say. This is the reason why I affirm that Kurtz was a remarkable man. He had something to say. He said it. Since I had peeped over the edge myself, I understand better the meaning of his stare, that could not see the flame of
the candle, but was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness. He had summed up—he had judged […] 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.

(Heart of Darkness, 154)

Marlow senses the connection between the natives and Kurtz, but he cannot understand it.

Although Marlow uses his distancing strategy in this statement, he does not seem to think that Kurtz is the embodiment of the ever-residing beast, or “a latter-day Faust figure who has sold his soul in return for forbidden knowledge, experience, and power.” Marlow’s expression of stepping over the edge is the moment of self-realization, not the moment of the beast within taking over. This is how Marlow describes this crucial moment:

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 compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the threshold of the invisible…It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory! That is why I have remained loyal to Kurtz to the last, and even beyond…

(Heart of Darkness, 154)
Marlow makes this statement before his distrustful description of “the sepulchral city” and its inhabitants. These words show that Marlow’s skepticism towards Kurtz before their first meeting has been replaced by trust, loyalty, and respect for the latter. Now he understands the meaning of the picture better. Kurtz has found the right social environment in which he can have a fulfilling companionship and social acceptance. His voice penetrated into the hearts of the natives, as Marlow says, because of the natives’ tolerance and concern for those who accept them as equals. Like Jim, Kurtz has come to realize that this new locale is where they can feel fulfilled and peaceful.

If Marlow relied on the information he received from the other company employees, his view of Kurtz would have been wrong and misleading. His initial disgust for the protagonist’s materialistic obsession would be his final view. The juxtaposition of Marlow’s new perspective after he met Kurtz against the hatred and disgust the white company employees harbor for the protagonist is another manifestation of Marlow’s effort to prevent the reader from accepting the first view as final.

In the absence of this narrative warning, Conrad’s presentation of the more inclusive—if not the ideal—native family structure by means of binary oppositions would be misunderstood. Those critics who completely ignored Conrad’s presentation of the native family structure have labeled Conrad as one of the great novelist of a patriarchal literary tradition. They have misinterpreted Conrad’s criticism of the patriarchal family structure of Western social system. They have used Conrad’s depictions of the female characters in order to justify their partial view. Jennifer Turner summarizes the traditional critical approach to Conrad’s female characters:
Conrad criticism has traditionally considered the women characters of the sea stories as unnecessary, unsubstantial, and artless concessions to public taste [...] Some critics even admire Conrad’s sea tales because of the relative marginalization of women characters, considering it a noble artistic refusal to submit to popular pressures.¹

Some of these criticisms will be mentioned so that the reader will be able to see how one can misinterpret Conrad if he/she does not detect his implicit use of binarism. Conrad couples his first attempt to deconstruct Western misconceptions about social life with the second step to offer an alternative in order to reconstruct a new social order. It involves both the decolonizer, the female and the native, and the decolonized, the Western male.

In the following quotation, Ruth L. Nadelhaft accepts the fact that Conrad’s novel *Heart of Darkness* includes different ideas and perspectives on women. She also mentions the conflicting sense this inclusion creates.

*Heart of Darkness* contains several kinds of women, several kinds of perspectives, testifying to Conrad’s unfixed, even conflicting sense of what roles women must play both in fiction and the world of imperialism which is his subject.²

She senses some “deconstructive” aspect in Conrad’s art, caused by the existence of several kinds of perspectives. She uses this cacophony of views to claim that Conrad’s ideas about what roles women must play in his novels and real life are unfixed. The next limitation her criticism imposes upon Conrad’s art is related to his subject matter. For her, Conrad’s subject is the world of imperialism, which indicates that she does not see
the encompassing project Conrad undertakes in his novels--decolonizing the Western mind in order to empower it in its search for peace and happiness.

Conrad has been described as a traditional man’s author. Like Frederick Karl, Andrew Michael Roberts believes that Conrad tries to explain what it means to be a man, more specifically a white man. Roberts also adds that Conrad’s novels look for the possibility of masculinity transcending racial and cultural boundaries. He favors the view that Conrad’s approach to masculinity is paradoxical: it consists of anxiety, instability on one hand and power and persistence on the other. Since man’s psychological state involves desire and fear, it protects itself by either transforming the Other into something larger than life or viewing it as an object, that is, making it less than what it is.

In the context of gender relations, the female becomes the other. Roberts claims that Conrad’s rhetoric relies on the visual; thus the female is voyeuristically presented as the subject of the male desire, which eliminates the fear factor in the above mentioned paradoxical structure of masculinity. However, Conradian narrator observes both the female as well as the male around him in the same manner. The issue of relying on the visual, as has been discussed in the second section of this study, is more complicated than Roberts claims it to be. It is a manifestation of the social imposition upon the individual of relying on the physical to avoid dealing with invisible aspects of human nature, especially those related to conscience and emotions. It is beyond being anti-feminine.

Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan agrees with Roberts that women become the objects of the male gaze. She goes further to claim that women are deprived of the role of knowing subject as well. She believes that gendering knowledge and truth is a patronizing attitude toward women that focuses on the visual and the articulation of masculinity through
sexual relations with women. In this environment, the female is always depersonalized and exposed to the male’s gaze. Supporting Vulcan’s view, Johanna Smith explains that the reason behind the Marlovian split of the world into two--the male and the female--is the patriarchal notion that the male harbors the possibility of truth: “As Marlow elaborates his explanation of manly experience, he equates belief and truth as masculine provinces.” The female, then, is dedicated to the maintenance of delusion. All of these critical views declare that Conrad’s depictions of women, regardless of their racial or cultural backgrounds, are sexist.

Combining Conrad’s imperialistic tendencies with his anti-feminism, some critics have accused Conrad of silencing and exploiting the native women. Their claim is that Conrad, as a white male, turns these women into objects of his prejudiced gaze by silencing them. Johanna M. Smith adds another dimension to this discussion by claiming that Marlow protects himself from his experience of the darkness these women stand for by silencing them. She believes that silencing is part of an ideological project to distance and control women and the wilderness-- the two mysteries that are wild, irrational, dangerous, strong, but irresistible and attractive. Smith sees a similar intention in Marlow’s lie to Kurtz’s Intended as well:

Marlow’s visit to the Intended dramatizes the consequent necessity she, like all the women in this story, exist as his creation. As he had earlier commodified the savage woman, he now reduces the Intended to a “pure brow,” a “forehead, smooth and white” which offers” the unextinguishable light of belief and love. (Smith, 192)
Smith claims that by substituting the Intended’s name for Kurtz’s last expression of “The horror! The horror!” Marlow equates the two. For Smith, keeping the Intended ignorant of this equation is Marlow’s way of humiliating her.

The fear and confusion Marlow feels in the presence of Kurtz’s native “mistress” disappears when he meets the Intended. Here is how Marlow describes his meeting with the Intended:

She came forward, all in black, with a pale head, floating towards me in dark. She was mourning. It was more than a year since his death, more than a year since the news came; she seemed as though she would remember and mourn for ever. She took both my hands in hers and murmured, ‘I had heard you were coming.’ I noticed she was not very young-I mean not girlish. She had a mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering. The room seemed to have grown darker, as if all the sad light of the cloudy evening had taken refuge on her forehead. This fair hair, this pale visage, this pure brow, seemed surrounded by an ashy halo from which the dark eyes looked out at me. Their glance was guileless, profound, confident, and trustful. (Heart of Darkness, 159)

The Intended is submissive and in self-denial. Her self-image depends upon what the man who loved her uttered before he died. She is relying upon two men--Kurtz and Marlow--for her happiness and peace of mind.

For the Intended, Marlow does not use any of those words of admiration and fear he used for the native woman. Still, he cannot stop paying attention to her physical features. The irony appears when he describes her glance as ‘guileless’ and ‘trustful’
because she is depending on Marlow to hear Kurtz’s last word, hoping that it was her name. Since Marlow is in control of this situation, he does what he wants: he keeps women out of it, as he has mentioned earlier in the story, by means of his lie to the Intended:

“I laid the ghost of his gifts at last with a lie,” he began suddenly. “Girl! What? Did I mention a girl? Oh, she is out of it--completely. They—the women I mean—are out of it—should be out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse. Oh, she had to be out of it.”

