THE SYMPATHETIC BOND IN THE WORKS OF JOSEPH CONRAD

by

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Conrad's firmly held ideal of an ordered and stable society appears to conflict with his undeniable assault on traditional values and the revelation in his works of the inadequacy of those simple virtues which he extolled in later years. The inescapability of human solidarity does not always appear to be inherent in the moral and metaphysical isolation which besets the individual separated from his fellows. Those critics who see as most significant human isolation and the power of the irrational and their result in negation and despair are those who emphasize the force of doubt and skepticism in Conrad's works. Those who seek affirmation emphasize the ideals of duty and fidelity and their function in supporting human solidarity and a stable society. Primary in Conrad's thought, however, was his recognition of the power of sympathy with and compassion for the suffering of other individuals. This compassion is most strikingly manifested in the relationship which I have called the sympathetic bond. It reveals both the force of individual isolation and the profound inevitability of human solidarity, man's need for order and the value of dissension, his loneliness in an indifferent universe and the liberating bondage of his commitment to the human society.

When the sympathetic bond takes effect, one character enters a state in which he feels, recreated in himself, the experience and suffering of another and the effects and implications of that
other's experience. Through his response to the experience and suffering of the other finite individual, he feels the claims of his own humanity acting upon him in a way which leads him out of himself into a general commitment to the claims stemming from his moral ties with all other men and to a trust in life. The sympathetic bond is felt when all other ties and values have been destroyed or revealed as ultimately meaningless unless they share in the motive force of sympathy and compassion which must invest all social organization. With an understanding of this relationship and of the need for "sympathetic imagination," we can see that any human institution must be inadequate, meaningful only as long as it takes account of the reasons for its existence, and we can see from another perspective why all virtues and ideals and all traditional values must be suspect.

The frequency of identification in Conrad's works is a reflection of his personality and creative temperament. Considered in terms of technique, the sympathetic bond is an extension of the form of identification which has been called "recognition," the process of seeing oneself and the evil within embodied in the other self. But it tends to be self-forgetful in contrast to the egoism and heightened self-awareness implicit in the latter relationship. However, the process of recognition can prepare the character who experiences it for the development of the sympathetic bond. This is the case in "The Secret Sharer," "Heart of Darkness" and "The End of the Tether."

In the latter two stories and in "Karain," the sufferings of the central characters instruct and inform with sympathy the
younger men who feel a bond with them. The sympathetic bond brings about a selfless compassion which extends beyond a concern for the individual sufferer to a general compassion for all mankind. We feel the strength of the individual's necessary commitment to the moral community in these works; the effect of the moribund state of society on that moral community is the most persistent impression conveyed by *The Secret Agent*. Sympathetic identification is destructive to those who experience it unless it results in an enlarging of their sympathies, and general compassion requires an outlet in social organization. Conrad suggests in *The Secret Agent* that the social order can be regenerated only if the sympathy and compassion of its individual members are made to work within it.

The claims of human solidarity are unavoidable, however, in spite of the moribund state of society. When they are recognized, they are felt more intensely and more urgently because of this state. Their modus operandi becomes, not increased knowledge, but pure power. Those individuals most affected by the disintegration of social order are described, symbolically, as experiencing the impact of an explosion, the shock of which stuns and casts a spell over them. The energy thus released is the energy of life and compassion which had previously invested society, and it is represented by imagery of explosions and the sun.

At the end of *The Secret Agent*, we are left with a choice between the Professor, who embodies wisdom without compassion, and Ossipon, whose moral sense has been awakened by the sympathetic bond which he feels with the dead Winnie. Ossipon is destroyed
by his recognition of the moral bond which he has too long denied. In *The Rover*, Conrad was able to affirm his hope in the triumph of the normal and the healthy. The sympathetic bond acts to reclaim the central characters for life. Peyrol's sacrifice re-establishes a stable society; and his renunciation makes possible a return to the normal for Real and Arlette. His affirmation and trust in life is fulfilled in them; for in them is released the "sense of triumphant life."
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I feel that I must express my thanks to three people.

To Dr. E.B. Gose for nurturing what sensitivity in the reading of the English novel I may possess and for teaching me much about critical methods.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION:

PART I:- CONRAD CRITICISM AND THE SYMPATHETIC BOND

There is general critical agreement as to what were Conrad's major concerns and the important themes of his work, but there remains a disagreement and confusion over his ultimate judgments and values. Conrad's intentions often seem as enigmatic as the motives of his characters; neither render up their secrets readily to the analytical probings and categories of the critic. Conrad's own explicit statements of his beliefs often add less to our clear understanding of his position than they detract through their disconcerting simplicity. If we are to exonerate him from the charge of obscurantism—which of all insults would most have offended the conscious artist—we must attempt to show why his position in so many of his works has been capable of such a bewildering array of interpretation, why in fact Conrad seems to hold a variety of views which conflict, and we must do this without oversimplifying his moral and aesthetic vision. This thesis can take only a small step toward such a goal. With the aim, then, of finally revealing a fundamental affirmation in Conrad's thought which embodied his hope for mankind and his resolution of many conflicts in his belief, we may begin with a brief survey of the conflicts and some comment on the validity of present Conrad criticism.
First, what are the conflicts in Conrad's thought which have stimulated critical disagreement and which bear on the topic of this thesis, the sympathetic bond? A conflict between the claims of discipline, control, order and authority on one hand and romantic individualism and revolt on the other was central to Conrad's temperament and also invested his novels with their peculiar tension. This conflict is manifested in his political and psychological judgments and in the major themes of his works. It resulted in a fear and suspicion of revolution and also of democracy coupled with a hatred of autocratic government, and in an ambivalence in his valuation of imagination and self-knowledge. Conrad's firmly held ideal of an ordered and stable society conflicts with his undeniable assault on traditional values and the revelation in his works of the inadequacy of those simple virtues which he extolled in more personal statements. Even more fundamental is the conflict between solidarity and isolation. Despite Conrad's famous invocation of "the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity,"¹ the inescapability of human solidarity does not always appear to be revealed in the moral and metaphysical isolation which besets the individual separated from his fellows; the loneliness of mankind in a material and mechanistic universe indifferent to his concerns is not apparently in accord with the recognition of a "world of moral and spiritual values."² Morton

¹ The Nigger of the "Narcissus," p. xii.
² Douglas Hewitt, Conrad: A Reassessment, Cambridge, Bowes & Bowes Publishers Ltd., 1952, p. 131: "For, in essence, this is Conrad's situation: he is intensely and continuously aware of the existence of a world of moral and spiritual values, yet every quality, every virtue, every position in which he might hope to rest in security, is at once undermined; the 'impenetrable darkness' covers the world."
D. Zabel, in describing the tension in Conrad's work as a "dynamic drama of forces," emphasizes the opposition between isolation and solidarity:

For in his finest work Conrad exonerates the tormenting ambivalence of his temperament and moral distractions through a powerful and dynamic drama of forces: of sensibility against action, of analysis against plot, of the isolated soul with its illusions and obsessions against the demands of human sympathy and sacrifice. The anarchy of personality becomes controlled by the law of life. It is in this suspense and tension of forces that Conrad's essential art lies. He found a dramatic equivalent for the law that operates in both psyche and society. For him the greatest drama of which man is capable comes when the soul is compelled out of vanity or isolation into the whole organism of human experience: into that moral organism and coherence of humanity--"solidarity" was his word for it--which must be the novel's supreme theme and subject.

Such a balance of forces, as Zabel implies, would not in itself be sufficient to prevent serious contradictions in Conrad's thought. The very fact of such a balance challenges the adequacy of those "few very simple ideas" on which the temporal world rests, and the main oppositions between order and revolt outlined above remain. The reconciliation is a consequence of an organic link founded in a human process of discovery and exploration of the self. The individual is impelled to a recognition of "the law of life" and "the whole organism of human experience." The value ever present in all the forms taken by these conflicts is "the

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2 A Personal Record, p. xxi; "Those who read me know my conviction that the world, the temporal world, rests on a few very simple ideas; so simple that they must be as old as the hills. It rests notably, among others, on the idea of Fidelity."
human necessity of action and commitment."¹ It corrects both
the fixed standards of an ordered society, and the dreams and
illusions held privately by the romantic idealist or the skep­
ticism of the detached observer. This thesis will discuss what
I believe is the force which leads to this commitment and provides
its initial form, which reveals most profoundly man's state—the
power of sympathy with and compassion for the suffering of other
individuals. This compassion is most strikingly manifested in
Conrad's works in the relationship which I have called the sym­
pathetic bond. It reveals both the force of individual isolation
and the profound inevitability of human solidarity, man's need for
order and the value of dissension, his loneliness in an indifferent
universe and the liberating bondage of his commitment to the human
society.

Those critics who seek affirmation in Conrad emphasize the
ideal of fidelity in his works and its function in supporting
human solidarity. Those who feel the force of doubt and skepti­
cism in his writing see as most significant the human isolation
and the power of the irrational and their result in negation and
despair. But no simple explanation can do justice to Conrad's
work and thought, and no one aspect of Conrad should be emphasized
at the cost of the others.

Paul L. Wiley in his book, Conrad's Measure of Man, describes

¹ Zabel, "Conrad in His Age," in Craft and Character, pp. 216-17.
"They are men who enact Conrad's central moral argument: that the
personal illusion of values must be compelled out of vanity, con­
ceit, or the nihilism of the closed personality by the human ne­
cessity of action and commitment. By that law they meet the crises
in their lives. Conrad's tales invariably center their dramatic
and moral situations in a crisis of this order."
the officers of the Narcissus and the Judea as "members of a craft with an inherited standard of conduct which is disappearing with their generation." He quite rightly claims that Conrad's characterization of these men reveals his ideal of a stable, well-ordered society—a society in which men are guided by loyalty, fidelity and responsibility:

Yet a code of behavior no longer valid for people of a different age may serve as a contrast to an inferior ethic which supplants it, and the non-existent ideal of man complete and assured of his place within an ordered society may be held as a norm by which deviations from it can be judged. Such an ideal, it appears, was native to Conrad's thought, even though as an artist concerned with contemporary subject matter he drew men who were incomplete and withdrawn from the communal orbit. His humanistic spirit finds utterance in his comment on Willems and Aissa in their utter solitude and despair at the end of An Outcast: 'They both long to have a significance in the order of nature or of society.' [Wiley's quotation is from Letters from Conrad, p. 42]

But Wiley also notes that Conrad's imagery—for example, images of the wilderness and chaos, expulsion from Eden—emphasize the limitations of all human institutions, and that man's confidence and feeling of security are founded in illusions about his place in the universe. "By placing man or the world created by him in the midst of such perilous surroundings, Conrad expressed symbolically his denial of complacent trust in human power or in human institutions." Such a view of the world forbids complacency. Douglas Hewitt points out that Conrad's unwillingness "to accept at its face value any idealism, any noble sentiment, any virtuous act," caused some of his contemporaries to accuse him of "nihilism." Hewitt maintains that if we "remove the pejorative flavour which

2 Ibid., p. 16.
it had for him and his accusers, there is seen to be a great deal of truth in the judgment."¹

How are we to account then for the complacency of Conrad's later years and work, and for the important place held by conventional order and discipline and the ideal of a stable society in his thought? Hewitt claims that Conrad, for his own peace of mind, had to turn away from a preoccupation with the evil bases of all our ideals and feelings and the recognition of these bases in our "other self."² Zabel insists that Conrad introduced a simplified moral scheme into his later works to fill the vacuum left by creative exhaustion. "In such circumstances he was able to do little more than invoke the nobler ideals that appear in his personal statements and apologies—Sincerity, Honor, Fortitude, Fidelity. These, however they may have served him in his personal faith and ethic, were not the sources of his tragic power, his instinct for moral truth, or his strength in pessimistic realism, the basis of his radical humanism."³ To anyone who has compared Conrad's later work with that of his early and middle periods, these critical judgments must seem just and accurate. Conrad's reliance on Fidelity suggests both a decline in creative power and a turning away from the sources of his creative inspiration. But I do not believe that we need either accuse Conrad of insincerity, or conclude that he came to believe in the complete

¹ Hewitt, A Reassessment, p. 129.
² Ibid., p. 77.
³ Zabel, "Conrad in His Age," Craft and Character, p. 222.
adequacy of human institutions in guiding man toward the good life. Conrad believed that man must try to make his institutions work well. The simple virtues reinforce human institutions and make society more liveable. But to Conrad, any institution remained only an approximation of that ideal of Human Solidarity which he had held throughout his life.

Wm. Wallace Bancroft has stressed the primacy of the concept of Human Solidarity in Conrad's thought. Such solidarity can never be fully represented and expressed by particular institutions or moral claims. "It is a reality of relations that finds activity through the Moral Law, the latter the Categorical Imperative of practical life." The individual cannot resist moral involvement with others, but the Moral Law transcends social codes. Human Solidarity is the force which gives life to social organization and on which such organization must be based if it is to be effective and meaningful. Human Solidarity, which informs the sympathetic bond with value, acts to pull man out of the limited world of his individuality. It is an active power and is behind the inevitable destruction of the individual's isolation which Zabel has noted:

Thus love, or the sense of honor, or the obligation of duty, or even the social instinct itself, enters the novels as a means by which the individual is lifted out of his isolation and morbid surrender. The inward-driving, center-


2 Zabel, "Chance and Recognition," in Craft and Character... in Modern Fiction, p. 165.
fathoming obsession of the tale becomes reversed and takes a centrifugal direction toward external standards of value. It is finally the world which saves us—the world of human necessities and duty.

Bancroft has described this same force and the way in which particular institutions only approximate the ideal in these terms:

No man can live unto himself, for the very meaning and value of life do not emanate from him but from the social content, which, in turn, is more than a present one. The social content, Human Solidarity, is past, present, and potential.

The given is outside of the personal self, for the self finds its meaning only in relation to the outside terms of its own existence. It comes from that 'divine society,' as the Stoics referred to it, as distinguished from artificial institutions and social organizations. This 'society' represents the 'Infinite Individual,' which makes possible social organization. Institutions, manners, customs, morals—these are particulars in that great universal represented by the term 'Human Solidarity.' Morals change with the times, while that universal solidarity of fellowship describes a direction—a 'nisus towards the whole,' the laws of which are immutable and execute themselves.

Bancroft also notes that Conrad emphasized the ideal value of things as opposed to their physical being, and such an emphasis is in accord with Bancroft's analysis of Human Solidarity. But the artist who has so vividly presented a physical world in his work, and who tended to despise abstractions, has rendered the power embodied in Human Solidarity in concrete terms. Objects gain value as they are interpreted by the mind, but if the value given conflicts with Human Solidarity, a "false adhesion between ideas and objects" will result and will act to destroy the in-

2 Loc. cit.
3 Ibid., pp. 52, 53.
dividual. This suggests that the physical world is inseparable from any meaningful discussion of abstractions. Moral conflicts and the drama of self-discovery are related to the physical world in which they are enacted. The link with the physical, the real world of men and their environment, without which no abstraction was meaningful to Conrad, this link between the ideal concept and actual human experience is found in the relationship which I have named the sympathetic bond. It is invested with a symbolic quality which reflects this relation between the ideal and the actual. We would expect Conrad, who presented internal conflicts by dramatizing them externally and symbolically, to present a physical correlative for Human Solidarity which yet transcends realism in its symbolic content.

How, precisely, does the sympathetic bond come into being and how does it operate? The qualities of the sympathetic bond are radical. Frequently in the works of Conrad relationships occur between two characters which result ultimately in a full or partial transference of identity. One character enters a state in which he feels, recreated in himself, the experience and suffering of another and the effects and implications of that other's experience. The receiver of this experience feels the claims of his own humanity acting upon him in a way which leads him out of himself into a general commitment to the claims stemming from his moral ties with all other men and to a trust in life. But the agency of this transference from the self-centered to the other-centered is a response to the sufferings of another finite individual and a recognition of the inescapable claims upon him of that other's experience. The "reality of relations" which com-
prises Human Solidarity exists in a concrete relationship between individuals which is so powerful and so fundamental in the works of Conrad that its establishment is portrayed as a psychic event. This relationship, the sympathetic bond, makes its power felt when all other ties and values have been destroyed or revealed as ultimately meaningless unless they share in the motive force of sympathy and compassion generated by the sympathetic bond.

The value of an understanding of the sympathetic bond in revealing Conrad's ultimate values and the nature of his affirmation is apparent after a critical examination of two of Douglas Hewitt's comments:

There is a potentially evil or discreditable side to the natures of all his central characters, a seed of corruption in all their idealisms, a suspicion that all our most elevated feelings derive at bottom from the same root as the hunger of Falk which had to be satisfied by cannibalism...

He has in his best novels and stories a conception of evil which is not vague and mystifying and which is not a matter of good people and bad people. It is precise and it is conceived profoundly in terms of the maiming power of Charles Gould's silver mine, the 'hollowness' of Mr. Kurtz and the self-deception and fear of Mr. Verloc. But he has no conception of a goodness just as profound (and sometimes just as hidden), rooted in a complex human nature...

The justice and perception of Hewitt's remarks are undeniable, but they must undergo a subtle yet far-reaching adjustment in the light of the sympathetic bond. There is certainly no sight in Conrad of a goodness so profoundly rooted in human nature as is

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1 Hewitt, A Reassessment, p. 77, pp. 130-31.

2 Eloise Knapp Hay, in her recently published critical study of Conrad, The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1963, has also attempted to show the need to redress the balance of critical opinion: "The
the force for evil described by Hewitt. But there are within men the springs not only of evil, but also of compassion, of a compassion and understanding strong enough to inform, in fact transform, the whole personality. The impulse to compassionate understanding is the one force revealed within man which is both hope-giving and as fundamental as the hunger of Falk. It expresses, as does this hunger, the fundamental urge to live.

Commitment to Human Solidarity is the only force powerful enough to overcome man's isolation. Its power, in fact, is reinforced by the very strength of the opposite pulls which it must overcome, man's retreat within the self and the indifference of the physical world. We can see that in Conrad's view, any human institution must be insufficient, meaningful only as long as it takes account of the reasons for its existence, and we can now see from another perspective why all virtues and ideals and all traditional values must be suspect. Such a radical conception of the significance of human compassion forbids complacency as much as does any form of nihilism. Only such general compassion can properly direct the "innate sense of personal dignity" which Bancroft says "remains the ground of emotional action" and which is in its relation to Human Solidarity."

... the bond that unites humanity in universal understanding. It is the sense, so to speak, through which the Moral Law operates and touches the core of the deepest recesses of human feeling. It is at once the most dangerous and at the same time the greatest blessing in the form of heaven's gifts.

1 Bancroft, Joseph Conrad, p. 60.
The same austerity of feeling which informs Conrad's moral vision has been detected and described by Zabel:¹

But there is no other comfort certain—perhaps no comfort at all except in that "resignation, not mystic, not detached, but . . . open-eyed, conscious, and informed by love" which Conrad believed to be "the only one of our feelings for which it is impossible to become a sham." The moral community he insistently invoked, exemplified as much by his personal tenacity as by the art he practiced against all but defeating obstacles of doubt and insecurity, offered little but this grim consolation to his skepticism; but that much it did offer, and on that principle of trust and sincerity he staked his faith . . .

Such resignation stems from a knowledge of man's weakness and limitations, but it does not prohibit a "principle of trust and sincerity" based on a recognition of the "moral community." The compassion which accompanies resignation in Conrad causes it to be "'informed by love.'" This affirmation is opposed to intellectual abstractions or emotional hopes—in Conrad's words, it is "'not mystic, not detached.'"² The final form which Conrad's resignation takes is an "egoless compassion"³ which casts a glow.

¹ Zabel, "The Threat to the West," in Craft and Character...in Modern Fiction, pp. 205-06.
² Abstractions such as "fraternity" and "international brotherhood" were largely meaningless to Conrad. In a letter to Cunninghame Graham, Feb. 8, 1899, Life and Letters, 1, 268-70, Conrad says this: "'There is already as much fraternity as there can be, --and that's very little and that very little is no good. What does fraternity mean? Abnegation,—self-sacrifice means something. Fraternity means nothing unless the Cain-Abel business. That's your true fraternity. Assez.'" (Quoted in Hay, Political Novels, p. 19).
of hope and tolerance over all mankind from the depths of despair and which makes action meaningful. Egoless compassion is the ultimate lesson learned by Marlow in "Heart of Darkness" and Van Wyk in "The End of the Tether." Conrad has stated explicitly his belief in the need for and value of compassion in an essay which also reveals his skeptical distrust of the benefits which science or any other form of human ingenuity can bring to mankind:

Since the day of Creation two veiled figures, Doubt and Melancholy, have been pacing endlessly in the sunshine of the world. What humanity needs is not the promise of scientific immortality, but compassionate pity in this life and infinite mercy on the Day of Judgment.

The importance which Conrad places upon sympathy with the suffering of others has often been obscured in critical discussion by a failure to distinguish between egoless compassion, which enlarges men's sympathies, and pity, which is merely a form of selfish fear. Hewitt's argument suggests that Conrad's "treatment of the sailors' pity for the dying negro, [in The Nigger of the "Narcissus"] which is seen as 'the latent egoism of tenderness to suffering' which makes them 'highly humanized, tender, complex, excessively decadent,'" reflects his view of all sympathy with suffering. But pity, unlike compassion, is, as Hewitt says, one of the "simple virtues" which are suspect in Conrad. It is suspect because it never rises above self-concern, whereas compassion involves men in the experience of others.

2 Hewitt, A Reassessment, pp. 16-7.
Moser sees more clearly the real roots of evil in such feelings:

The truth is, however, that their sympathies are really for themselves. They see in Jimmy's impending death their own mortality, and they cannot bear the sight of it. As Conrad states explicitly: 'the latent egoism of tenderness to suffering appeared in the developing anxiety not to see him die.'

There is, too, an ambivalence in Conrad's assessment of egoism and imagination which also suggests that the roots of good and evil are inextricably mingled in the human psyche. Mrs. Hay concludes that to Conrad, "human society has its origins, its present, and its future in the conflicts of human egoism, out of which comes everything that we hate, but also everything that we love." Egoism can lead, paradoxically, to self-forgetfulness, to the

1 Thomas C. Moser, *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957, p. 33. Paul L. Wiley has recognized the need for sympathetic understanding among individuals to compensate for the inadequacy of social organization: "... more importance attaches, in the writing of the middle phase, to the claims of the individual divided between the opposing forces of a rigid official code of morality and law and a world ruled by chance. When subject to accident and the drive of instinct man must err, and existing moral and legal institutions no longer supported by faith offer him little safeguard. Mindful of this dilemma Conrad laid increasing weight upon the need for a bond of sympathy and love. . . ." (p. 91). The works of the middle period which most reflect this need are *The Secret Agent*, *Under Western Eyes*, and "The Secret Sharer." I would go a step further than Wiley and suggest, as I have attempted to do already, that "all moral and legal institutions" of any age must be founded upon "a bond of sympathy."

2 Hay, *Political Novels*, p. 23. Mrs. Hay quotes from Conrad's later letter to Cunninghame Graham, Feb. 8, 1899: "'L'homme est un animal méchant. Sa méchanceté doit être organisée. La société est essentiellement criminelle,--ou elle n'existerait pas. C'est l'égosme qui sauve tout,--absolument tout,--tout ce que nous abhorrons, tout ce que nous aimons. Et tout se tient. Voilà pourquoi je respecte les extrêmes anarchistes. --'Je souhaite l'extermination générale.' Très bien. C'est juste et ce qui est plus, c'est clair. On fait des compromis avec des paroles. Ça n'en finit plus. C'est commune une forêt où personne ne connaît la route.'" (p. 23). Cf. "Henry James" in *Notes on Life and Letters*, p. 14: "For my own part, from a short and cursory acquaintance with my kind, I am inclined to think that the last utterance will formulate, strange as it may appear, some hope now to us utterly inconceivable. For mankind is delightful in its pride, its assurance, and its indomitable tenacity."
renunciation which Conrad valued. The dreams and ideals of Conrad's romantic heroes, though nurtured by their egos, often act to elevate their concerns to a dimension beyond the self. To the imaginative individual, such a process can be a necessary step toward the recognition of human solidarity. The individual can know the world only through his responses to it. That same involvement with the self which egoism feeds can, through the imaginative enlargement of one's perceptions, contribute to the defeat of solipsism. The development of the sympathetic bond depends upon egoism to the extent that it requires the involvement

1 Conrad's comments on renunciation in the essay on Henry James are worth examining. They reinforce his high valuation of self-sacrifice contained in the letter to Cunninghame Graham cited above: "That a sacrifice must be made, that something has to be given up, is the truth engraved in the innermost recesses of the fair temple built for our edification by the masters of fiction. There is no other secret behind the curtain. All adventure, all love, every success is resumed in the supreme energy of an act of renunciation. . . . Like a natural force which is obscured as much as illuminated by the multiplicity of phenomena, the power of renunciation is obscured by the mass of weaknesses, vacillations, secondary motives and false steps and compromises which make up the sum of our activity. But no man or woman worthy of the name can pretend to anything more, to anything greater" (pp. 15-6). The subject of the novelist is, clearly, the detailed examination of human motives and the depiction of the process of moral discovery. Conrad goes on to suggest that renunciation and self-sacrifice result in men from the possession of a fine conscience, one which is "concerned with essentials" and unworldly. "A fine conscience is more concerned with essentials; its triumphs are more perfect, if less profitable, in a worldly sense . . . What is natural about it is just its fineness, and abiding sense of the intangible, ever-present, right. It is most visible in their ultimate triumph, in their emergence from miracle, through an energetic act of renunciation" (pp. 17-8). Such a conscience is sustained by a sensitive imagination and does not rely upon fixed standards of conduct. In another essay from the same collection, Conrad links renunciation with hope and the role of the artist ("Books," p. 8). Renunciation is both portrayed in and expressed by the work of the artist, and it is expressed in his temperament.

2 Mrs. Hay notes the intimate connection in Conrad between ego and imagination in her discussion of Lord Jim. (Political Novels)
of the whole personality.

Conrad suggested the close connection between imagination and compassion when he described the value of the "sympathetic imagination." He said that only "direct vision of the fact, or the stimulus of a great art" can stir our emotions and awaken our imaginations:

In this age of knowledge our sympathetic imagination, to which alone we can look for the ultimate triumph of concord and justice, remains strangely impervious to information, however correctly and even picture-squely conveyed.

The high valuation which Conrad placed on imagination as the instrument of moral responsibility is especially apparent in the relationship which I have called the sympathetic bond. Only sympathetic imagination reveals fully to men their bond with their fellows, and it defines the artist's purpose while governing his practise. We are reminded by the above quotation of Conrad's famous description of his artistic task in the "Preface" to The Nigger of the "Narcissus" as, "by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see." The same Preface contains Conrad's famous evocation of "that feeling of unavoidable solidarity; of the solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy, in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds men to each other and all mankind to the visible world." He distinguishes between the appeal made "always to our credulity" by thinkers and scientists and the appeal "to our

1 "Autocracy and War," in Notes on Life and Letters, p. 84.
3 Loc. cit.
less obvious capacities" made by the artist. The sympathetic imagination, which fosters understanding and egoless compassion, is closely related to yet vastly different in effect from the imagination which is fed by the ego alone.

The imaginative person, whether lost in the pursuit of a dream or of selfish desires for wealth or power, is as inevitably cut off from his fellows as the rational skeptic whose destructive analysis of human motives and ideals leaves him without hope. We can take for examples, Almayer as the selfish dreamer, Leggatt or Jim as the romantic idealist, Decoud or Heyst as the skeptic. But all these types in Conrad discover an isolation that is metaphysical rather than moral, that reflects man's state in the universe. The imaginative man, however, has the advantage over the skeptic—unless like Almayer he is controlled by selfishness—of being able to affirm a trust in life or the ideal, and over his less imaginative fellows in being more responsive to the claims of conscience.