(Heart of Darkness, 125)

Marlow’s last words, however, show that he is also afraid of telling the truth because he does not know how to deal with the possible emotional consequences:

It seemed to me that the house would collapse before I could escape, that the heavens would fall upon my head. But nothing happened. The heavens do not fall for such a trifle. Would they have fallen, I wonder, if I had rendered Kurtz that justice which was his due? Hadn’t he wanted only justice? But I couldn’t. I could not tell her. It would have been too dark—too dark altogether.

(Heart of Darkness, 163)

He accepts that he could not tell her the truth because he did not know how he would handle if her reaction was too sentimental. It seems that he protects himself from such a difficult emotional engagement through the lie. However, even at the time of the narration he keeps wondering what would happen if he told her the truth.

Marlow’s lie to the Intended is not a manifestation of his allegiance to patriarchal social system. It is a result of his instinct for survival. He does not want the world to
shatter. He always prefers to be a voyeur rather than an actor because action might end up in rejection, punishment, or immigration. Marlow exhibits the same attitude Brierly does during Jim’s trial. They have chances to bring about change, but their fear of facing the reality prevents them from action.

In his article on *Heart of Darkness*, new historicist, Brook Thomas challenges Smith’s description of Marlow as a misogynist with his claim that Marlow’s lie, along with his narrative approach, serves two functions.

If, on the one hand, they suggest a truth that resist narrativization, on the other, they reveal Marlow’s reluctance to continue his narrative journey toward the glimpse of truth he experienced at the heart of darkness. For Marlow to mention Kurtz is to recall all that Kurtz came to embody for him. Not yet capable of facing that horror, Marlow interrupts the story that inevitably leads to Kurtz. The very breaks and gaps in that seem to be the only way to suggest the truth also indicate an avoidance of it.6 Thomas connects this personal experience to the human condition and claims: “So long as truth cannot fully be represented, lies become part of the truth of the world” (Thomas, 250).

Thomas also reminds the reader of the statement Marlow makes about lies. He hates them and yet at the end lies to Kurtz’s intended. Thomas interprets this irrationality as Marlow’s acceptance of the view that humankind will never have full knowledge of truth. Thus, the acceptance of a world in which lies and repression are inevitable summarizes the vision Marlow holds. Thomas links this philosophical view with linguistics and claims that Marlow’s narrative “helps reveal the horror at the heart of
darkness as well as it serves to cover it up and hold it at bay” (Thomas, 250). Then he concludes that this logic, on the one hand, forces humanity to confront the horror Kurtz had the courage to face, and on the other, compels it to succumb to the horror in order to survive. Marlow accepts that the work of civilization is a lie. Since the alternative is so terrifying, the lie must go on. He is always protected either by his status, by his relatives, or by his own game-playing mind, relapsing back and forth, between truth and falsehood. Thus, through his “white” lie to the Intended, Marlow does not have to deal with the pain and suffering Mrs. Verloc feels with her first encounter with truth.

Marlow’s efforts to “colonize” and “pacify” both savage darkness and women,” on the other hand, do not work. He could not keep darkness or the savage woman out of the picture when they come to claim what is theirs--Kurtz. Although Marlow uses his strategy of keeping the native woman under control by turning her into a physical object, she does not keep quiet and makes her resistance felt by the oppressor. She does not hesitate to outcry her anger and protest, which makes Marlow uneasy. In addition to her foreign words, her stately movements show that she does not have to rely on her linguistic capacity for resistance and resilience.

She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the
value of several elephant tusks upon her. She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul.

(Heart of Darkness, 141)

Here is another detailed description of a female by Marlow, who pretends to be a man to resist temptations and romance. He sees beauty, fertility, and passion in the female, However, in its historical context such a statement, especially used to describe a native woman, would be socially disapproved and condemned.

The abruptness of the silence after the native woman leaves reminds the reader of a movie scene in which love at first sight takes place. Everything in the scene freezes after the woman leaves. The stillness becomes the witness of the attraction of the man for the woman. It also implies that Marlow is experiencing something that was completely unknown to him. She fits in the environment perfectly. The words “stately,” “tenebrous,” and “fecund” connote fertility, femininity as well as attraction. These words also establish a connection between the native woman and the painting Marlow had seen in the company headquarters before he came to the Inner Station.

Marlow’s fear and sense of insecurity increase when the native woman comes closer and breaks the silence with her outcry:

She came abreast of the steamer, stood still, and faced us. Her long shadow fell to the water’s edge. Her face had a tragic and fierce aspect of
wild sorrow and of dumb pain mingled with fear of some struggling, half-shaped resolve. She stood looking at us without a stir, and like wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose. A whole minute passed, and then she made a step forward. There was a low jingle, a glint of yellow metal, a sway of fringed draperies, and she stopped as if her heart had failed her. The young fellow by my side growled. The pilgrims murmured at my back. She looked at us all as if her life had depended upon the unswerving steadiness of her glance. Suddenly she opened her bared arms and threw them up rigid above her head, as though in an uncontrollable desire to touch the sky, and at the same time the swift shadows darted out on the earth, swept around the river, gathering the steamer in a shadowy embrace. A formidable silence hung over the scene.

(Heart of Darkness, 142)

After this amazing demonstration of power and fearlessness, she disappears, leaving fear and discomfort in the hearts of the white men. She is strong enough to face these men to claim her husband. The second appearance of this native woman takes place when the ship is ready to leave with Kurtz aboard:

There was an eddy in the mass of human bodies, and the woman with helmeted head and tawny cheeks rushed out to the very brink of the stream. She put out her hands, shouted something, and all that wild mob took up the shout in a roaring chorus of articulated, rapid, breathless utterance.

(Heart of Darkness, 150)
She is in front of her people like a leader. This time, Marlow senses a real threat and realizes that his attempt to contain her by means of his gaze is to no avail. Her sturdiness is not amazing any more; it becomes dangerous and threatening. She is not afraid at all:

I pulled the string of the whistle, and I did this because I saw the pilgrims on deck getting their rifles with an air of anticipating a jolly lark. At the sudden screech there was a movement of abject terror through that wedged mass of bodies [...]
The three red chaps had fallen flat, face down on the shore, as though they had been shot dead. Only the barbarous and superb woman did not so much as flinch, and stretched tragically her bare arms after us over the sombre and glittering river. (Heart of Darkness, 150)

These scenes show that the native woman is not trying to make Marlow understand and sympathize with her. She knows that the white men cannot understand her. Her effort is to keep her connection with Kurtz through her sudden appearances and outcries.

Marlow’s source of fear is his realization that the emotional connection between Kurtz and the native woman is something he cannot control. As a living example of such a defiant protest, Ngugi Thiong’o displays how successful the native can be in finding different ways of claiming his/her freedom, besides using the white man’s language, or means. Although he got Western education and recognition, he turned to his own community and his own language, unknown to many, to continue his struggle against imperialism and its ruthless agents.

Another Conradian character who performs such strong resistance and courage is Nina, Almayer’s half-caste daughter, who was educated in the West and chooses her native community over the Western one because of the latter’s irrational racism and bias.
She is Conrad’s answer to those who believe that the women characters in Conrad’s novels are not as “powerful, glamorous” as their counterparts in his short stories. Western society rejects Nina with scorn because she is the product of miscegenation. She will never be accepted as a white woman, regardless of her Western education and mannerisms. Even her own father tries to deny the fact that Nina’s mother is a Malay woman. Almayer does not feel any confusion or fear in the presence of his native wife whom he detests. He exhibits a patriarchal and imperialistic attitude towards the native women. Although his attitude seems to be very similar to Marlow’s attitude towards Western women--his aunt and Kurtz’s Intended, Marlow’s is different from Almayer’s disrespectful and dehumanizing manner because of the mental confusion and fear Marlow experiences in the presence of the native women.

The source of the native women’s power comes from their access to real life experiences through their active social involvement. That is a right Western society denied to its women. David Brudney’s interpretation of Marlow’s lie to the Intended describes how the narrator prevents the European woman from real life:

I am tempted to say that Marlow wants to spare the Intended the very concept of evil so that Kurtz-like people would utterly absent from her conceptual repertoire, be as inconceivable as they were to eve before she bit the apple. This would be a way to understand the thought that he denies the Intended the knowledge of good and evil and so keeps her from becoming “one of us.”

(Brudney, 321)

Brudney continues his own internal dialogue by saying that this hypothesis cannot be right because the Intended reads books, newspapers and the Bible. Then, he comes up
with another explanation:

    Rather, I think the knowledge Marlow tries to forestall is the knowledge of evil’s concrete existence in this world among one’s acquaintances, friends, lovers. The abstract recognition that evil is possible might not transport the Intended from Eden; the recognition that it exists squarely in her life would do so. At issue, therefore, is not simply letting her know that her fiance was other than she thought. Such knowledge would merely shake her; knowing that he instantiated evil—that such people exist right here, next to us—would make hers, like ours, a fallen world. That is the transformation Marlow seeks to forestall.  

(Brudney, 322)

Brudney believes that Marlow’s lie is one of his failures to “attend” to the other. He fails because he himself has not found out a way to comprehend and deal with this knowledge, either.

Since Marlow’s mental transformation is not complete yet, he resorts to lies. Again, the lie is his way of self-protection. Marlow is not capable of keeping such knowledge away from the Intended because she already knows that she does not live in Eden. Her love for Kurtz, in spite of her parents’ disapproval, is emblematic of her capacity for resistance and resilience. She might not be able understand what happened to Kurtz in the Congo at first, but she seems to be capable of comprehending it even though it involves suffering. Marlow does not hesitate to lie to the Intended because her external features present her as fragile and vulnerable. As a result of their cultural upbringings, both Marlow and the Intended seem to conceal their true feelings behind
appearances. At the end, what Marlow does is to use this cultural tool to protect himself and the Intended because she is the reflection of his image as a young boy.

The confusion Marlow’s Congo experience has brought into his life manifests itself in his attitude towards the native woman. Despite his biased depictions of the native woman, his feelings oscillate between fear and admiration. He cannot lie to Doramin’s wife about Jim’s mother or Jewel as easily as he can to Kurtz’s Intended. He cannot deny the awe he feels in the presence of the native woman and yet he can ridicule his own aunt. He cannot hide his approval of the positive effects of the relationships between white men and their wives. He does not seem to think that these marriages are unacceptable. He does not represent the traditional European view upon such marriages, although his gaze tries to follow that path.

Similar to Marlow and Conrad, Jeremy Hawthorn does not think that miscegenation brings tragedy and disillusionment into the European male’s life. He claims that Conrad does not follow the European tradition of objectifying and one-way looking. Hawthorn detects the reversal of the gaze in Conrad’s stories and describes it as a reciprocal and intimate exchange of looks. At the end, this untraditional approach to the other makes both sides more understanding and tolerant.

The outcome of such marriages is a constructive communication and interaction between these two opposing cultures. The negative connotations of stepping over the edge or going native disappear. A more humane notion of accepting the other on the other’s terms becomes possible. Unlike Turner, who claims that male relationships with women in Conrad’s novels rarely succeed because “many are tarnished by money,”
Hawthorn seems to think that they are successful because of their constructive effect upon the participants, especially the males.\(^9\)

This positive attitude towards others, especially towards the female, is the backbone of the new social ethics Conrad offers to the “homo-duplex whose inmost self is constricted and perturbed in the modern age of disappearing landmarks”. This completely contradicts Beth Sharon Ash’s view that “Conrad does not call for a new social ethics.”\(^10\) Ash also thinks that Conrad fatalistically leaves humans stand, in a mechanistic world, defenseless against an absolute loss of the social self. Ash follows the old literary approach that detected existentialism in Conrad. The invalidity of such a claim is confirmed by the author himself: in his preface to *Nigger of Narcissus*, he views writing as a means of “forging the bonds that make possible human community, emotional solidarity and shared meaning”\(^11\) Conrad is not talking about a community of white men, excluding the rest of mankind--the female and the natives. The type of solidarity he is seeking is emotional. The traditional connotation of the word “emotional” refers to the female that has usually been seen as the inferior term of the binary opposition between the rational and the emotional. Conrad does not think that any human community can exist without the emotional solidarity, the source of the social and personal stability the disconnected and disillusioned modern individual needs. The idea of emotional solidarity excludes the patriarchal objectification of the female as a sexual commodity and implies the revival of the family that connects the individual to his other half. In his examination of the American society, Bloom declares that

> The resulting inevitable individualism, endemic to our regime, has been reinforced by another unintended and unexpected development, the
decline of the family, which was the intermediary between the individual and society, providing quasi-natural attachments beyond the individual, that gave men and women unqualified concern for at least some others and created an entirely different relation to society from that which the isolated individual has…The decay of the family means that community would require extreme self-abnegation in an era when there is no good reason for anything but self-indulgence. (Bloom, 86)

The words the Commissioner uses in his conversation with Mr. Verloc indicate this widely practiced prejudice against women and family.

The main reason for female exclusion is that their presence requires certain emotions and responsibilities that obstruct progress and limit individual’s freedom. Marriage is one of such relationships that the Commissioner considers dangerous because of its demand for attachment, commitment, and unconditional responsibilities:

“What is your ostensible occupation? What are you supposed to live by?”

“I keep a shop,” answered Mr. Verloc.

“A shop! What sort of shop?”

“Stationery, newspapers. My wife—“

“Your what?” interrupted Mr. Vladimir in his guttural Central Asian tones.

“My wife.” Mr. Verloc raised his husky voice slightly. “I am married.”

“That be damned for a yarn,” exclaimed the other in unfeigned astonishment. “Married! And you a professed anarchist, too! What is this confounded nonsense? But I suppose it’s merely a manner of speaking.
Anarchists don’t marry. It’s well known. They can’t. It would be apostasy.”

“My wife isn’t one,” Mr. Verloc numbled sulkily. “Moreover it is no concern of yours.”

“Oh, yes, it is,” snapped Mr. Vladimir. “I am beginning to be convinced that you are not at all the man for the work you’ve been employed on. Why you must have discredited yourself completely in your own world by your marriage. Couldn’t you have managed without? This is your virtuous attachment—eh? What with one sort of attachment and another you are doing away with your usefulness.” (The Secret Agent, 45)

One can argue that the Commissioner is right in his disapproval of Mr. Verloc’s marriage because the latter’s profession requires him to be alone. However, his statement that with one sort of attachment or another, Mr. Verloc is doing away with his usefulness is the expression of the materialistic view of marriage: “The first class hostility appeared with the development of the antagonism between man and woman because of individual marriage” (Izetbegovic, 263). Individual marriage is the subjugation of one sex over the other. The case is almost the same in other professional and social circles.

The absence of Jim’s mother indicates that the same practice is followed in the field of religion. Izetbegovic believes that the roots of this bias against the female lie in Saint Paul’s recommendation: “Unmarried people worry about God, how to please God; married people worry about this world, how to please his wife.” Then Saint Paul himself comes to accept that a relationship between a man and a woman is unavoidable” “It is good for man not to touch a woman, but to avoid prostitution, man should have a woman,
and a woman a man.” Izetbegovic interprets Saint Paul’s notion of marriage as a compromise. For him, this view emphasizes that “marriage is not a solution based upon principle but one forced by practice (…to avoid prostitution”) (Izetbegovic, 262)

For Conrad, however, marriage is the solution based upon principle and the only way to reach peace and happiness. With the inclusion of the native family structure, exemplified by Doramin and his wife, Conrad displays how to forge communal bonds that are based upon peace, emotional solidarity, and shared meaning. The best way to bring stability and balance into the chaotic West is to interact with the Other, whether represented by the female or the native.