The Nigger of the "Narcissus," pp. xi-xii. "The changing wisdom of successive generations discards ideas, questions facts, demolishes theories. But the artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent on wisdom; to that in us which is a gift and not an acquisition—and, therefore, more permanently enduring. He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain; to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation—and to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts, to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn" (p. xii).

It seems likely that to Conrad fidelity, like compassion, was far from being a simple virtue. It is not a simple response to duty, but a dedication to truth and the human community sustained by hope and imagination. This is the meaning of Fidelity for
and unsupported, as he often must, when the claims of conscience come unremittingly. It may be necessary to distinguish further in the simple classification of types which I have introduced, between the dreamer such as Jim and the perceptive figure who, like Marlow in "Heart of Darkness," responds imaginatively to the situation of another. What the two characters share, however, is a consciousness of moral values even in isolation and in spite of their feeling of separation from their fellows. This suggests that the springs of morality are within and that moral claims are more likely to make themselves felt in the conscience of the isolated individual than in the external standards and codes of 

Marlow in "Heart of Darkness," Mrs. Hay argues that Jim's faithfulness to a shadowy ideal of conduct is a correlative for Conrad's fidelity to the dream of Polish nationhood. Conrad's sympathy for Quixotic characters has often been noted, and his reference to Don Quixote to explain the facts of his own life in A Personal Record is well-known. Such an interpretation of fidelity helps to explain the significance of this romantic idealist to Conrad. In A Personal Record, Conrad says: "He who kept in pious meditation the ritual vigil-of-arms by the well of an inn and knelt reverently to be knighted at daybreak by the fat, sly rogue of a landlord, has come very near perfection. He rides forth, his head encircled by a halo—the patron saint of all lives spoiled or saved by the irresistible grace of imagination. But he was not a good citizen" (p. 37). The Quixotic character engaged in a search is preferable for Conrad to men, like Whalley, whose fixed ideas always prove inadequate, even though the Don was not a good citizen. Fidelity becomes, in fact, indistinguishable from a faithfulness to the dictates of conscience. Mrs. Hay makes this comment on Conrad's attitude toward his Quixotic heroes: "The quixotic drive for Conrad comprises, among other things, faith in a difficult moral commitment, in an impossible standard of conduct, or in the job that gives men their moorings in an incomprehensible universe" (Political Novels, p. 196). Conrad in the later evocations of his ideals tended to reduce a complex idea to the terms of a simple formula.

1 Moser, Achievement and Decline, for instance, distinguishes between the vulnerable and the perceptive hero.
society. The recognition of evil within oneself, as Whalley and Marlow demonstrate, is a major step toward a general compassion for human suffering. Conrad's novels reveal an awareness that imagination is bad as it hampers action or leads to selfishness, good as it increases compassion for others and understanding of oneself.

The distinction between imagination as it promotes selfishness and as it sustains selflessness can be seen in a comparison of the imagery which Conrad employs to render the motives of Almayer and Winnie Verloc. The former epitomizes selfishness and the latter selflessness and the descriptions are in marked contrast, yet the central image is the same. Here is Almayer as

1 We must, however, beware of exaggerating the superiority of action over thought in Conrad. The weight placed on Marlow's lotus posture in "Heart of Darkness" suggests that meditation can act as a valuable corrective to unreflective action. The essay, "Autocracy and War," in Notes on Life and Letters, contains two passages which indicate that western civilization is mistaken in looking to action alone for its salvation. In the first, Conrad compares the attitudes of East and West: "The West having managed to lodge its hasty foot on the neck of the East is prone to forget that it is from the East that the wonders of patience and wisdom have come to a world of men who set the value of life in the power to act rather than in the faculty of meditation" (p. 88). In the second, he is concerned with the dependence upon action as it is manifested in the struggle for power between states: "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 master-ed 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" (pp. 108-09).
he responds to Lingard's proposal:

Startled by the unexpected proposal, Almayer hesitated, and remained silent for a minute. He was gifted with a strong and active imagination, and in that short space of time he saw, as in a flash of dazzling light, great piles of shining guilders, and realized all the possibilities of an opulent existence. The consideration, the indolent ease of life—for which he felt himself so well fitted—his ships, his warehouses, his merchandise (old Lingard would not live for ever), and, crowning all, in the far future gleamed like a fairy palace the big mansion in Amsterdam, that earthly paradise of his dreams.

And Conrad's comments on Winnie as she reviews "the tenor of her life in visions concerned mostly with Stevie's difficult existence from its earliest days":

It was a life of single purpose and of a noble unity of inspiration, like those rare lives that have left their mark on the thoughts and feelings of mankind. But the visions of Mrs. Verloc lacked nobility and magnificence. She saw herself putting the boy to bed by the light of a "business house," dark under the roof and scintillating exceedingly with lights and cut glass at the level of the street like a fairy palace.

Winnie's devotion to Stevie is the most striking example of the sympathetic bond found in Conrad. Stevie, Winnie and Ossipon define a bond of sympathy, are linked in a chain of experience, that reveals the primary human values implicit in The Secret Agent. The effect of the bond in The Secret Agent is markedly different, however, from its effect in "Heart of Darkness" and "The End of the Tether." A comparison of these works with reference to the description of Winnie leads to two important points which reveal emphatically the power of compassion and the signif-

1 Almayer's Folly, p. 10.
2 The Secret Agent, pp. 241-42.
icance of society in Conrad's thought.

The reoccurrence of the central image of the "fairy palace" in the passage from The Secret Agent suggests that Winnie is just as "enchanted" by her total dedication to Stevie as Almayer was by his selfish greed, and that this dedication will bring upon Winnie and Stevie a disaster as great as Almayer's. Why does such a fate befall them if Conrad's intention is to show the value and power of compassion? First, the force which unites two characters in a sympathetic bond is so intense and so fundamental that it cannot be explained by reference to the power of "sympathetic imagination" alone. It has already been noted that Conrad depicts this force as resulting in a full or partial transference of identity. This transference is more marked in The Secret Agent than in the earlier works, though it occurs in them too. But the more intense and all-absorbing form which the bond takes in The Secret Agent is not alone sufficient to explain why it brings destruction in that novel and not in "Heart of Darkness" and "The End of the Tether." In the latter works, the bond results in an egoless compassion which extends beyond a concern for the individual sufferer to a general compassion for all mankind. The second main point suggested by the comparison is, therefore, that sympathetic identification is destructive to those who experience it unless it results in an enlarging of their sympathies and the power of compassion which it generates finds a form for its expression. It will become apparent, in fact, that general compassion requires an outlet in social organization.

Both Winnie and Ossipon lack imagination in a general sense; the former refuses to look beneath the surface of things and the
latter's perception is restricted by his selfishness. But the claims of human solidarity are not felt by the imagination alone. Winnie and Ossipon are completely gripped by the experience of another when their defenses are penetrated. This lack of imagination in the characters in the novel not only contributes to their isolation and defeat, but it also reflects Conrad's concern with the condition of the society in which they live and share. Marlow, Whalley and Van Wyk are more sensitive and imaginative than Winnie and Ossipon, and we feel that the latter have been conditioned by a dehumanized society. The strength of the individuals' necessary commitment to the moral community is what we feel in the works in which the former characters appear; the effect of the moribund state of society on that moral community is the most persistent impression conveyed by *The Secret Agent*. Yet Conrad suggests in the novel that the social order can be regenerated if the sympathy and compassion of its individual members are made to work within it.

The sympathetic bond embodies the motive force of compassion which must lie behind the formation of social institutions. But the social dissolution and instability which prevent the formation of normal human ties in *The Secret Agent* also force the sympathetic bond when it occurs to take a form so intense that it is destructive. The most urgent message of this novel is that social and political institutions are in an extreme state of decay, and under those conditions it is impossible for sympathetic
identification to result in general compassion. Conrad was temperamentally and intellectually unable to conceive of individuals existing apart from a social context. Although his heroes often experience the metaphysical isolation which separates them from the physical universe, they remain as men inescapably bound up with their fellows until their deaths. The claims of human solidarity are unavoidable in spite of the moribund state of society. When they are recognized, they are felt more intensely and more urgently, in fact, because of this state. Their modus operandi becomes, not increased knowledge, but pure power.

The connection between the dissolution of society and the force of the sympathetic bond between individuals is conveyed in *The Secret Agent*—and also in *The Rover*—by imagery related to the sun and to explosions. Those individuals most affected by the disintegration of social order are described, symbolically, as ex-

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1 Bancroft's analysis of *The Secret Agent*, which he uses as an illustration of "the false adhesion between ideas and objects," is valuable and perceptive: "When the false adhesion between ideas and objects occur and grow fixed, one strives to protect the issues emanating from these, and likewise, the interest represented by them. When the attachment snaps, the fibre of individual will and mind is tested to the extreme. Winnie, in *The Secret Agent*, whose interest attached itself to her half-witted brother, went mad when that adhesion broke. Ossipon, in the same tale, who disregarded moral laws and defined all in terms of science, sunk by the very force he opposed into despair and madness. The professor, who thought himself strong because he carried enough stuff to send twenty other people into eternity, moved unnoticed, a pest, in the multitude that he feared" (Joseph Conrad, p. 53). Still I believe that it must be qualified markedly. Winnie's love for Stevie is an expression of Human Solidarity and an extreme form of the sympathetic bond. It represents a true adhesion, in Bancroft's terms, in that it embodies the claims of human sympathy which cannot be denied. These claims are forced into an unnatural form by the moribund state of society. The spirit which invests Conrad's treatment of society in the novel is echoed in the "Author's Note": "I have no doubt . . . that there had been moments during the writing of the book when I was an extreme revolutionist" (p. xiv).
periencing the force of an explosion, the shock of which stuns and casts a spell over them. The explosion which kills Stevie flashes through Winnie's imagination with a force that severs all her remaining ties with society. In The Rover, those characters who have experienced the total destruction of all social order in a bloody revolution are described as stunned and enchanted. Their enchantment recalls Winnie's in her total dedication to Stevie—a dedication which had been called forth in her in response to the inadequacy and inhumanity of society. When Winnie's enchantment is finally lifted by the murder of Verloc, she is left with a complete and evil freedom, and a simple and primitive urge to live. In The Secret Agent the sympathetic bond arises because of the inadequacy of society and is destroyed by society. In The Rover it arises after the individuals affected have felt the impact of complete social disintegration, and it acts to reclaim them for life. The energy that stunned Arlette and Real in the revolutionary upheaval was the energy of life and compassion which had invested society. This power which had gone into the creation of social organization flashes back onto the individual in periods of disruption. When it is again directed outward in sympathy and compassion through the sympathetic bond, the result is a chance for a normal life. Yet Real and Arlette are not able to achieve such a life through their efforts alone. A third person is necessary: a return to normal life for Real and Arlette is made possible by Peyrol's sacrifice. Peyrol is himself joined to Real and Arlette in sympathetic bonds, but he acts as, or takes the place of, an outside agency in reconstituting a normal society. This complex relationship suggests, as in The Secret Agent, that
the power of compassion contained in the sympathetic bond cannot be liberated creatively if society is totally corrupt. But Conrad was able to affirm in his last novel, in the person of Peyrol, his hope in the triumph of the normal and the healthy. Peyrol's sacrifice reminds us not only of the necessity for compassion, but also of the efficacy of renunciation, of that renunciation which inhabits action for Conrad.

The affirmation we are left with at the end of The Secret Agent is contained in Ossipon's awakened moral sense discovered in the sympathetic bond which he feels with the dead Winnie. Ossipon is the only character in the two novels who shares in

1 The complexity of this relationship also suggests, I think, that Conrad did not believe in the efficacy of love in creating profound human ties. Wiley is much too uncritical in his discussion of the role of romantic and sexual love in Conrad's middle and later periods. He is certainly correct in his statement of Conrad's concerns: "Conrad cares less about the state in itself as a background for his stories than about man as an individual. But he is concerned with order, or better its disappearance, in the society to which man belongs; and true order depends, finally, upon the existence of human bonds" (Conrad's Measure, p. 128). But he goes on to claim that Conrad viewed love as "evidence of man's willingness to establish a protective bond with another of his kind": "When relationships of this kind fail or when society no longerheeds them, the individual suffers through division and betrayal. Conrad begins at this time, and the interest carries over into his later work, to bring love between man and woman into the foreground and to stress the consequences of its neglect through a decline of moral feeling in society; for as its character is defensive rather than aggressive and because it safeguards life, love gives evidence of man's acceptance of his limitations and of his willingness to establish a protective bond with another of his kind" (pp. 128-29). Conrad's depiction of love, however, hardly leads to optimism. Moser has traced convincingly what might be called the sexual pathology of Conrad's novels, e.g., "An examination of Flora and Lena will help us to understand how Conrad succeeds with his women only so long as they remain objects of pity" (Achievement and Decline, p. 157). The power of love is secondary in the complex human bond that unites Real, Arlette and Peyrol. Sexual love is not happy or effective in Conrad.
such a bond and is also guilty of inflicting some of the suffering felt by another character. Unlike the other characters who are innocent of what befalls them, he is not portrayed as a victim. Rather, he undergoes the recognition of evil within that commonly enlarges the sympathies and understanding of Conrad's characters. But Ossipon has been a scoundrel all his life. Such a bond has come too late for Ossipon, for it presents him with a burden of guilt which he cannot cope with. Ossipon is destroyed by the force of moral laws because, as Bancroft says, he has too long denied their existence. He cannot act upon the change within himself. But this does not diminish the truth or the urgency of what he feels. At the end of the novel, we are left with a choice between Ossipon and the Professor, who does not believe in the existence of madness and despair in the contemporary world. What Winnie was prevented from doing by a corrupt world and Ossipon did not do by choice until it was too late and he could not, was to trust in life. Bancroft describes fully the need to trust in life, although his allusion to God is irrelevant in Conrad: 1

The particular and practical question is this. What matters it whether one believes or not in the safety of his surroundings, or whether one puts his trust in life? In the first, life seems cruel, disappointments are the results of struggle, gain has little or no meaning, and life is empty and without peace. In the second, such a trust discovers one's true relationship with that which gives true value; hardships are transmuted into hope, faith, and honest endeavor, and disappointments become simply episodes in the drama of final triumph. To rest upon the first is to increase the

1 Bancroft, Joseph Conrad, pp. 87-8.
uncertainty within, to trust in the second is to lose that uncertainty in the discovery of the permanent. That is to say, to do what is felt to be right, because it requires no argument, no self-justification, is peace, is happiness, is answered prayer, and the reward of faith in God.