Once the individual tastes the tranquility and peace his marital state promises, his solitary and suffering soul will reach its final destination. He/she does not need to repress his/her sexual and emotional aspirations for the sake of social obligations and responsibilities. This is what Jim finds in Patusan:

all his conquests, the trust, the fame, the friendships, the love—all these things that made him master had made him a captive, too. He looked with an owner’s eye at the peace of the evening, at the river, at the houses, at the everlasting life of the forests, at the life of the old mankind, at the secrets of the land, at the pride of his heart.

‘It was something to be proud of. I, too, was proud for him, if not certain of the fabulous value of the bargain. It was wonderful. It was not so much of his fearlessness that I thought […] I was more struck by the other gifts he had displayed. He had to proved his grasp of the unfamiliar situation […] Now and then, though, a word, a sentence, would escape
him that showed how deeply, how solemnly, he felt about that work which had given him the certitude of rehabilitation. That is why he seemed to love the land and the people, with a sort of fierce egoism, with a contemptuous tenderness.  

(Lord Jim, 182)

The person who initiates this process of rehabilitation for Jim is Doramin’s wife, who is so strong and outspoken that she has the courage to ask Marlow why Jim left his own country:

Without removing her eyes from the vast prospect of forests stretching as far as hills, she asked me in a pitying voice why was it that he so young had wandered from his home, coming so far, through so many dangers? Had he no household there, no kinsmen in his own country? Had he no old mother, who would always remember his face?  

(Lord Jim, 201)

Conrad’s presentation of the personal and social benefits of marriage in the stories of Jim and Kurtz finds its most clear and eloquent expression in Nina’s story. She is the most straightforward and the most verbally-efficient Conradian protagonist. She does not give in to her father and is able to confront him with strength and determination. She tells him her feelings about his culture and her own decision about her future. Unlike Jim, she takes the challenge of facing the authority represented by the father. Her strength seems to come from her bi-cultural background. Her parental heritage allows her to have unlimited access both to Western and the native cultures.

Her advantageous position also empowers her to articulate her views very eloquently and explicitly. On the contrary, Conrad’s male characters, along with Marlow, the most educated and the highest in status, are always in need of words to express
themselves. Nina, however, when expressing her anger at and disagreement with her father, is not afraid to confront her father and let him know what she thinks of him and his irrational actions. Her ability to observe and assess her environment and people around her is noteworthy. She does not have to conceal her opinions or her emotions. It is very remarkable to see that Conrad chooses a female character to be the voice of wisdom and balance.

Besides her linguistic clarity and eloquence, she is also the only Conradian character with an offspring, which indicates hope for the future. Her strength and resilient personality reverse the order of the male/female binary opposition in favor of the female. Her version of self-preservation is very different from Marlow’s version. Nina’s active rejection of lies and the world that succumbs to them challenges Marlow’s passive and unwilling acceptance of a world, full of lies and falsehood. Like Marlow, Nina has been in two different cultures and survived in both. Unlike Marlow, she is not hesitant to express her disapproval of Western society. She learns to survive in it until she gets the opportunity to choose. She does not pull her foot back; she willingly jumps over to the other side. Her description of the paradoxical situation her father forced her into is noteworthy for its precision and accuracy. When her father asks her if she forgot what she learnt among the whites, this is how she replies:

‘No,’ she interrupted, ‘I remember it well. I remember how it ended also. Scorn for scorn, contempt for contempt, hate for hate. I am not your race. Between your people and me there is also a barrier that nothing can remove. You ask why I want to go, and I ask you why I should stay.’
‘You told me yesterday,’ she went on again, ‘that I could not understand or see your love for me; it is so. How can I? No two human beings understand each other. They can understand but their own voices. You wanted me to dream your dreams, to see your own visions—the visions of life amongst white faces of those who cast me out from their midst in angry contempt. But while you spoke I listened to the voice of my self; then this man came, and all was still; there was only the murmur of his love. You call him a savage! What do you call my mother, your wife?’

*(Almayer’s Folly, 145)*

She confesses that she was listening to her own voice while her father was trying to brainwash her against her mother and the native culture. However, she did not tell him about her own dreams because he could not understand her. She knew that her father was not telling her the truth. She waited until she found a way out. She finds the solution in a man who loves, respects, and trusts her. While Mrs. Verloc’s story describes the problems modern life brings into the female’s life, Nina’s story shows what the solution is—a happy and mutually fulfilling marriage with a man who does not hide behind lies. Nina experiences whatever Mrs. Verloc is missing in her life and marriage: physical and emotional love, commitment, and shared values.

Nina’s access to both cultures provides her with a better and sounder judgment as well. Her rejection of her father’s culture is not a question of her prejudice against it. She is aware of the bias her father’s culture has against her and her mother. She is rejected because of her mother’s cultural background. The metaphor Marlow uses to describe Jim seems to describe the European culture’s view of Nina:
He looked as genuine as a new sovereign, but there was some infernal alloy in his metal. How much? The least thing—the least drop of something rare and accursed; the least drop!—but he made you—standing there with his don’t-care-hang air—he made you wonder whether perchance he were nothing more rare than brass. (Lord Jim, 33)

In Nina’s case, having native blood is the infernal alloy in her metal. Her father’s being white does not change the fact that she is the product of miscegenation.

The statement her father makes when she tells him that she will stay with Dain is an expression of this Western mindset:

‘Tell me,’ he said—‘tell me, what have they done to you, your mother and that man? What made you give yourself up to that savage? For he is a savage. Between him and you there is a barrier that nothing can remove. I can see in your eyes the look of those who commit suicide when they are mad. You are mad. Don’t smile. It breaks my heart. If I were to see you drowning before my eyes, and I without the power to help you, I could not suffer a greater torment. Have you forgotten the teaching of so many years?’ (Almayer’s Folly, 144)

The arrogance and prejudice in these words is the manifestation of the teaching that Almayer blames his daughter of forgetting. He does not realize that the education he is talking about implanted in him bigotry and mistrust.

His words about the suicidal intentions of a mad person resemble to those Brierly used for Jim and those the company employees used for Kurtz. In each case, the character that interacts with the native is accused of madness and self-negation. Because of his
racial bias, Almayer believes that if a person does not follow the mainstream culture, she/he must have some selfish aims. When Nina mentions that Dain’s love has brought her back to life after his people rejected her “with scorn,” Almayer accuses her of using Dain as a tool for some “incomprehensible ambition” (Almayer’s Folly, 145).

In his commentary on the women in Heart of Darkness, J. H. Miller claims that wilderness and his native wife had negative effects upon Kurtz:

> The novel sets women, who are out of it, against men, who can live with facts and have a belief to protect them against the darkness. Men can breathe dead hippos and not be contaminated. Male practicality and idealism reverse, however. They turn into their opposites because they are hollow at the core. They are vulnerable to the horror. They are the horror.

(Miller, 221)

Miller juxtaposes female sentimentalism against male practicality and idealism. Although his deconstructive reading tries to display the duality in the novel, he seems to believe that women are not only men’s opposites but they also turn men into themselves. The wilderness, represented by the female, becomes successful in making its terror prevail.

Disagreeing with Miller’s view, Nina challenges the idea of a power struggle between men and women. Instead, she believes that men and women are opposites that need each other to achieve wholeness and balance. Male practicality, suggesting this worldliness, needs the so-called female otherworldliness to keep its will to power under control and to avoid tyranny. In this sense, the world will be a better place for both to live and share rather than being a place for men to conquer and for women to suffer. Nina’s rejection of her father’s offer of a comfortable life in Europe is emblematic of her
rejection of a world that views things in competitive terms. Her acceptance of Dain as her soul-mate symbolizes her idea of a world where male and female can come together without fighting for power and share not only the present but even the future, embodied in their child.

The linguistic advantage Conrad gives to his female characters, is symbolic of his sympathy and respect for the female. He seems to express his respect and admiration for them through the strong and successful female characters he creates in his novels. The linguistic confusion his narrators suffer from is emblematic of their emotional instability. They oscillate between patriarchal supremacy, misogyny, intimidation, and desire for companionship. Marlow becomes the real victim, after all. He feels the need and yet he cannot accept it. He has the passion and yet conceals it. He needs a companion and yet he denies it.

One can view Conrad’s gender-oriented approach to language as the symbol of the linguistic relationship between him and his wife. Since English was Conrad’s third language, after Polish and French, he had his wife help him with linguistic and semantic difficulties he faced while composing his novels.

This linguistic clarity and straightforwardness is also an indication of the female’s philosophical orientation. The way the female handles problems and difficulties is less complicated and more straightforward than the male’s. Once the right solution is found, it is immediately applied, without being overclouded with existential dilemmas. When truth becomes clear, there is no reason to run away from it or try to find more excuses to avoid it as Marlow attempts to do, especially after he lies to Kurtz’s Intended. When Nina decides what she wants, she does not hesitate to act.
The female capacity for linguistic accuracy is also a metaphor for her ability to adjust to change. The female’s ability to adjust is not a sign of hypocrisy or weakness; on the contrary, it is a reflection of her ability to survive without falling into the trap of pessimism and despair. They are the ones who can survive in different environments and circumstances. Nina was able to make it in the white world and she is successful in her native community; Jewel went through a hard time when she was under Cornelius’ control, now she is cherishing a love relationship with Jim. In both situations, they are players not voyeurs. They cannot freeze as Jim did when he was challenged with a real emergency on the Patna. Marlow’s survival strategy, on the other hand, is self-denial and detachment. He does not appear as an active character. These male characteristics push them into inertia, pessimism and existentialism. The female, however, keeps her spirit by waiting for the right time to come and by disallowing the dominant perception from contaminating her mind. Even Mrs. Verloc does not hesitate to take the necessary action when she realizes that she has to look into things.

This feminine approach to life is prevalent especially in the personalities of the native woman, Nina, and Jewel. What makes Nina and Jewel different from other Western women lies in their unique backgrounds. Both of them have had experience with more than one culture; they know Western culture as well as its native counterpart. Although the native females seem to have the same potential as Nina and Jewel, the information the reader receives about them is limited to the words of a narrator who hides behind certain cultural and linguistic barriers. However, they are strong enough to make their existence felt by the people around them, even by those who have come to exploit them. Nina’s native mother presents a strong personality of persistence, steadfastness,
resilience, perseverance, and patience. She is the one who survives while her oppressive husband dies at the end.

By sending his daughter to Europe, Almayer tries to put a physical barrier between his daughter and his wife but he cannot cut the mental connection between them. Eventually, the patient ones—the wife and the daughter—come together, but the oppressor dies as a social solitary. Almayer’s struggle to separate his wife and daughter is similar to Marlow’s effort to keep Kurtz’s native wife away from the ship by the force of guns. In both cases, they fail because the connection between the parties goes beyond the dimensions of the physical world over which such men as Gentleman Brown, Cornelius, Brierly, Almayer, and Marlow can have limited control. Anything beyond the external world transgresses their power and imagination.

The presence of the female also decreases the selfishness and materialism that caused the power struggle between men. The men who are happily connected with their female companions cannot afford being selfish because it will endanger the lives of their families. While Gentleman Brown does not care about having any moral or legal grounds in his war game, Jim has to be very careful because his decision will affect the lives of those whom he loves. Kurtz surrenders to Marlow and his crew and allows them to take him away because the natives might face genocide, committed by the greedy company employees. Almayer, on the other hand, believes that he will be happy when he has enough material resources to buy him a respectable social position. His dream comes to a tragic end when his own daughter forces him to realize his fatal mistake. She tries to make him realize the happiness and tranquility he has missed by ignoring his own family.
The struggle between the personal need for emotional solidarity and the social pressure for ultimate power will stop as soon as the Conradian protagonist realizes his mistake and makes changes in the light of the lessons he learnt from it. His hunger for power will subdue. Conrad places hope for the future in Nina and her child. They can establish a bridge between the two conflicting cultures of the West and the natives. Conrad knows that the change will come through the light the woman in Kurtz’s painting provides.
CONCLUSION

Since its initial publication in 1902, in the volume *Youth*, Conrad’s most meticulously poetic work of fiction, *Heart of Darkness*, has acquired an extraordinary reputation. Nine decades after its publication it remains one of the most read and debated, of English works of fiction.¹

Referring to one of the most famous Conrad novels, *Heart of Darkness*, Joyce Carol Oates describes the special place Conrad’s work has reached since its creation. It is still appreciated by a variety of readers and it is the topic of serious literary discussions. This is, indeed, what a responsible and talented author deserves. In her review of Conrad’s earlier books, *Youth, Lord Jim, Typhoon*, and *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, Virginia Wolf foresees Conrad’s age-defying success as a novelist:

> For when the question asked, what of Conrad will survive and where in the ranks of novelists we are to place him, these books, with their air of telling us something very old and perfectly true, which had lain hidden but now is revealed, will come to mind and make such questions and comparisons seem a little futile.²
The old and hidden truth that Wolf believes Conrad reveals in his work has been the main interest of many generations: the road to happiness. Half a century later, Allan Bloom describes his way to happiness and it is very similar to that of Conrad: love and family.

But a man who is deeply in love with a woman both desires and for the moment at least, really cares for another. If this latter condition can be made permanent, desire and morality practically coincide. The free choice of marriage and the capacity to stick to it, not merely outwardly but also inwardly, is a proof of culture, of desire informed by civility. It is also the proof of culture, of the overcoming of nature for the sake of morality, without making man unhappy. (Bloom, 186)

Marriage is the alternative Conrad's work presents: the union of desire and morality, the female and the male, East and West. For family, through its rights and its duties, its legal basis and its protection, connects what was once an isolated individual, concerned only with himself, to his society. The individual finally resumes his existence as a social being. Through marriage, then, man will be his own master again, and both the world of nature and that of society will be fulfilled.

With the following words, Nina, Conrad’s voice of wisdom, describes the happiness her marriage has brought into her life:

‘In time,’ she went on, ‘both our voices, that man’s and mine, spoke together in a sweetness that was intelligible to our ears only. You were speaking of gold then, but our ears were filled with the song of our love, and we did not hear you. Then I found that we could see through each other’s eyes; that he saw things that nobody but myself and he could see.
We entered a land where no one could follow us, and at least of all you.

Then I began to live.’  

(Almayer’s Folly, 145)

This land does not have any geographical boundaries. It can be a place or a state of mind in which a man and a woman share the same dream.

They will share the past, the present, and future there together. Nina describes the future her new state of being will bring to her and her family in very passionate terms:

‘And I mean to live. I mean to follow him. I have been rejected with scorn by the white people, and now I am a Malay! He took me in his arms, he laid his life at my feet. He is brave; he will be powerful, and I hold his bravery and his strength in my hand, and I shall make him great. His name shall be remembered long after both our bodies are laid in the dust. I love you no less than I did before, but I shall never leave him, for without him I cannot live.’  

(Almayer’s Folly, 145)

Almayer and his kind even in the land of the ‘Other’ cannot achieve such a successful and promising future. For they blame the past and others for their present misery and therefore their dreams of future are destined to shatter. While describing her own happiness, Nina is also reminding her father of what he would have attained if he kept his family together. He could have enjoyed love and power at the same time in his marriage if he allowed his wife to take the seal from his heart. He was not ready to go through the decolonizing process of unlearning in which he has to forget his historical and cultural habits of prejudice and racism.

Nina’s description of happiness seems to be the materialization of Fanon’s effort to reverse the traditional equation of marriage: “let us try what happens when the man is
black and the woman white.’” Then, let us try what would happen if a man, like Dain, took Mrs. Verloc in his arms. She would most likely repeat Nina’s words. Conrad also tells us what happens when a white man unites with a woman with the strongest bond of marriage in the stories of Jim and Jewel as well as of Kurtz and his native wife. These mutual relationships suggest that the different understanding of values the female brings into social life enables a multicultural community to emerge and expand over a vast geography. The values that she represents are tolerance, sensitivity towards the ‘Other,’ affection, commitment, devotion, and patience.