The sympathetic bond, examined in terms of technique, is an extension of Conrad's customary method of characterization and means of depicting interaction between characters. As a technique it was native to his own temperament and personality as well as to his creative temperament and artistic practice. It is the most extreme form of the sympathetic identification which has often been noted in Conrad in that it results in a full awareness of the experience of the other person as well as a heightened awareness of oneself. It is, however, similar to what Zabel has called "recognition," the process of seeing oneself and the evil within embodied in the other self which Jim experiences in Brown and Marlow in Kurtz. But in this case the other person is not important in himself, but only as a projection of what the subject recognizes within himself. Marlow, regarded for a moment only as the narrator who appears in so many tales, responds to the plight of the character whose story he tells through a sympathetic identification. The extension of this method in the sympathetic bond is a correlative of Conrad's emphasis upon the need for compassion and the inescapable moral and emotional ties which bind individuals together in human solidarity. But Conrad's employment of this relationship in The Secret Agent and "The Secret Sharer" pushed his analysis of human character to the limits of intelligibility. Only in The Rover, his last novel, did
he again attempt to pursue the implications of the sympathetic bond.

Gustav Morf has seen the frequency of identification in Conrad's works as a reflection of his personality, which he classifies as of the intuitive type. Morf asserts, quite rightly I believe, that the general and widespread use of identification is the natural and inevitable result of Conrad's personality:

The intuitive type possesses in a remarkable degree the faculty of putting himself in the place of others, or rather, of feeling as if he were some third person, of "identifying himself" with others, as the technical expression is. The consequence is that he adapts himself very easily to whatever appeals to his imagination and that he understands and penetrates and literally 'makes his' the motives and enthusiasms of all sorts of men (for him, there is always a 'common bond'), of saints as well as of rogues, of Eastern as well as of Western people, of sailors and soldiers as well as of explorers and generals. The intuitive type has not always the stable personality of other types... they often give up one identification for another. They apprehend reality by means of identifications. Where identification is impossible, the process of understanding is greatly hindered, in which case much verbiage, or a theory, is often put forward to mask the difficulty. But identification does not only mean understanding, it means still more sympathy. Whatever or whomever we love, we always love in them the projection of desires which are our very own. In other words: sympathy is impossible without some sort of identification, and identification is impossible without some sort of sympathy, or at least a great amount of indulgence related to sympathy.

Morf's comment that identification means sympathy even more than understanding is a valuable insight. The importance of sympathy is reflected in the extension of this technique in the sympathetic

bond. The more complete and selfless the identification, the more intense the sympathy.

Although the similarity of the sympathetic bond to the more common forms of sympathetic identification, typified best by the "recognition" relationship, shows that the former is in keeping with Conrad's customary techniques, the differences between these relationships should not be overlooked. These differences have been implied in the foregoing discussion, but it may be useful to state them. The latter form of identification embodies an outward projection from the main character's own self-consciousness. It is basically egoistic in that it is usually the recognition in another of the evil which is hidden within oneself.¹ The other person comes to incarnate for the subject his own unconscious impulses, and the two characters form a psychic unit. The process is for the subject, that is the person altered by the "recognition," basically one of self-discovery. In the sympathetic bond, on the other hand, the subject who undergoes change receives an impression of the experience of another which is conducted so forcefully that he feels invested, to some extent, with the identity of the other. He may learn about himself from the experience and suffering of the other which are transmitted to him, but his response tends to be self-forgetful in contrast to the egoism and heightened self-awareness implicit in the other bond. Both types

¹ Conrad employed more obviously, in his later novels, but less effectively, a pattern of doubling which approached the allegorical but was superficially like the recognition bond. Characters such as Jones and his cohorts who confront Heyst, Ortega in The Arrow of Gold and De Barral in Chance, clearly personify evil. But as Moser (Joseph Conrad) points out, their relationships to Heyst, Mr. George, and Anthony do not suggest that these heroes share within themselves the evil with which they are confronted.
can be dangerous to the individuals who experience them because of the revolutionary power demonstrated in the destruction of their isolation. And both generally lead to increased understand-
ing. But the sympathetic bond results either in an egoless com-
passion or in a complete absorption in the experience of the other, the object. The value of sacrifice, renunciation and compassion is affirmed by it. Criticism has dealt fully with the signifi-
cance of "recognition" in Conrad, but it has not sufficiently dis-
tinguished the occurrence of the sympathetic bond. Some of Con-
rad's tales contain both types of bonds. In fact, the process of recognition can prepare the subject for the development of the sympathetic bond. This is the case in "Heart of Darkness" and "The Secret Sharer." In the latter story Leggatt completes the Captain and represents his unconscious and the force of the ir-
renal. But he is also an individual separate from the Captain with whom the Captain can sympathize. An understanding of Leggatt's dual role is essential in avoiding misinterpretation. This story shows too how the sympathetic bond between individuals and the compassion which it expresses can reinforce the social bonds. As Walter E. Wright reveals, one kind of solidarity, the Captain's sympathy for Leggatt represented symbolically by the gift of the hat, brings about with the saving of the ship the second kind of solidarity, the "submergence in the tradition to which a Captain must belong."1 The sympathetic bond and the recognition of one-
sel in the double become the means, in the story, whereby the

1 Walter E. Wright, Romance and Tragedy in Joseph Conrad, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1949, p. 50.
Captain is sustained in a world of action. I will discuss "The Secret Sharer" in this introduction as an example of the operation of the sympathetic bond for the two reasons suggested above: it will allow me to show that the compassion of the sympathetic bond also sustains social organization and codes and is the motive force which lies behind their creation, and it reveals the differences between the two types of bonds yet shows that they can work together.
PART II: - "THE SECRET SHARER"

The Captain of "The Secret Sharer" is faced with a moral and psychological test in which failure would mean for him not only the virtual destruction of his career, but also the frustration of his efforts for self-knowledge and self-fulfilment. At the beginning of the story, the Captain recognizes his unfamiliarity with his crew, his ship and himself. He must achieve two ends during his initial voyage as master. He must prove himself worthy to command his ship and crew and to take his place in the tradition of service upon the sea, and he must attain a knowledge and mastery of himself. These two ends are necessarily related: the Captain cannot successfully master his ship in the "perfect communion of a seaman with his first command" without self-mastery, and the command of his craft demonstrates such self-mastery. The sympathetic bond links the two significantly and affirms that the basis of both self-knowledge and the codes of society lies in a sympathy for individual human suffering.

Although the Captain succeeds, the story offers no concessions to complacency or reassuring affirmations of unassailable values and traditional virtues. Dedication and self-sacrifice are not the all of human experience, nor does tradition offer sufficient scope for all of human aspiration. Leggatt is outside the service, yet he is superior in character to Archbold, who is, in spite of his "seven-and-thirty-virtuous years at sea," the incarnation in

2 Ibid., p. 118.
many crucial respects of all a Captain and a man: should not be. Archbold has not achieved the self-mastery necessary to command. He is one of those men "disdained by destiny or by the sea,"¹ but his complacency is finally destroyed by Leggatt. The Captain of our ship must also be shocked out of his complacency before he can be fit to command.

The events on board the Sephora provide an implicit commentary upon how the Captain must act as ship's master. He must discipline his emotions and curb his irrational impulses in order to take his place within the valuable tradition to which Archbold clings so tenaciously. But he cannot achieve this until he comes to terms with that part of himself represented by Leggatt. In his role aboard the Sephora, however, Leggatt had affirmed and upheld the traditions of the merchant service even as his actions carried him beyond it. He "'was an officer of that old coal wagon, anyhow.'"² The role which Archbold played on board the Sephora is duplicated on the Captain's ship by his first mate. When the Captain assumes full and confident command of the ship in the crisis which threatens its safety, he asserts the need of both discipline and audacity as it had fallen to Leggatt to do on the Sephora. His handling of the mate is an object lesson, a lesson which Archbold was in need of too. Throughout the story, the Captain feels as if Leggatt's experience were his, as if their two identities were one. The transference of identity implicit in the sympathetic bond operates when the Captain disciplines his

¹ Typhoon, p. 19.
despairing mate. It is Leggatt discipling Archbold and Leggatt choking the mutinous crew man.

It is through the operation of the sympathetic bond that self-mastery and dedication to the tradition become realities for the Captain. It reveals that these two ends are related to and dependent upon a commitment to humanity. They are achieved and human solidarity is affirmed by the Captain's sympathy for the isolated and suffering individual, Leggatt. The Captain's identification with Leggatt is more complete than Jim's recognition of himself in Brown, and the moral significance of the bond is ambiguous in a different way. Leggatt is not an embodiment, as is the case with Brown, of the evil within the Captain; rather, he represents the irrational and amoral forces within the mind of the Captain. These forces can be released in manifestations which are evil and destructive for men. But Leggatt symbolizes the Captain's unconscious, which is neither good nor evil. In terms of the "recognition" bond alone, the two characters combine to form a psychic unit. Yet the sympathetic bond is also present. Leggatt is a character in his own right in the story. An impression of his experience is transmitted to the Captain, who sympathizes with him. Leggatt does not pose the kind of threat to the Captain which Brown represented to Jim. The Captain is right to trust his sympathetic response. His vision of Leggatt suffering under the hot sun saves his ship. Nor is his compassion self-destructive, as is Ossipon's for Winnie in *The Secret Agent*, because the Captain acts upon it in time.
Setting is of vital significance in "The Secret Sharer." The initial and concluding scenes balance and contrast with each other to frame and interpret the story. The vision of the natural world which confronts the Captain is one not uncommonly faced by the Conradian hero: An immobility so complete that even the blue sea looks solid, an unbroken silence, and the total absence of human kind characterize the picture, one in which the human wanderer is an alien intruder. There is lurking behind the immediate impression an ominous foreboding of other, even stranger, regions as incomprehensible in design as the apparently abandoned fishing stakes which arbitrate the "domain of tropical fishes." These regions appear in the story as the chain of islands to which Koh-ring belongs; "the manner of life they harbor is an unsolved secret." Only one landmark "on which the eye could rest from the vain task of exploring the monotonous sweep of the horizon" offers itself—the grove of trees of the great Paknam pagoda and the miter-shaped hill on which it sits. The pagoda represents human faith, aspiration and hope. But the pagoda and Koh-ring are twins as certainly as Leggatt is the Captain's double; they combine to form the major symbol of the story. The merging of the man-made pagoda seen in the sunlight and the ominous and black natural threat that is Koh-ring suggests that faith must be founded on a knowledge of the dark side of man's nature and his precarious hold on existence. Leggatt.

1 "The Secret Sharer" in 'Twixt Land and Sea, pp. 91.
2 Ibid., p. 133.
3 Ibid., pp. 91-2.
is swallowed up in the darkness that surrounds Koh-ring, yet he pursues "a new destiny" that takes him "into uncharted regions."¹ The Captain is permitted to return to the tradition, to an established code that expresses man's faith in his own powers.

Though the Captain is acutely sensitive to his surroundings, he displays a fundamental misunderstanding of the sea and of himself in his responses and thoughts. One detail which seems out of harmony with his feelings is the "impeccable joint" made by the meeting of sea and shore "in one level floor half brown, half blue under the enormous dome of the sky."² The land and sea are part of the same "monotonous sweep of the horizon." There is a sameness about them to the view which seems to belie the Captain's response to the sea as a place to escape the more complex problems of living represented for him by the land, his rejoicing "in the great security of the sea as compared with the unrest of the land, in . . . [the] choice of that untempted life presenting no disquieting problems, invested with an elementary moral beauty by the absolute straightforwardness of its appeal and by the singleness of its purpose."³ Not only is the sea like the land in presenting opportunities for "disquieting problems" which require the devious exploration of self, but it can also embody these problems in forms as strange and startling as Koh-ring itself and which make a mockery of the Captain's belief that "the sea was not

² Ibid., p. 91.
likely to keep any special surprises expressly for my discomfiture."\(^1\)

The Captain certainly does not yet understand the nature of the test which he must face. Though he welcomes the start of the arduous voyage with his ship, the "appointed task of both our existences to be carried out, far from all human eyes, with only sky and sea for spectators and for judges,"\(^2\) he does not know that he cannot escape himself and that the physical universe alone is enough to challenge and intimidate any man. He does not yet see that man is powerless in the face of his isolation unless he knows himself and recognizes the claims of human solidarity. The glare which interferes with his sight and prevents him from seeing the rigging of the *Sephora* until the tropical darkness is imminent has psychological as well as physical relevance. He does not appreciate the significance of his feeling that, "with all that multitude of celestial bodies staring down at one, the comfort of quiet communion with her [his ship] was gone for good."\(^3\) The Captain is not so much in error in creating "that ideal conception of one's own personality every man sets up for himself secretly"\(^4\) as unaware of the uncharted depths of the mind and spirit which affect every man's personality and of the difficulty of accomplishing self-mastery.

\(^1\) "The Secret Sharer," in *Twixt Land and Sea*, p. 91.


of circumstances which moves inexorably to his realization of the irrational forces deep within himself. It produces the sleeplessness which prompts him to take upon himself the first anchor watch, an "unconventional arrangement" which threatens to disrupt the routine of his ship. The presence of the rope ladder left hanging over the side of the ship represents the breach of discipline committed by the Captain's unconscious which embodies his reaction against order and control and the beginning of his self-exploration, for the sea symbolizes the irrational in which his unconscious shares, that part of himself not subjected to discipline and the control of reason. He is made startlingly conscious of the existence of this element by the unexpected resistance of the ladder to his pull. The resistance is due, of course, to the presence of Leggatt, who gives definition to the Captain's unconscious as he emerges from the irrational element.