Conrad’s stories seem to prove that all human cultures that have animated whole societies over some considerable stretch of time have something important to say to all human beings. Through his character portrayals, Conrad expresses his belief that those who have the heart to confront the truth have the ear to hear those important things. Those whose hearts are sealed with the arrogance of racism and greed of self-centeredness will miss their opportunities for happiness and peace of mind. They waste their lives in resentment and hatred. Their hearts are filled with the fear of underachievement and mistrust. They will never be able to enjoy the tranquility of trust and friendship. When such negatives feelings and fears penetrate into a culture and redefine the existing norms, apocalypse becomes imminent.

In his movie Apocalypse Now, Francis Ford Coppola announces that he detects such an apocalyptic picture in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness. The movie includes certain critical mistakes in its interpretation of the novel. Joyce Carol Oates points to one of these serious problems the movie poses:
it was the model in spirit, of the flawed but enormously ambitious film by Francis Ford Coppola, *Apocalypse Now*. (Coppola transformed *Heart of Darkness* into a grotesque melodrama set in Vietnam in the waning years of Vietnam War. In the role of Marlow, an American army officer is sent to Cambodia to assassinate a renegade Green Beret colonel who has set himself up, like Kurtz, as a murderous madman-god. Imaginative in concept and vivid in execution, *Apocalypse Now* is undermined by the ludicrous overacting of Marlon Brando in the role of Kurtz, which neither he nor his director seems to have understood.4

Coppola’s depiction of Kurtz shows a closer affinity to that of Frederick Karl than that of Conrad. In the movie, Kurtz is the savage beast whose existence threatens the authority, the American military force in Vietnam. At the end, the beast is slaughtered like a sacrificial animal in a pagan ritual. His butcher is another American army officer whose main duty is to assassinate whoever disagrees with the authority. This aspect by itself holds enough evidence to prove that the movie is a misinterpretation of the novel.

The movie has attracted this study’s attention for two reasons. The first has to do with its enormous impact upon the public view of the novel and the second is related to Coppola’s misreading of the novel. The effect of movies upon the public reception of a work of art is widespread and difficult to change. For those who grow up in an age when mass media has become the source of every kind of knowledge, political, economic, geographical, literary, and even religious, the visual and audio effects a movie offers will be more attractive and real. Those who rely upon physical stimulants to form their opinions will be misled by the movie in their effort to understand the novel. Once
dramatically presented, Marlow’s intimidation in the presence of Kurtz’s native wife will be more intense and effective than reading the story itself. The effect of film upon public opinion finds its ultimate expression in Lenin’s words: “Film is the most important of all kinds of art.” As Lenin point out, film is very important because it has an overwhelming capacity to reach more people than any other art and to affect their worldviews.

Whether Coppola had a specific ideology to propagate when he was directing the film brings us to the question J. H. Miller asks at the very beginning of his article “Heart of Darkness Revisited”:

Is it a senseless accident, a result of the crude misinterpretation or gross transformation of the mass media that the cinematic version of Heart of Darkness is called Apocalypse Now, or is there already something apocalyptic about Conrad’s novel in itself? (Miller, 209)

Miller believes that there is something apocalyptic about Conrad’s novel:

Heart of Darkness is perhaps most explicitly apocalyptic in announcing the end, the end of Western civilization, or of western imperialism, the reversal of idealism into savagery. As is always the case with apocalypses, the end is announced as something always imminent, never quite yet. Apocalypse is never now. (Miller, 221)

Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan’s statement that Marlow’s quest is a journey to both the ends and the origins of Man supports Miller’s description of Conrad’s story as an apocalyptic text. Erdinast-Vulcan also believes that the story’s “apocalyptic and eschatological overtones” are overpowering.6

Miller, however, is not fully inclined to classify it as apocalypse because he sees
the characteristics of a parable within the text as well:

Conrad’s story is a parable, in part, because it is grounded firmly in the details of the experience. Biographers such as Ian Watt, Frederick Karl, and Norman Shelly tell us all that is likely to be learned of Conrad’s actual experience in the Congo, as well as historical originals of Kurtz, the particolored harlequin-garbed Russian, and other characters in the novel. If parables are characteristically grounded in representations of realistic or historical truth, *Heart of Darkness* admirably fulfills this requirement of parable. But it fills another requirement, too. Conrad’s novel is a parable because, although it is based on what Marx calls “real conditions,” its narrator attempts through his tale to reveal some as-yet-unseen reality.

(Miller, 210)

With this statement, Miller also touches some of the points this study has discussed: the biographical and historical elements of Conrad’s work and his constant effort to unveil the truth about human being’s existence.

Unlike Miller, Coppola believes that apocalypse is already taking place. He disagrees with Miller on the point that the end has “never quite come as long as there is someone to speak or write of it” (Miller, 222). He does not seem to accept Miller’s idea of the text’s impenetrability, either. For him it is an explicit apocalypse. What is common in both is their claim that the apocalyptic aspect of the novel lies in its presentation of Western male idealism that gives into savagery and darkness when confronted with the natives. For Miller it is the wilderness of the Congo. Coppola finds the same darkness and savagery in Vietnam. Western men turn into their opposites. In the
movie, darkness is presented as a living creature with a heart, embodied in any Vietnamese man or woman. Miller, on the other hand, claims, “the pervasive personification of the darkness is most dramatically embodied in the native woman, Kurtz’s mistress.” He also believes that the woman “unmans all her male questors who try to dominate her” by revealing the truth about their bipolar nature that “they are vulnerable to horror” and that “they are the horror” (Miller, 221).

With his discussion of personification, Miller suggests that the female is the source of the horror. Coppola, on the other hand, does not even bother himself with including the female in his film. It is a man’s world where one white man is against another who has sold his soul to savagery and has gone native. Although Miller believes that the existence of the narrator prevents apocalypse from prevailing, Coppola announces the end of time and the impossibility of delaying it. Therefore, he believes that having the female involved will not change the picture.

In this section, the absence of the female in *Apocalypse Now* will be juxtaposed against the active presence of the female in Conrad’s novels, especially in *Heart of Darkness*, with references to Miller’s interpretation. The three works, representing different branches of art, are the manifestations of differing philosophical orientations. Coppola does not believe that there is hope for the disconnected and alienated modern individual to survive in this chaotic world except by submitting to the authority.

Miller and Conrad, on the other hand, are hopeful because of their belief that the end is imminent and not yet. As long as the time before the end is used wisely, things can be reversed. The difference between the two appears in their sources of hope. Miller, agreeing with Karl and many other traditionalists, believes that a man who had a glimpse
of truth can delay the end. Conrad, however, does not think that a glimpse of truth can be
enough to bring about a dramatic change. Man can prevent the apocalypse only if he has
the courage to confront the truth and learn to establish a new social environment where
he can unite with his other half. In the novel, the opposite of man and the opposite of the
West become the source of hope. Miller’s source of horror is the source of hope for
Conrad. The movie answers the questions about why Miller’s source of hope is not
enough to keep apocalypse at a distance and how Conrad’s source is able to delay and
reverse the inevitable end Coppola’s movie depicts.

In Conrad’s story there are two significant female characters: Kurtz’s native wife
and his Intended, the first representing the native community and the second the western
society. The first female to challenge the male is the native woman whose presence
leaves Marlow awestruck. Her stately walk and magnificent appearance rejects the
dominance Marlow and the other company employees struggle to impose upon her by
means of their guns. Her existence is the only challenging force against European
imperialism. The novel’s inclusion of such a strong personality who changed Kurtz’s life
contradicts his image in the movie in which the pursuit of power and control becomes the
ultimate reason for his inexplicable life among the natives and his “insane” actions.

The validity of such a diagnosis becomes undeniable when Captain Willard, the
narrator in the movie, offers some information about Kurtz’s background and shows the
pictures of the protagonist with his family, with his wife and son, before he went to
Cambodia. There seems to be no other excuse, except for insanity, to describe Kurtz’s
current condition. He prefers a terrible life in the inferno-like place to a seemingly happy
life with his family back home. Even Willard’s heart softens and yearns for a family
when he looks at these pictures, which definitely confirms Kurtz’s psychological instability.

Coppola’s portrayal of Kurtz legitimizes Willard’s profession as an assassin to kill people whose judgment has become unsound. Karl’s terminology seems to be more appropriate for Coppola’s narrator and hero than Conrad’s characters. Karl sees the narrator as the most dutiful of men who possesses threads of heroism and the protagonist as the most idealistic of men who turns into a sadistic murderer because of his undefeatable will to power.

The second woman in the novel is the Intended whose presence functions at two different levels: providing information about Kurtz’s background and enabling Conrad to juxtapose two women who are emotionally involved with the protagonist--his native wife and his Intended. One of the reasons for Kurtz’s departure is the Intended’s parents’ disapproval of his proposal on the basis that they belong to different social classes. Since the idea of upper mobility between social classes is unacceptable, he cannot marry a girl from a higher class. His disillusionment and dissatisfaction with such a social system initiates his nomadic journey. On the contrary, the movie presents Kurtz’s patriotism and professional success as the reasons for his presence in Vietnam, which further complicates his transformation into a murderous madman. That leaves the natives and their country as the culprits.

Marlow’s idea that the Intended should be kept out of the picture also emphasizes Western prejudice against the female. She must stay in that beautiful world of her own; otherwise, the world of men will get worse. Although Marlow is the one who describes her to the reader, she has the opportunity to express herself while the white man deprives
the native woman of such a chance. Her words do not prove Marlow wrong: she seems out of it; her only concern is to find out if Kurtz mentioned her name before he died. Compared to the native woman, the Intended’s perception of the world is limited and romantic, which implies that if Kurtz had stayed back he would have not been able go through the transformation he did in the native land. Without these two women, the novel will lose its authenticity. Once these two essential figures are excluded from the story, it is exposed to misinterpretations.

The dichotomy between these two women also becomes useful in Conrad’s depiction of two opposing cultures. Their presence takes Conrad’s examination of cultures to another level, the examination of cultural institutions. The relationships between the male and the female always refer to the institution of family that Conrad sees as the backbone of his new social structure. The family structure Conrad envisions is completely in conflict with that Coppola depicts. Conrad involves both parties--male and the female-- in a mutual and complementary relationship while Coppola gives priority to the male, as either a husband or a son, over the female who is economically and emotionally dependent upon the male. In this privileged and free environment, the male brings his own downfall due to his uncontrollable desire for power and success. Willard’s adherence to his professional ethics and loyalty to authority seem to be the only restraining elements in this chaotic world. At the end, he accomplishes his mission successfully by eliminating his target, Kurtz, in a sacrificial ritual.

The young American soldiers in Vietnam offer a microcosm of the modern social structure. They are of different social, racial, and economical backgrounds. The most common aspect among them is their gender and nationality: all of them are Western
males. Their participation in the war is their execution of the freedom and privilege the social system allows them to enjoy. As Bloom states, they are the “exaggerated versions of Plato’s description of the young in democracies:”

[The democratic youth] lives along day by day, gratifying, the desire that occurs to him, at one time drinking and listening to the flute, at another downing water and reducing, now practicing gymnastic, and again idling and neglecting everything; and sometimes spending his time as though he were occupied with philosophy. Often he engages in politics and, jumping up, says ands does whatever chances that come to him; and if he admires any soldiers, he turns in that direction; and if it’s moneymakers, in that one, and there is neither order nor necessity in his life, but calling it sweet, free, and blessed, he follows it throughout.⁸

Ironically, their choice teaches them the consequences they have to face once they begin to execute their right to social and emotional freedom.

They become the victims of the “sporting spirit” George Orwell detects in modern military combat and political machinations. Those who do not know how to adjust themselves to this new condition eventually face one of the two inevitable ends: death or insanity. Only those who know how to play the game of survivalism can avoid both. Willard becomes victorious because he knows that his future depends upon the completion of his mission. If he does not kill Kurtz, he himself will have to suffer for it. The movie’s depiction of success and victory does not allow any moral opinions to interfere with the missions these soldiers, or any individual for that matter, must accomplish.
In his “Sex Roles in a Three-Person Game,” Edgar W. Vinacke analyzes the gender differences in game playing and decision making. He concludes, “males are primarily concerned with winning, whereas females are more oriented towards working out an equitable outcome as satisfactory as possible to all three participants.” The game the American soldiers are playing will not yield to such a result. Instead, it will endanger the lives of the soldiers as well as the natives. At this point, the movie completely contradicts the novel in which the protagonist, after spending some time with the natives, comes to realize the fatal consequences of this unfair game playing and tries to reverse what he has done. Conrad’s narrator is aware of such consequences from the very beginning as well, even though he is reluctant to act upon his realization. Coppola’s Kurtz does not show any indication of such a transformation while his narrator actively participates in maintaining what Conrad’s Marlow dislikes. Coppola’s narrator shows some glimpses of sympathy towards Kurtz and yet he does not hesitate to kill him as the symbol of his obedience to authority and system.

Once the constant inertia Conrad’s narrator exhibits is juxtaposed against the persistent effort Coppola’s narrator exerts to accomplish his mission, the different worldviews these works harbor become undeniably apparent. With his inertia, Conrad’s Marlow stays loyal to his fictive position. Willard, on the other hand, plays the role of an actor rather than a narrator. Coppola’s preference of action over mental activity negates Conrad’s emphasis on the mental struggle one has to go through during the decolonization process. Willard’s acting also implies the materialistic view of man as a machine. He takes orders and executes them immediately.
Marlow’s reaction to his Congo experience is also in complete contrast with that of Willard’s to his Vietnam experience. The former has become more aware of the crimes committed by the Europeans overseas. As a result, his skepticism towards his own culture increases. He has changed and he tells others about what he has observed, hoping that his story will change them as well. On the contrary, Willard might feel some remorse and guilt after executing Kurtz as a sacrificial animal to guarantee his own future, but he goes back to his former life and waits for his next mission. There is no Intended to lie. There is only Kurtz’s little son to whom Willard delivers his father’s belongings. He does not meet with the mother. Although Marlow’s lie to Kurtz’s Intended has been interpreted as a manifestation of his approval of the status quo, the ambiguity of his intention has not been denied. It is also possible to interpret it as a manifestation of Marlow’s inertia and his passiveness, or as a way of self-protection. Marlow avoids the emotional tension the truth might cause because he does not know how to deal with emotions, except concealing them. Willard again performs his mission in a matter-of-fact manner.

Coppola’s narrator does not seem to care for emotions in general. When one of his soldiers injures a Vietnamese woman in fear, his reaction is one of indifference and apathy. This reaction shows his indifference not only to the native woman but also to his own kind. He does not hesitate to ruthlessly shoot the wounded woman to death. His only concern is to find and eliminate his target, Kurtz, or anyone who delays him from reaching his target. Human life or loss has value as long as it helps him accomplish his mission. His life depends upon his missions. He becomes alive when he is on a mission. Otherwise, he is drunk, lost, and disoriented.
In this obnoxious state, Willard keeps himself away from getting involved in any emotional or intimate relationship, lest his usefulness and strength will be in danger. That seems to be an implicit reiteration of the Commissioner’s warning to Mr. Verloc in *The Secret Agent*. He also seems closer to Conrad’s Brierly than Marlow in terms of his obsession with his job. Although Conrad’s Brierly dies because of his unfortunate exposure to truth, Willard survives, reassuring the validity and usefulness of his worldview.