The manner of his appearance reveals, as we have seen, what he represents and his relationship to the Captain. He first presents to the Captain's view a vision of a headless corpse; his appearance in the water is "ghastly, silvery, fishlike." He is a primordial being whose nature is opposed to reason. The Captain leans far over the rail to look directly into the face "upturned exactly under mine." The Captain feels, in fact, after

1 "The Secret Sharer," in 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 98. Guerard analyzes this description of Leggatt in his Introduction (to 'Heart of Darkness' and 'The Secret Sharer'), p. 11. His discussion of "The Secret Sharer" is valuable and stimulating. But he does not, I think, properly distinguish Leggatt's dual roles, even though he makes the distinction himself.

2 Loc. cit.
he has given Leggatt a sleeping suit identical to his own, "as though I had been faced by my own reflection in the depths of a somber and immense mirror."¹ Leggatt is the Captain's double.²

The combining aspect of the recognition bond results in a psychological crisis in the Captain. Until the aspects of himself represented by Leggatt are fully recognized, faced, and re-integrated within his personality, the Captain suffers a spiritual fragmentation that threatens to destroy himself and his command. He endures mental and emotional exhaustion in keeping "invisible" the previously hidden and secret part of himself:³

... all the time the dual working of my mind distracted me almost to the point of insanity. I was constantly watching myself, my secret self, as dependent on my actions as my own personality, sleeping in that bed, behind that door which faced me as I sat at the head of the table. It was very much like being mad, only it was worse because one was aware of it.

At the climax of his inner turmoil, which occurs immediately before Leggatt sanely discusses his plans to leave the ship, the Captain feels himself "creeping quietly as near insanity as any man who has not actually gone over the border."⁴ His sensation of being in two places at once becomes most intense when he takes full command of the ship for the first time. Then he discovers that only his conscious faculties reside with him on deck; his uncon-

² Ibid., p. 104.
³ Ibid., pp. 113-14.
I was not wholly alone with my command; for there was that stranger in my cabin. Or rather, I was not completely and wholly with her. Part of me was absent... There are to a seaman certain words, gestures, that should in given conditions come as naturally, as instinctively as the winking of a menaced eye. A certain order should spring on to his lips without thinking; a certain sign should get itself made, so to speak, without reflection. But all unconscious alertness had abandoned me. I had to make an effort of will to recall myself back (from the cabin) to the conditions of the moment.

The implications of the bond between the Captain and Leggatt are not exhausted, however, by assuming that it is a process of "recognition" on the part of the Captain. Throughout their contact, the Captain feels invested with the other's identity. He feels established between them while Leggatt is still in the water a mysterious and intuitive communication. He understands Leggatt's character and experience immediately; he sees the events on board the Sephora "going on as though I were myself inside that other sleeping suit." Leggatt tells him that he has understood, "from first to last." What he has understood is—undeniably on the realistic rather than symbolic level at least—the experience of another person. Though the irrational impulses which have carried Leggatt outside the tradition are also present in the Captain, the sympathy which he feels is not

2 Ibid., p. 99.
3 Ibid., p. 102.
4 Ibid., p. 136.
for himself but for another whose claims upon his understanding and compassion are irresistible. Leggatt's assumption that the Captain understands fully is ambiguous throughout. When Leggatt interrupts his narration with, "'But what's the use telling you? You know!'" he is appealing both to the Captain's self-knowledge and to his sympathetic imagination. The persistent reminder that Leggatt is sane and that he thinks prevents us from forgetting that he is more than a symbol of the irrational and unconscious. And so does the Captain's perception that, "he was not a bit like me, really": "And I could imagine perfectly the manner of this thinking out—a stubborn if not a steadfast operation; something of which I should have been perfectly incapable." The Captain can "imagine perfectly" the qualities of Leggatt's mind, but he knows they are not his. He says that he could not have told a direct lie to Archbold, "for psychological (not moral) reasons." He is afraid of Archbold "putting my feeling of identity with the other to the test," not only because of the danger to his allegiance to the tradition represented by Leggatt, but also because he is afraid of failing Leggatt. The Captain has no moral scruples about lying for Leggatt, but "psychologically" he is committed to the tradition. It is for him "a matter of conscience to shave the land as close as possible." He must express con-


2 Ibid., p. 106.

3 Ibid., p. 120.

4 Ibid., p. 139. Only by doing so can he affirm his bond with Leggatt and transcend and master the irrational forces which he has felt within himself.
cretely his compassion for Leggatt while encountering and combating the destructive forces which the latter had revealed to him. And his acts during the critical moments exonerate Leggatt from any charge of failure to the tradition on the Sephora.

Leggatt as the Captain's unconscious and Leggatt as a character in the story merge in his tale of the events aboard the Sephora. He had killed the seaman under water, immersed in the destructive element, as the ship closed with an "awful sea" that drove the rest of the crew to the rigging. The cry of Murder! loosed by the crew and sustained by Archbold is made to seem absurd. Leggatt has been baptised in the irrational by "those mountainous seas that seemed ready every moment to swallow up the ship herself" and which receive the corpse of the man he has killed. Leggatt acted not against the tradition of the service, but outside it. He became a "strung-up force" holding tenaciously to life, but he had first acted on his own initiative because Captain Archbold had abandoned his command, had broken the chain of command on which the preservation of the code depended:

"I assure you he never gave the order. He may think he did, but he never gave it. He stood there with me on the break of the poop after the main topsaid blew away, and whimpered about our last hope--positively whimpered about it and nothing else--and the night coming on! To hear one's skipper go on like that in such weather was enough to drive any fellow out of his mind. It worked me up into a sort of desperation, I just took it into my own hands and went away from him, boiling, and ---But what's the use telling you? You know! . . . It wasn't a heavy sea--it was a sea

2 Ibid., pp. 124-25.
gone mad! I suppose the end of the world will be something like that; and a man may have the heart to see it coming once and be done with it—I don't blame anybody. I was precious little better than the rest. Only—I was an officer of that old coal wagon, anyhow—"

"I quite understand," I conveyed that sincere assurance into his ear... It was all very simple. The same strung-up force which had given twenty-four men a chance, at least, for their lives, had, in a sort of recoil, crushed an unworthy mutinous existence.

Archbold broke the order and discipline of the ship, while Leggatt remained "an officer of that old coal wagon" and acted for the best. Archbold did not have the strength of character to admit to himself that he had not given the order which saved the ship, nor could he believe that it was Leggatt's efforts which had. The only explanation he arrives at is, "'God's own hand in it..."¹ The Captain of the Sephora had been terrified by the gale as he had always been afraid of other men. Leggatt reveals the extent to which Archbold had not been able to assume full command of his ship in spite of his many years at sea when he describes the Captain's fear of his escaping:²

He was afraid of the men, and also of that old second mate of his who had been sailing with him for years—a greyheaded old hunbug; and his steward, too, had been with him devil knows how long—seventeen years or more—a dogmatic sort of loafer who hated me like poison, just because I was the chief mate. No chief mate ever made more than one voyage in the Sephora, you know. Those two old chaps ran the ship. Devil only knows what the skipper wasn't afraid of (all his nerve went to pieces

² Ibid., p. 107. The disintegration of the code on board the Sephora resembles the process of social dissolution which stuns and enchants characters in The Secret Agent and The Rover. Leggatt, like them, is thrown entirely on his own resources. Like Winnie, he feels the power of the irrational and inhuman that stands outside of and opposed to society, as well as the recoil which falls upon individuals from the breakup of social organization.
altogether in that hellish spell of bad weather we had)--of what the law would do to him--of his wife, perhaps. Oh, yes! she's on board.

Unlike Archbold, our Captain fights to attain command and overcomes the doubts and resistance of his officers, and he succeeds in saving the ship from disaster during a dangerous manoeuvre, whereas Archbold lost his head in an emergency like the first mate who cries out, "'Lost!'"¹

The mate when exposed to danger is "thunderstruck, and as it were, deprived of the moral support of his whiskers."² The many parallels in appearance and temperament between the mate and Archbold are not accidental. The "terrific character"³ of the mate's "frightful whiskers"⁴ conveys his puerile rectitude, the same unreflective rectitude which puts Archbold "under some pitiless obligation."⁵ His reaction to the Captain's dangerous manoeuvre parallels Archbold's response to Leggatt's "crime": "The stare of extreme surprise imparted an air of ferocity also to his eyes,

¹ "The Secret Sharer," in 'Twixt Land and Sea, p. 140. The ambiguous or dual nature of the Captain's bond with Leggatt and its strength is indicated in the repetition of this word when he thinks that Leggatt has disappeared: "'Saved,' I thought. 'But, no! Lost! Gone! He was gone!'" (p. 129). The passage refers to Leggatt, who would certainly be "lost" without the sustaining sympathy and understanding of another person which he needs. But it applies to the Captain too in that the achievement of command and the hope of self-mastery would both be "Lost" if Leggatt disappeared.

² Ibid., p. 140.
³ Ibid., p. 114.
⁴ Ibid., p. 94.
⁵ Ibid., p. 119.
and he looked truly terrific for a moment."¹ The first detail we learn of Archbold is that he has "a thin red whisker all round his face, and the sort of complexion that goes with hair of that color."² Both men substitute an uncritical commitment to the tradition for self-mastery and self-knowledge, and they fail the tradition because of it. They depend, symbolically, upon the "moral support" of their whiskers, upon the external role which they have assumed so completely and which hinders exploration of the self. The "spiritless tenacity"³ which is Archbold's main characteristic is, too, much like the mate's "painstaking turn of mind" which must "take all things into earnest consideration."⁴

In disciplining the mate, the Captain asserts the basic rightness of Leggatt's acts and the latter's superiority over Archbold. His sympathetic identification with Leggatt impells him to duplicate the dangerous situation that had threatened the Sephora by shaving the land as close as possible. He confirms Leggatt's fidelity while he tests himself, hopeful in the knowledge that Leggatt, as an officer and a "strong soul," will understand as he had understood Leggatt. In thus accepting fully the implications of his bond with Leggatt, the Captain achieves in the test the self-mastery which confirms him in the tradition. That sympathy for the suffering of another is the means of his double triumph

² Ibid., pp. 115-16.
³ Ibid., p. 116.
⁴ Ibid., p. 94.
is further suggested by an analogue in his treatment of the mate to his compassion toward Leggatt. This passage occurs shortly after the Captain has placed his own hat on Leggatt's head in their last meeting: "I caught his arm as he was raising it to batter his poor devoted head, and shook it violently." The shock he must give the mate does not preclude an expression of compassion for "his poor battered head."

The mate and Archbold lack sympathy or compassion and the imagination to come to grips with Leggatt's "crime." The absence of the former qualities in the two men heightens implicitly the value of the sympathetic bond in the story. The "lack of any great concern" for the welfare of the Captain disclosed by the mate is present in Archbold: "'What was the cause of it--some disease?' he inquired, without the least sympathy and as if he thought that, if so, I'd got no more than I deserved." From his devotion to the law can he alone take his bearings in the uncharted regions exposed by Leggatt. He feels a compulsion to surrender Leggatt to the "shore people" and thus free himself from his "densely distressed" perplexity:

To the law. His obscure tenacity on that point had in it something incomprehensible and a little awful; something, as it were, mystical, quite apart from his anxiety that he should not be suspected of "countenancing any doings of that sort." Seven-and-thirty virtuous years at sea, of which over twenty of immaculate command, and the last fifteen in the Sephora, seemed to have laid him under some pitiless obligation.


2 Ibid., p. 129.

3 Ibid., p. 116.

4 Ibid., pp. 118-19.
Archbold's reliance on external and fixed standards is not invested by compassion. The mechanical operation of social institutions is more important to him than their motive force. That the Captain would not have done as chief mate aboard the Sephora either is to his credit. A jury could not have dealt with Leggatt; his actions had been amoral, not immoral, and he must assume the responsibility for judgment of them himself:

"You don't suppose I am afraid of what can be done to me? Prison or gallows or whatever they may please. But you don't see me coming back to explain such things to an old fellow in a wig and twelve respectable tradesmen, do you? What can they know whether I am guilty or not—or of what I am guilty, either? That's my affair. What does the Bible say? 'Driven off the face of the earth.' Very well, I am off the face of the earth now. As I came at night so I shall go."

1 Johns, the Captain of the Sapphire in Conrad's first story, "The Black Mate," anticipates in several respects the character of Archbold and the mate. He is like the former in his self-righteousness and the latter in his perplexity about events. The Sapphire and the Sephora are alike in more than name; the relationship between Captain and mate on board each is strikingly similar. Johns' characteristics and his manner toward his officers anticipate ships' officers in other stories of whom Conrad is critical. His credulity reminds us of Burns in The Shadow Line and his attention to trifles of MacWhirr in Typhoon.

2 "The Secret Sharer," in 'Twixt Land and Sea, pp. 131-32. It is tempting to draw a comparison between Leggatt and Jim. They both affirm the value of the code in their separation from it, and their actions testify to human solidarity even in their isolation. Marlow must reconcile, like our Captain, the claims of his sympathy with the outcast and the claims of the code. Brierly cannot achieve this reconciliation when he feels its necessity, and he commits suicide. But Lord Jim is too complex to survey in a footnote. Cf. Mrs. Hay: "Lord Jim is Conrad's picaresque in the modern key, the story of an individual's self-assertion in the face of an uncomprehending society and incomprehensible fate. His 'victory' is measured by his ability to convince Marlow, who maintains the strength of the social code even while finding Jim's appeal to his personal vision of integrity 'irresistible'" (Political Novels, p. 177).
Leggatt has mastered himself, but he can no longer express this mastery within the tradition. Leggatt's behaviour when the Captain prepares to "make the acquaintance" of his ship suggests a trace of regret that he cannot share in the duties of the service. "He made a gesture—somewhat vague—a little mysterious, accompanied by a faint smile as if of regret."¹

The Captain's sympathy provides Leggatt, the man, with what he needs, the communion with and understanding of his fellows. Leggatt is reinforced by the sympathetic bond as much as is the Captain:²

"As long as I know that you understand," he whispered. "But of course you do. It's a great satisfaction to have got somebody to understand. You seem to have been there on purpose." And in the same whisper, as if we two whenever we talked had to say things to each other which were not fit for the world to hear, he added, "It's very wonderful."