The movie emits a message that is completely different from that of Conrad. Willard’s philosophy of life seems to be similar to Mrs. Verloc’s before her self-realization: “life doesn’t stand much looking into” (*The Secret Agent*, 11) His way of avoiding looking is keeping himself busy or drunk when he does not have a mission. His success confirms the validity of his philosophy while Mrs. Verloc has to learn the hardest way that her philosophy is unsubstantial and self-delusive.

In conclusion, the movie can only be a misinterpretation of its original. In many ways, it is the reversal of Conrad’s vision. The movie does not imply any of the positive aspects Conradian individual achieves through his experience with the native: hope, optimism, happiness, and future. Conrad envisions a whole, happy, and emotionally stable man that was once disconnected, disillusioned, and alienated. The rehabilitated individual finds the meaning of his life in his commitment and attachment to his opposite--the female--without whose help he will go back to his old self: lost and vulnerable.

The closest the movie comes to the novel is in its expression that the alienated and disconnected individual is taking over in the absence of the strong resistance from his
opposite, not the opponent. Coppola’s biggest mistake is to accept and present these masculine destructive patterns as facts of nature, not of convention. His description of man is nihilistic and racist. Although he accuses the white man of causing his own destruction, his acceptance of the patriarchal view of man as universal prevents him from imagining, let alone looking for, an alternative.

Coppola extends his apocalyptic worldview into Conrad’s novel: the world is a stage on which the male is the only significant player. His mission, his madness, his fears, his family, his duty, and his life are at the center of the director’s movie and the critic’s article. The misty nature of Conrad’s novel, however, allows such interferences from its reader while preserving its real message. It expands beyond time and space and reaches those who are willing to challenge the traditional identification of the white male with the human norm.
NOTES

Introduction

1 In his first note in Notes on Life and Letters, Joseph Conrad talks about books and what happens to them after their publication, p. 1.


6 Najder claims that Conrad’s masters in this multicultural vision were three famous Polish writers: the poet Juliusz Slowacki, and two novelists, Jozef Ignacy Kraszewski and Zygmunt Milkowski.

7 Gail Fincham and Myrtle Hooper, editors of Under Postcolonial Eyes: Joseph Conrad After Empire. (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1996), p. xiii. They invited several African universities to contribute to their book; however, they received a negative response.


9 “Autocracy and War” in the second part of Notes on Life and Letters.


11 While describing the similarities between these writers’ literary experiences, Sewlall also points to the differences between them in terms of their ways of dealing with imperialism.

Part One

I) Conrad the Philosopher

1 An excerpt from the third letter in Conrad’s Notes on Life and Letters (N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, 1923).

II) Conrad and His Critics


6 Conrad’s heroes do not travel for the sake of adventure. See Conrad’s Notes on Life and Letters.


8 Najder mentions some other famous names that linked cultural relativism with moral relativism such as H. G. Wells, Edward Westermarck, and Ludwik Gumplowicz.


III) The Alienated Soul


2 J. Hillis Miller, Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University
3 Daniel Brudney tries to rehabilitate Marlow’s reputation by claiming that the narrator possesses a virtue worth mentioning. Brudney names this virtue attentiveness to the other.


8 Freund, p. 91 and Izetbegovic, p. 162.

9 See Linda Dryden’s review of Martin Bock’s Joseph Conrad and Psychological Medicine in Conradiana (35: 3, 2003). Dryden claims that the book is based on the notion that Conrad’s own medical history becomes inscribed in his fiction.


12 Robert Hampson also provides some historical information about the developments made in the sciences of geography and cartography during Conrad’s time.

13 Linda Dryden’s Joseph Conrad and the Imperial Romance. Dryden asserts that in his Malay fiction, Conrad denounces the glorified tradition of adventure and its depiction in the imperial romance of his day. p. 149.

14 Michael Taussig, Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing.

15 “Autocracy and War” in Part II in Notes on Life and Letters.


18 Allan Bloom uses these images to compare old Western societies with modern ones, p. 123.

19 Thiong’o has written about the humiliation boys had to go through at an English-speaking school he
II) Cultural Ritual

1 Alan Bloom In The Closing of the American Mind, p. 177. Bloom compares and contrasts many different philosophies on self and society, from the ancient times to modern times. Rousseau is one of the modern thinkers Bloom mentions


3 In their article, Smith and Wolstenholme discuss the idea of trust in the communities such as the “fellowship of the craft” in detail.

4 Mitchell refers to Ibn Haldun’s book Muqaddimah in terms of Islamic education and history, p. 113

5 Al-Azhar is an Islamic university in Cairo, Egypt. p. 114.

6 The Russian plays a pivotal role in Marlow’s and our understanding of Kurtz’s life in the Congo., p. 144.
III) Game Playing

1 Daphna Patai’s article on Orwell’s 1984 focuses on the application of game theory in 1984 in order to describe the cultural setup in the world of 1984. She uses Goldschmidt’s quotation to present the significance of game theory for anthropology in terms of studying different cultures and their value systems, p. 861.

2 Cawelti’s explanation of how formula stories work in constructing the values for a culture definitely indicates the relevance of game playing in literary works.

3 Formula stories’ presentation of the white man as the winner is similar to Coppola’s presentation of the American male, p. 122.

4 Orwell’s Collected Essays, p. 40-44. Orwell does not only create fictional environment in which game playing is practiced, but he also criticizes the contemporary practices of it,

5 Orwell’s essay “The Sporting Spirit” in his Collected Essays.

6 Kurtz’s cousin provides more information about Kurtz that helps Marlow understand Kurtz. p. 88.

7 For Marlow, another source of information about Kurtz is the journalist. p. 88.

9 Another example of Karl’s misinterpretation of the information about Kurtz. p. 125.

10 Karl takes the journalist’s statement as an expression of facts without questioning if there is any bias in it. p.129.

11 Bloom uses these words to describe the present condition of American society, p. 87.

IV) Companionship: A Taste of Paradise

1 In her article, Turner talks about women characters in Conrad’s Edwardian Short Stories. p. 143.

2 Ruth Nadelhaft’s quotation in Beth Sharon Ash’s work. See note 25 in this section.

3 Andrew Michel Roberts’ Conrad and Masculinity (St. Martin’s Press, 2000).


Brook Thomas’ new historical approach to the novella in her “Preserving and Keeping Order by Killing Time in Heart of Darkness,” p. 250.

See Turner’s article on women characters in Conrad’s Edwardian stories.


See Turner’s comparison between Conrad’s novels and Edwardian stories, p. 143.

Beth Sharon Ash’s Writing in Between : Modernity and Psychosocial Dilemma in the Novels of Joseph Conrad.

Nigger of Narcissus, The Preface.

Conclusion

Joyce Carol Oates’ “Introduction” to the two of Conrad’s novels. She compares Heart of Darkness and Apocalypse Now, a modern cinematic take on Conrad’s novella, by famous director Francis Coppola.

Virignia Woolf’s statement on the back cover of Lord Jim by Penguin Modern Classics.

Franz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Press, 1965).

See note 1 in this section.

Izetbegovic describes how the film industry was used by communists in Russia as a political tool. p. 89.

In her article “Heart of Darkness and the Ends of Man,” Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan sees a double vision is generated by the tension between two irreconcilable kinds of knowledge-metaphysics and history. She claims that Marlow’s quest for the ultimate knowledge of the origin and the end turns into a “willed deafness to the historical bodily truth of brutality and suffering.” P. 21.


Bloom’s using this excerpt to describe the current condition of the youth in democratic environments.

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VITA

Sevda Altinkaynak

1985-1990: Bachelors of Arts – The University of Ankara, Faculty of Western Languages and Literatures, Ankara, Turkey.

1990-1994: Teaching English as a Second Language at Hasanoglan Ogretmen Lisesi, Ankara, Turkey

1994-2000: Research Assistant- The University of Kirikkale, Kirikkale, Turkey.


1996-present: PhD student at the Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania.

2002-2004: Founder and Director of Umee & Me: A Parent-Child Resource Center, Gaithersburg, Maryland.

2003-2004: Teacher of Arabic at ICM, Gaithersburg, Maryland.