His swim to the ship elucidates the dual role which he plays in the story. He had jumped into the water impulsively, in answer to a sudden temptation which overcame him. But he welcomed the presence of the ladder as providing a chance to emerge from the irrational. He wanted the company of his kind, and the ladder was his only link with humanity:³

"Your ladder—" he murmured... "Who'd have thought of finding a ladder hanging over at night in a ship anchored out here!... I didn't mind being looked at. I—I like it. And then you speaking to me so quietly—as if you had expected me—made me hold on a little longer. It had been a

² Ibid., p. 132. This reciprocal quality is a departure from the usual form of the sympathetic bond.
³ Ibid., pp. 110-11.
confoundedly lonely time—I don't mean while swimming... I don't know—I wanted to be seen, to talk with somebody, before I went on."

Although he wanted to swim on, he was grateful for the chance of communion with the Captain. Contact with anyone, however, would not have done, unless it had brought the sympathy and understanding which he needed and which confirmed his ties with all mankind. He had been lonelier aboard the Sephora than in the water. It is the light of the binnacle lamp by which the Captain's ship is steered that dispels momentarily the "warm, heavy tropical night"\(^1\) from about Leggatt's head. The riding light which "burned with a clear, untroubled, as if symbolic, flame, confident and bright in the mysterious shades of the night"\(^2\) became the "something to swim for," the first representation to his imagination of the shadowy ideal towards which he must now strive. It defines distance for him and gives direction to his progress—"it keeps him on a course and gives meaning to his defiance:"\(^3\)

"It was something to swim for. I couldn't see any stars low down because the coast was in the way, and I couldn't see the land, either. The water was like glass. One might have been swimming in a confounded thousand-feet deep cistern with no place for scrambling out anywhere; but what I didn't like was the notion of swimming round and round like a crazed bullock before I gave out; and as I didn't mean to go back... No." [Conrad's ellipsis]

His assertion of his independent destiny must, paradoxically, bear witness to that Human Solidarity manifested in his bond with the Captain. Though he is "'driven off the face of the earth'" to wander like Cain, he does not go "'naked like a soul on the

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2 Ibid., p. 96.
3 Ibid., p. 109.
Day of Judgment."¹ He says that he will freeze on to the sleeping-suit given to him by the Captain, the concrete demonstration of his bond with another as well as being "the garb of the unconscious life."² For Leggatt is sane with the sanity of an integrated personality. His quest is controlled by his baptism in the irrational, and his acceptance of this makes him "sane," makes him rational.

The Captain reintegrates his personality³ when he triumphs over the ominous mass of Koh-ring. The island threateningly manifests in symbolic form all that the Captain has learned and experienced of the irrational through his bond with Leggatt. The islands to which Koh-ring belongs are, to the outside world, an "unsolved secret."⁴ It embodies not only the irrational force of the sea, but also oblivion and annihilation and the negation of all manifestations of human identity. It presents a vision of death to the imagination of the Captain:⁵

When I opened my eyes the second view started my heart with a thump. The black southern hill of Koh-ring seemed to hang right over the ship like a towering fragment of the everlasting night. On that enormous mass of blackness there was not a gleam to be seen, not a sound to be heard . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Already she was, I won't say in the shadow of

³ In re-reading Guerard's Introduction to Heart of Darkness and The Secret Sharer after several years, I see that he cites Jung to make this point: "The psychologist Jung was to argue, some years later, that only such a descent, only such a traffic with the unknown within, can permit integration and enrichment of the personality" (p. 12).
⁵ Ibid., pp. 139-40.
the land, but in the very blackness of it, already swallowed up as it were, gone too close to be recalled, gone from me altogether. Then stillness again, with the great shadow gliding closer, towering higher, without a sound. Such a hush had fallen on the ship that she might have been a bark of the dead floating in slowly under the very gate of Erebus.

We are reminded that Leggatt describes the heavy seas in which he kills a man as something like the end of the world. But the key to the complete significance of the island lies in its shape. Like the hill on which the Paknam pagoda sits, Koh-ring is miter-shaped, and the surrounding topography is like the entrance to Bangkok:

It has got two hills and a low point. It must be inhabited. And on the coast opposite there is what looks like the mouth of a biggish river— with some town, no doubt, not far up.

The great Paknam pagoda has a double in Koh-ring. The faith and hope of the former is equalled in force by the nothingness and the irrationality of the latter. The Captain had taken a compass bearing of the Pagoda at the start of his voyage of self-discovery, but its conclusion is enacted in the shadow of Koh-ring. The opposition between the dark coast of Koh-ring and the sunlit entrance to Bangkok is like that between the light and dark imagery of "Heart of Darkness," but here it is not treated ironically.

Dedication to the service can be a sustaining ideal. It must be founded, however, on a knowledge of the dark and irrational side of man's nature and its alignment with the oblivion that threatens man in his isolation. Yet this recognition is not enough, by it-

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2 Ibid., p. 134.
3 Ibid., p. 125.
self, to make faith and dedication meaningful. Koh-ring and
the pagoda are counterparts as well as opposites. Man's faith
and hope embodied in codes and beliefs can also negate the self.
Leggatt can search for his ideal in the darkness, and nothingness
can inhabit the ideal represented by the pagoda. Man's ideals
and codes can prevail and the individual can retain his identity
and his commitment to the human community in his pursuit of them,
only if they are invested with the motive force of compassion.
If the Captain is superior to Leggatt in any sense, it is in his
ability to act upon his feeling of compassion.

The agent of the ship's safe passage round the island is, as
we have seen, the hat whose gift to Leggatt symbolizes the Captain's
most intense sympathy for him—"And I watched the hat—the expression
of my sudden pity for his mere flesh." The Captain's comp­
passion makes possible the successful defiance of the darkness
and preserves both himself and Leggatt. In the blackness surround­
ing Koh-ring, the Captain feels that the ship is gone from him al­
together; the hat becomes the "saving mark" for his eyes that per­
mits him to reclaim the ship. The triumph of the sympathetic bond
gives the Captain the "perfect communion of a seaman with his
first command" and with himself. Only through the expression of
human solidarity can the darkness of Koh-ring be transcended. And
it is this solidarity which gives significance to Leggatt's course
"into uncharted regions" from the water into which he lowers him­
selv­self "to take his punishment: a free man, a proud swimmer striking
out for a new destiny."

Leggatt and the Captain are now separate and complete individ­
uals. The Captain's compassionate recognition of Leggatt's human limitations ends the harmful effects of the identification. The identification would have been fatal had it continued because it could bring only the loss of the self and the triumph of the irrational. The self is found through sympathy for another person that also brings to the Captain a truth that transcends the recognition of the irrational in man and the universe. The sympathetic bond reveals the inescapability of human solidarity. This solidarity, expressed as it must be by compassion for man's weakness, is the foundation on which society and the tradition must be built.
CHAPTER II

"KARAIN"      "HEART OF DARKNESS"      "THE END OF THE TETHER"

"Do you see him? Do you see the story? Do you see anything? It seems to me I am trying to tell you a dream—making a vain attempt, because no relation of a dream can convey the dream-sensation, that commingling of absurdity, surprise, and bewilderment in a tremor of struggling revolt, that notion of being captured by the incredible which is of the very essence of dreams..."  

Three stories by Conrad contain the sympathetic bond and also reveal similar image patterns and thematic foundations. They are "Karain," "Heart of Darkness," and "The End of the Tether." These stories are among those by Conrad which have proved the most difficult to interpret, but an understanding of the sympathetic bond can clarify many contentious points. The relationship is seen most clearly and presented most pervasively in "The End of the Tether." I will examine it at greater length than "Heart of Darkness" for this reason and because I believe it has not received sufficient critical attention. The latter, and undeniably greater, work has, on the other hand, been discussed at length by most Conrad critics. "Karain" will be considered almost exclusively for its relevance to "Heart of Darkness." Its intrinsic worth is less than the importance it holds for an understanding of the latter work.

In all three stories lies are told out of a compassion for

1 "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, p. 82.
another person, and the sufferings of the central characters instruct and inform with sympathy the younger men who feel a bond with them. We can distinguish between the character, like Marlow, who learns and alters and whose bond with mankind is strengthened by his experience, and the one, like Kurtz, whose experience provides the instructing example. The latter could be called the object, the former the subject in that usually it is his responses and reactions which are important in the tale. The three stories also have in common a triangular relationship in which not only the subject but also a loved one is allied to the object. In "Heart of Darkness" the triangle is completed by the confrontation of Marlow and The Intended; the emphasis is on Marlow's reactions, and he displaces Kurtz at the apex of the triangular relationship. In "Karain," the title character divides his sympathetic response between Pata Matara and the latter's sister, and this conflict brings about the tragedy of the story. But a chain of experience is forged like that in The Secret Agent. Karain is the subject who receives an impression of the suffering of the sister and Pata Matara, and his own suffering is revealed to the European observers. Such a chain is incipient in "Heart of Darkness" in that Marlow, the receptive subject for the experience of both Kurtz and The Intended, would like to pass on an understanding of their experience to his audience. In "The End of the Tether," both Ivy and Van Wyk are subjects who receive an impression of Whalley's suffering. The interest centers in this case upon the object who experiences the suffering, upon the other, Whalley.

In "Karain," Conrad extended his theme of the conflict between loyalty and impulse, duty and egotism, with which he was concerned
in "The Lagoon," to a tentative scrutiny of the foundations of human ties. Karain is haunted by the spirit of Matara, the comrade he has killed, just as he had earlier been possessed by the vision of Matara's sister. His imagination cannot absorb or transcend his experience, the force and quality of which is emphasized by the sub-title, "A Memory." This alludes both to the narrator's vivid impressions of Karain, and to the latter's inescapable commitment to the two people whose experience has defined his life. The tragedy arose in the breakdown of the code of honour, before a superior and more persistent claim. The experiences of the other two characters make claims of sympathy and assistance upon Karain which are equally undeniable and illustrate implacably the force of human solidarity.

"Karain" to a remarkable degree is a preliminary study of the subject and material of "Heart of Darkness." The similarities reflect, of course, some of the constant preoccupations in almost all of Conrad's stories. Both express the necessity of recognizing and coming to grips with the irrational within man and nature, which we have seen in "The Secret Sharer." And both suggest that man's hopes and aspirations, as they are contained in his beliefs and social institutions, are vain and illusory unless founded on a knowledge of

1 Conrad said this about the relationship between "Karain" and "The Lagoon": ". . . I didn't notice then that the motif of the story is almost identical with the motif of "The Lagoon." However, the idea at the back is very different. . . ." (Tales of Unrest, pp. ix-x).

2 Karain's compulsive absorption in the memory of Pata Matara is basically the same as that apparent in a primitive form of the sympathetic bond found in some other stories. The haunting power of another's experience felt after the death of the sufferer is an important element in "The Inn of the Two Witches" and The Shadow Line, and is suggested in "The Black Mate." Burne and Tom exhibit such a bond in "The Inn of the Two Witches," as do, in a different way, Burns and the dead Captain in The Shadow Line. The sympathetic bond
man's limitations and the need for compassion. But almost every
detail of "Karain" is echoed and developed in "Heart of Darkness."
The similarities in narrative structure most clearly reveal the
identical purpose in the two stories. In each an exotic or rather
foreign narrator tells a dream-like tale of the suffering of a man
and a woman to an audience of skeptical Europeans. Karain and the
European gun-runners have the roles of Marlow and his audience
respectively; Pata Matara and his sister the roles of Kurtz and The
Intended. The correspondences are not total, however, primarily
because of the differences between Karain and Marlow. Karain is
not meditative like Marlow; his European audience must digest his
experience for him. The anomaly of having the audience who are to
be instructed more perceptive than the narrator disappears in "Heart
of Darkness." Karain's lack of introspection causes a radical split
in his personality represented by the conflict between the memory
which haunts him and the sun-lit world of illusions in which he
seeks to live. He has some of the qualities of both Kurtz and The
Intended, as well as of Marlow. In his illusions he is close to The
Intended; their destruction places him closer to Kurtz.

"Karain" and "Heart of Darkness" share a pattern of contrasting
light and dark imagery, and in them illumination or increased under­
standing is associated with the darkness. In attempting to negate
the memory of Pata Matara, Karain becomes an "actor" in a world
which acknowledges only the present, that stresses the finality of
continues to be felt after death in The Secret Agent and "Heart of
Darkness," but its roots are firmly established before the deaths
of Kurtz, Stevie, and Winnie. The former stories emphasize the
creation of a compelling bond in the minds of the survivors after
the deaths have occurred.
events; his stage, and this is the European's stage too, is the
world of affairs and impersonal action. He lives in "a land
without memories" in a "bottomless pit of intense light." His
activities on his sunlit stage are gestures to keep back the
darkness; he has tried to extend his domain till it is "bounded
only by the sky." However, memories reside beyond the hills which
limit his small plain, and their entrance cannot be permanently
resisted. Karain comes to the schooner at night, not clad "all
in white" as in the day, but like Leggatt, a "shadowy figure leap­
ing over the rail, straight out of the night." When gripped by
his memory, he recognizes not merely his disloyalty to a code of
honour and friendship, but much more irresistibly, the power of
the irrational to overcome man's limited achievements. Pata
Matara had become before his death an avenging spirit intent on
eradicating the light that sustained the illusion of peace and
security in which his sister lived. Karain's memory of Pata Matara
is like Marlow's of Kurtz in the sensation which it brings of the
conquering darkness threatening to overwhelm not only The Intended,

1 "Karain," in Tales of Unrest, pp. 4-6.
2 Ibid., p. 8.
3 Ibid., p. 22. The recognition of the irrational is presented at
one point as a reflection in a mirror, which is how the Captains of
"The Secret Sharer" and The Shadow Line first see Leggatt ("as
though I had been faced by my own reflection in the depths of a
somber and intense mirror") and Burns ("suddenly I perceived in the
mirror that there was another man in the saloon, standing a little
on one side and looking intently at me"): "'The sight of all this
made me think of him,' he went on, with his face near the glass . . .
and I could see another man, powerful and bearded, peering at him
intently" (pp. 53-4). Although Karain bears the same relation to
Pata Matara that Marlow bears to Kurtz, his own experience of the
irrational confronts the Europeans, as we shall see, like Leggatt
confronting the Captain and Kurtz confronting Marlow.
or the sister, but also all of the illusions about man's powers on which human society is based. This is the sense in which the idea at the back of Karain is so very different from that in "The Lagoon."

Karain is really trying to preserve, not a belief in his innocence, but one in the adequacy of human capacities and actions. This belief is destroyed by the memory of Pata Matara as Marlow's is by the memory of Kurtz. Like Marlow, Karain does not live through the failure directly in his own experience. He sees it expressed in the life of another person. Pata Matara, in pursuing his ideal of honour to its limits had become, like Kurtz, invested with the destructive power of complete negation. Pata Matara's role is not clearly developed, however. Rather, for his European audience, Karain's own career is an example of human failure as Kurtz' career is for Marlow; his trust in human achievements is like Kurtz' trust before his surrender to the wilderness and the trust supported by illusion which The Intended retains. Like Kurtz before his submission to the dark powers, "To no man had been given the shelter of so much respect, confidence, and awe." He is an object of great admiration and hears his praises sung in a "song of triumph."

Karain's European audience, however, are the people who must learn from his experience. He is like them in essentials, and he is attracted to them because their society is founded on illusions as much as is his own "conquered foothold." ¹ His "exulting eager-

¹ "Karain," in Tales of Unrest, p. 4. Karain is able to contain his memory while the old man lives because he bears for Karain "the possession of a burdensome secret of existence" (p. 5). He is called a wizard and a sorcerer, and Karain refers to him as "the wise old man." After his death Karain has no defense against the memory.
ness for endeavour"\(^1\) is also theirs, and their "unbelief" in any power greater than themselves fosters their illusion of security. "Belief" in the story is a belief in the dark visitation contained in Karain's dream-like tale. The dream, the memory, is true; the sensation of strength and of the adequacy of man that comes in the sunlight is false. The cabin of the schooner becomes "the only place of avenging belief" when "all the ghosts driven out of the unbelieving West by all the men who pretend to be wise and alone and at peace . . . come from the inhospitable regions of the earth . . . ."\(^2\) These are the same shades that follow the memory of Kurtz to the door of The Intended. The skepticism that is Marlow's saving grace in "Heart of Darkness" is an unbelief in illusions; it is the opposite of "unbelief." Marlow's lotus posture suggests that a necessary wisdom is lacking in the West. Karain is attracted to the Europeans because their "unbelief" promises peace. The life "of endeavour, of unbelief" is the same, and the West rather than the East is the land of illusions. Karain respects Queen Victoria because of the magnitude of her powers' apparent triumph over the darkness. The devastating ghosts are dispelled from about Karain by the gift of the Jubilee sixpence. It is the white man's charm against the darkness, "'the most powerful thing the white men know.'" It is as much a lie as the gift of Kurtz' last words by Marlow to The Intended, and it is given for the same reason--it is an expression of compassion for human inadequacy and

\(^1\) "Karain," in \textit{Tales of Unrest}, p. 15.  
\(^2\) \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 48-9.
suffering. Karain's predicament had awakened the sympathy of the Europeans. He had for them, "the power of the possessed—the power to awaken in the beholders wonder, pain, pity, and a fearful near sense of things invisible, of things dark and mute, that surrounds the loneliness of mankind."¹ The "illusion of unavoidable success" that transfigures Karain is The Intended's "cry of inconceivable triumph." But there is one truth that transcends the knowledge of the "conquering darkness"—the recognition of the need for compassion—and it is felt both by Marlow and the Europeans.

The identical function of the tales told by Karain and Marlow is apparent not only in what they say of them, but also in the similar descriptions of their effect given by the two English narrators. The English narrator of Karain says of the story he has heard, "It is undying, it is but a memory, and its vividness cannot be made clear to another mind, any more than the vivid emotions of a dream."² This narrator is sympathetic to Karain's story, whereas his counterpart in "Heart of Darkness" resists the non-straightforward yet strangely compelling influence of Marlow's tale. The unsympathetic narrator refers to another "of Marlow's inconclusive experiences."³ Marlow does not tell sailors' yarns which have "a direct simplicity": "... to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but out-

side, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of those misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine."¹ Karain says of his haunting memory, "It is only near you, unbelievers, that my trouble fades like a mist under the eye of day." Both story tellers tell tales which bring together the light of illusion and the dark truth. The impact results in a misty half-light in which no fact is straightforward, no illusion unaffected by the engulfing darkness. Karain does not understand his experience—he is possessed by it. Marlow attempts to grapple with what is even to himself, "not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light." The light which the tales of Karain and Marlow shed—like the light of the fog which surrounds Marlow's steamer—reveals the engulfing darkness. The imagery of Marlow's tale, in its frequent suggestion of "the spectral illumination of moonshine," is like that in The Ancient Mariner.² Like The Ancient Mariner, Marlow has returned from a journey of horrors which he has not fully understood, but he must be faithful to its memory. Kurtz' final remark in his "pamphlet"—"'Exterminate all the brutes!'"—comes to Marlow, "luminous and terrifying, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky."³ This revelation of man's failure is signaled in "Karain" by "a vivid flash of lightning" which accompanies his first attempt to speak

¹ "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, p. 48.
² See, especially, Elliott B. Gose, Jr., "Coleridge and The Luminous Gloom," PMLA.
his tale. The most persistent similarity, however, is that Marlow and Karain are present to their audiences as a voice throughout their tales. Just as the intention in both tales is to instruct the listeners, so both have the form of a work of art. Marlow is like an artist in the form he gives to his material and the comments he makes upon it. He organizes, presents, sifts and qualifies. His own personality infuses and at the same time is absorbed in his story, which is his voice. Conrad described the artist as a "voice" in an essay on Henry James: "The artist in his calling of interpreter creates (the clearest form of demonstration) because he must. He is so much of a voice that, for him, silence is like death . . ." Kurtz and Pata Matara are also voices—voices to Marlow and Karain as characters in a work of fiction are to the author.

Although Marlow knows that he does not understand his experience fully at all times, he is able, unlike Karain, to sift through it in a conscious attempt to arrive at its essential truth. We shall see that the final enlightenment which it yields is a knowledge of the need for compassion, and that this knowledge has transfigured all his judgments. We can fully appreciate the redeeming power of compassion only if we are aware of what Marlow is forced to discard on his mental journey to the one truth which survives. Marlow was forced to think and live through all his assumptions and beliefs and to reject or qualify all of them on his journey up the Congo. To fully reveal to his audience the significance of his experience and to capture its essence for himself, he must in his narration supply an impression of his character before his

journey and show the process that breaks down his values. Temperamentally, Marlow does not want to recognize man's limitations and the truth of the darkness any more than his audience does. But aided by the skepticism which has always tempered his acceptance of the illusions on which society is based and his fidelity to the memory of Kurtz, he is able to recreate the full process of discovery for his listeners.

The most persistent affirmation in Marlow's character and the one that dies the hardest is his commitment to his British heritage. Marlow's complacency must surely be suspect when he compares unfavourably the Romans and their empire to the British: "'Mind, none of us would feel exactly like this. What saves us is efficiency—the devotion to efficiency. But these chaps were not much account, really.'"\(^1\) This is the same Marlow who can say, "'I have a lot of relations living on the Continent, because it's cheap and not so nasty as it looks,'" and, "'There was a vast amount of red-good to see at any time, because one knows that some real work is done in there . . . . '"\(^2\) These simple affirmations are not in accord with the Marlow who has confronted his darker self in Kurtz. But Marlow is mocking himself and his defunct values and therefore his listeners, who have not yet made the journey into darkness. William B. Stein has made this point succinctly: "The self-mockery that pervades the Marlow recital, it seems to me, must operate to temper the ego climate of epic endeavour."\(^3\)

\(^1\) "Heart of Darkness," in *Youth*, p. 50.
\(^3\) Stein, "The Lotus Posture and 'The Heart of Darkness,'" in *Con-
at one point the complacent trust in hard work and the reliance on "surface-truth" which he had once shared with his audience:1

"When you have to attend to things of that sort, 

rad's 'Heart of Darkness' and the Critics, Harkness, p. 148. E.K. Hay reaches an opposite conclusion about Marlow's attitudes and remarks: "Marlow's tone of voice throughout the novel convinces me, nevertheless, that the irony in this scene the meeting with The Intended is Conrad's alone, that Marlow behaves here, as before consistently, as a punctilious, well-meaning British conservative" (Political Novels, p. 153, n. 107). However, most other critics have seen Marlow as deeply affected by his experience, and I believe that a closer examination of the irony and self-mockery of his comments aboard the yacht upholds the more usual view of him. Mrs. Hay says that "the Marlow of Lord Jim believes that even dangerous knowledge is worthy of public examination, whereas the Marlow of Heart of Darkness believes the contrary: that dangerous knowledge must be suppressed" (p. 129). But Marlow makes his "dangerous knowledge" public aboard the yacht; Mrs. Hay, I believe, does not fully understand the function of the lie which I have sought to show by a comparison with "Karain" and "The End of the Tether." Mrs. Hay is right in suggesting that Marlow mistrusts his own faculties, but mistaken in saying that Marlow assumes his audience will see in his tale exactly what he sees: "Marlow is forever fussing about reality and unreality, but it is his own rather than his listeners' faculties that he mistrusts. We are cautioned at the start that this Marlow will see the meaning of the episode 'only as a glow brings out a haze' Heart of Darkness, p. 48. And still this Marlow identifies himself with his English listeners to the point of assuming that they will see in the story neither less nor more than he sees himself. His listeners accept in silence. They are utterly inert, except for one trivial rejoinder p. 94. Nothing is feared from them besides boredom, and nothing is expected of them. And this makes sense because in fact the Marlow of the story is himself incapable of decisive moral insight" (pp. 130-31). Marlow's task is, like the artist's, to make them see. Mrs. Hay does not take into account the fact that Marlow must overcome their resistance and involve them in his experience gradually; she would remove Marlow's didactic intention in narrating his story. Marlow identifies with his English listeners, certainly, but he sees in them what he was before his journey. And one can be capable of "decisive moral insight" only in the world of straightforward facts and surface truths which his story destroys. Mrs. Hay is also unlucky in the surface reading of the work. I count at least three interruptions (pp. 114, 115, as well as p. 94), although we have to surmise what is said in the other two.

1 "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, pp. 93-4.
to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality—the reality, I tell you—fades. The inner truth is hidden—luckily, luckily. But I felt it all the same; I felt often its mysterious stillness watching me at my monkey tricks, just as it watches you fellows performing on your respective tight-ropes: for—what is it? half-a-crown a tumble—"

The image of the tight-rope which occurs to Marlow is reminiscent of the wire on which the Lilliputian ministers must perform in *Gulliver's Travels* in order to win favour and advancement. Marlow is forced to partially retract his critical comment, however, so as not to antagonize further the listeners whose resistance to Marlow's tale is already so great:

"Try to be civil, Marlow," growled a voice, and I knew there was at least one listener awake besides myself.

"I beg your pardon. I forgot the heartache which makes up the rest of the price. And indeed what does the price matter, if the trick be well done? You do your tricks very well. And I didn't do badly either, since I managed not to sink that steamboat on my first trip."

The unperceptive English narrator, not Marlow, invokes the sacred fire of colonizing and exploration:

Hunters for gold or pursuers of fame, they all had gone out on that stream, bearing the sword, and often the torch, messengers of the might within the land, bearers of a spark from the sacred fire. What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth. . . . [Conrad's ellipsis] The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empires.

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1 I am indebted to a graduate student at The University of British Columbia, Michael Sinclair, for suggesting that *Gulliver's Travels* may have been in Conrad's mind to some extent when he wrote "Heart of Darkness." In *The Secret Agent*, Inspector Heat feels as if he were on a tight-rope which the Assistant Commissioner is shaking.

2 "Heart of Darkness," in *Youth*, p. 94.

3 Ibid., p. 47.
Conrad has the same narrator describe the Accountant aboard the Nellie unknowingly in a way which ominously foreshadows his colleague in the jungle: "The Accountant had brought out already a box of dominoes, and was toying architecturally with the bones."\(^1\) The gift of inhuman abstraction which permits the other accountant to remain indifferent to the exploitation so vividly epitomized by the grove of death is not so far away from the men on the Nellie. The bones of men can be toyed with as easily as the bones of elephants.

The above analysis of Marlow's inherited values has touched on his three main defenses against the darkness—hard work, the "devotion to efficiency," and "an unselfish belief in the idea" behind conquest.\(^2\) Hard work stood Marlow in better stead than the others. It provided him with the "surface-truth" that kept at a distance the "overwhelming realities" of the world of the river he encountered on his journey to Kurtz. But he had to face these realities in the other man, and in turning to Kurtz, he says, he "turned to the wilderness really."\(^3\) The "devotion to efficiency" and the "idea" behind conquest are even less effective in redeeming those who possess them. Marlow is first made aware of the limitations of efficiency in the person of the impeccable chief accountant of the trading company. Marlow admits to a respect for the fellow, but he couples his praise with a remark that implies a final and irrevocable condemnation: "'... bent over his

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\(^1\) "Heart of Darkness," in *Youth*, p. 46.


books, [he] was making correct entries of perfectly correct transactions; and fifty feet below the doorstep I could see the still tree-tops of the grove of death."¹ Marlow's commentary operates on two levels here as it does throughout; his English listeners can appreciate the praise of efficiency, but they must also be made to see its limitations. When Marlow turns to Kurtz in his "choice of nightmares," it is in the full knowledge that he has passed into an area of experience where the value of efficiency does not apply at all. When the manager refers to Kurtz' "'method [which] is unsound,'" Marlow's reply is, "'No method at all.'"²

Marlow had first sided with Kurtz, however, not because he seemed to embody efficiency as Mrs. Hay suggests,³ but in reaction against the moral vacuity of the brickmaker, the "papier-mache Mephistopheles." Kurtz had at least "'come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort.'"⁴ Marlow makes clear on several occasions that his skepticism had rejected utterly the propaganda of the "gang of virtue," but he saw also that the whole colonial enterprise was unjustified unless redeemed by the idea behind it. Yet when he introduces the subject to his audience, he suggests

¹ "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, p. 70. Hewitt cites this passage in A Reassessment. I am indebted to Hewitt for many of the primary assumptions of this part of my analysis.
² Ibid., pp. 137, 138.
³ Hay, Political Novels, pp. 140-41.
that such a hope is fatuous:¹

"The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to..." Conrad's ellipsis

He broke off.

This description of the idea as something like an idol anticipates the worship of ivory that Marlow encountered in the service of the company and that he contrasts with the truth of the wilderness.² Dedication to the "idea," to an abstraction or principle in place of the "deliberate belief" to which Marlow later refers, is susceptible to a subtle form of egoism that flourishes on greed, and its description brings to mind the "unspeakable rites" offered to Kurtz. It is the blind devotion to the "idea" possessed by The Intended and originally by Kurtz which is tested and found wanting. The "idea" becomes a "sentimental pretence" unless it takes account of the darkness.

Marlow's "deliberate belief" founded on man's "inborn strength" is his final defense against the darkness before his meeting with Kurtz. It is at this point the crystallization of his personal hope and his faith in man's capacities, and it gave him a "voice" to transmit his moral vision. The slowly forming conviction that the natives who live in "'the night of first ages'" are not inhuman, share in fact in human solidarity, calls forth the affirmation

¹ "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, pp. 50-1.
² Ibid., p. 76.
that is the deepest spring of his character:¹

"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. . . . The mind of man is 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 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 won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags—rags that would fly off at the first good shake. No; you want a deliberate belief. An appeal to me in this fiendish row—is there? Very well; I hear; I admit, but I have a voice, too, and for good or evil mine is the speech that cannot be silenced."

The affirmation is inadequate in this form, however, though it takes account of the darkness. The moral vision which accompanies it is not destroyed by Marlow's meeting with Kurtz—it is strengthened. But his belief in man's inborn strength changes to a conviction of the need for compassion for man's weakness. This conviction is fostered by the sympathetic bond that draws him to Kurtz. The bond is much more than a "recognition" of his darker side in Kurtz; it is the expression of a profound sympathy for the suffering of another. Its foundations are laid only when he "sees" Kurtz for the first time—when he sees that Kurtz is willing to test himself against the darkness divested of all supports and "acquisitions":²

"They were at a loss for an adequate motive. As to me, I seemed to see Kurtz for the first time. It

¹ "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, pp. 96-7.
² Ibid., p. 90.
was a distinct glimpse: the dugout, four paddling savages, and the lone white man turning his back suddenly on the headquarters, on relief, on thoughts of home—perhaps; setting his face towards the depths of the wilderness, towards his empty and desolate station."

Kurtz is also a voice against the darkness, a voice that contributes to the "one immense jabber" of human failure. We are made aware that Kurtz' fate carries with it Marlow's trust in his "belief" when he feels as if he has been "'robbed of a belief'" in his despair at not hearing Kurtz. But the recognition that his hopes depend upon Kurtz' success is accompanied by a darker one. He sees also that the act of throwing his shoes overboard is a submission to the irrational and that he, like the natives, is prepared in fact to worship Kurtz:

"The other shoe went flying unto the devil-god of that river. I thought, By Jove! it's all over. We are too late; he has vanished—the gift has vanished, by means of some spear, arrow, or club. I will never hear that chap speak after all,--and my sorrow had a startling extravagance of emotion, even such as I had noticed in the howling sorrow of these savages in the bush. I couldn't have felt more of lonely desolation somehow, had I been robbed of a belief or had missed my destiny in life. . . . [Conrad's ellipsis] Why do you sigh in this beastly way, somebody? Absurd? Well, absurd. Good Lord! mustn't a man ever---- Here, give me some tobacco." . . .

The "recognition" has been adequately analyzed by the critics, but the degree of the identification and its roots in compassion for human failure have not been stressed sufficiently. Marlow's continuing attraction to Kurtz is not explicable as merely a fascination with the evil revealed within himself. And he remain-

1 "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, p. 115.
2 Ibid., p. 114.
ed faithful to the memory of Kurtz because his last words had been a "moral victory"—one which demonstrated that human suffer­ing and guilt are not merely meaningless phenomena of the darkness. The moral vision that sees "'The horror!'" also carries for Mar­low a conviction of human solidarity that makes imperative the need for compassion:

"I like to think my summing-up would not have been a word of careless contempt. Better his cry—much better. 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, when a long time after I heard once more, not his own voice, but the echo of his magnificent eloquence thrown to me from a soul as translucently pure as a cliff of crystal."

The flash of light in the darkness reveals not only human failure but also this need. The "regular flicker of the tiny flame" that his audience sees when Marlow lights his pipe (after the revelation of his own failure in the passage on p. 114 quoted above) is the same light of human society—like "a flash of lightning in the clouds." Civilization is a defiance of the darkness made possible only by compassion. Kurtz attains the first insight—he sees the weakness and suffering of mankind. It is left to Marlow to express universal sympathy.

This further truth which Marlow sees separates him immeasurably from Kurtz, but its recognition was made possible only by the sympathetic bond between them. Because Marlow saw embodied in Kurtz a test of human strength, the sympathetic bond grew as the recognition of failure increased and remained in effect afterwards. The force of the sympathetic bond which Marlow feels with Kurtz

1 "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, pp. 151-52.
invests him with Kurtz' most striking attributes. Kurtz had been worshipped as a God; he had preached and rallied disciples. Marlow assumes on board the Nellie, the "pose of a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus-flower." We see him, at the end of the story, "in the pose of a meditating Buddha," and he is first described as having "sunken cheeks, a yellow complexion, a straight back, an ascetic aspect, and, with his arms dropped, the palms of hands outwards, resembled an idol." This description of Marlow is reminiscent of Kurtz' emaciated frame. Kurtz had "presented himself as a voice." To the auditors listening in pitch darkness, Marlow seems "no more to us than a voice." But Marlow and Kurtz are, of course, finally unlike. Through his identification with Kurtz, Marlow has learned a further truth, one that transcends, "'The horror! The horror!'" As W.B. Stein says, "But, of course, the nature of his enlightenment is different from Kurtz' and at this point his lotus posture defines itself." The similarities in the descriptions of the two men emphasize the similarities in their initial values and beliefs and the destruction of them which they have shared. But the image of the meditating Buddha indicates the extent to which Marlow's vision has transcended the truth of the conquering darkness. His

1 "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, p. 162.
2 Ibid., p. 46.
3 Ibid., p. 113.
4 Ibid., p. 83.
5 Stein, "The Lotus Posture and 'The Heart of Darkness,'" in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' and the Critics, p. 236. I read Stein after writing the first draft on "Karain" and "Heart of Darkness."
voice is the voice of the artist intent on reproducing the nuances of his material, the voices that pursue him. His sympathy for Kurtz is fundamentally the sympathy of one suffering human being for another, and as such it perpetuates the moral victory which Marlow sees in Kurtz' final cry, "'The horror! The horror!'"

The creation of the sympathetic bond occurs, symbolically, in the scene in which Marlow brings Kurtz back to the steamer. Marlow sees "the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself." In bringing him back to the boat, Marlow experiences, in symbolic terms, the full weight of Kurtz' humanity:¹

"I kept my head pretty well; but when I had him at last stretched on the couch, I wiped my forehead, while my legs shook under me as though I had carried half a ton on my back down that hill. And yet I had only supported him, his bony arm clasped round my neck—and he was not much heavier than a child."

He feels the burden of man's mortality and the weakness of his powers before the "possession of an accursed inheritance [the earth] to be subdued at the cost of profound anguish and excessive toil."² The identification with Kurtz is so complete that Marlow feels in the illness that overwhelms him as if he is experiencing Kurtz' "extremity," Kurtz' illness:³

"And it is not my own extremity I remember best—a vision of greyness without form filled with physical pain, and a careless contempt for the evanescence of all things—even of this pain itself. No! It is his extremity that I seem to have lived through."

¹ "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, p. 145.
² Ibid., p. 95.
³ Ibid., p. 151.
The above passage has a striking parallel in another scene. He had felt the burden equally heavy when he carried the body of the African helmsman: "'His heels leaped together over the little door-step; his shoulders were pressed to my breast; I hugged him from behind desperately. Oh! he was heavy, heavy; heavier than any man on earth, I should imagine!'"\(^1\) He has accepted the burden of their humanity and mortality, and therefore his own; he recognizes their common bond and his bond with them. This identification of Kurtz and the helmsman suggests that Marlow's sympathy for Kurtz expresses a general truth for Conrad. The lives and deaths of the two men are inextricably intertwined in Marlow's memory. He says that he is "'not prepared to affirm the fellow [Kurtz] was exactly worth the life we lost in getting to him. . . . He steered for me--I had to look after him, I worried about his deficiencies, and thus a subtle bond had been created, of which I only became aware when it was suddenly broken. And the intimate profundity of that look he gave me when he received his hurt remains to this day in my memory--like a claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment.'"\(^2\) Marlow is as affected by the death of the African as he is by Kurtz' demise, and a sympathetic bond is formed in both cases. As several critics have pointed out, both Kurtz and the native lack restraint, are trees "swayed by the wind." This lack results in their ultimate degradation, but it also strengthens their claims of sympathy upon Marlow. The need for compassion is as general in Conrad as the claims of human solidarity are universal.

\(^1\) "Heart of Darkness," in *Youth*, pp. 119-20.

We have already seen that Marlow's loyalty to Kurtz' "'moral victory'" accounts for his saving The Intended when he hears "'the echo of his [Kurtz] magnificent eloquence thrown to him from a soul as translucently pure as a cliff of crystal.'" Marlow would not be acting with fidelity to the memory of Kurtz were he to permit its destruction of The Intended. When hearing of Kurtz' degradation from the Russian harlequin, he feels that, "'never, never before, did this land, this river, this jungle . . . appear to me so hopeless and so dark, so impenetrable to human thought, so pitiless to human weakness.'"1 The wilderness had taken on Kurtz, "a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion.'"2 The Russian's judgment of Kurtz is accurate: "'This man suffered too much.'"3 Kurtz is a victim of the irrational; he is invested with the "'conquering darkness.'" But the knowledge of the darkness is only half of the truth which Marlow has learned. Kurtz resembles an idol of death in Marlow's first sight of him:4

"I could see the cage of his ribs all astir, the bones of his arm waving. It was as though an animated image of death carved out of old ivory had been shaking its hand with menaces at a motionless crowd of men made of dark and glittering bronze. I saw him open his mouth wide—it gave him a weirdly voracious aspect, as though he had wanted to swallow all the air, all the earth, all the men before him."

The same vision of the conquering power of death and the darkness transferred to Kurtz appears to Marlow as he approaches the door.

1 "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, p. 127.
2 Ibid., p. 131.
3 Ibid., p. 129.
4 Ibid., p. 134.
... before the high and ponderous door, between the tall houses of a street as still and decorous as a well-kept alley in a cemetery, I had a vision of him on the stretcher, opening his mouth voraciously, as if to devour all the earth with all its mankind. He lived then before me; he lived as much as he had ever lived—a shadow insatiable of splendid appearances, of frightful realities; a shadow darker than the shadow of the night, and draped nobly in the folds of a gorgeous eloquence. The vision seemed to enter the house with me... the heart of a conquering darkness. It was a moment of triumph for the wilderness, an invading and vengeful rush which, it seemed to me, I would have to keep back alone for the salvation of another soul."

1 "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, pp. 155-56. Mrs. Hay brings up two very important points that must be considered in a study of "Heart of Darkness." She asks if the jungle is a symbol of "evil" or "truth." Conrad disclosed that it might be either or both when he suggested a confusion or uncertainty in Marlow's mind. ("'And outside, the silent wilderness surrounding this cleared speck on the earth struck me as something great and invincible, like evil or truth, waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion'" (p. 76)). Mrs. Hay also notes that the natives are as "'virtuous' and humane in their society as he [Marlow] is in his own." She states: "It is important to decide, most crucially, whether 'the jungle' and all it signifies for Conrad in 'Heart of Darkness' is evil in the sense of intrinsically alien to man's social instincts, as both Guerard and Moser imply, or whether primitive life represents the 'existential' truth of human relationships which has had to be suppressed by racialist 'civilizers.' Moser writes that 'going into the jungle seems to Marlow like travelling into one's own past, into the world of one's dreams, into the subconscious.'... he concludes that... it means the truth, the darkness, the evil, the death which lie within us, which we must recognize in order to be truly alive.' [Achievement and Decline, p. 80, quoted in Hay, p. 148, n. 91] The implication is that in siding with Kurtz, Marlow is in some Freudian or Nietzschean way attracted into a revolt against the cage that society has made for him. But he makes plain that the savages in the jungle are as 'virtuous' and humane in their society as he is in his own. His revolt is only against the falsehoods that are ruining his society. If he finally suppresses the truth he has seen, it is not because it is evil but because he is by nature conservative in the political sense and suppresses it for the good of white society, as Chamberlain suppressed the truth about Rhodes" (p. 148). The wilderness, I believe, can mean both evil and truth for man. It is, it seems to me, a symbol for the fundamental truth of man's existence—not the "'existential' truth of human relationships"—but his metaphysical isolation in a world of physical power totally
Marlow lies finally, not to deny the truth, but "'for the salvation of another soul.'" Marlow's feeling of the identity between Kurtz and the girl develops during the meeting. The dark potential within her light is manifested in his sense of again witnessing the jungle rites to which the sick Kurtz had been attracted "'amongst confused columnar shapes of intense blackness,'"¹ the counterparts of the long windows in The Intended's drawing-room. The suffering of the two merges in Marlow's vision. Their "'extremity,'"² their mortality, are inseparable:

"I saw her and him in the same instant of time--his death and her sorrow--I saw her sorrow in the very moment of his death. Do you understand? I saw them together--I heard them together. She had said, with a deep catch of the breath, 'I have survived' while my strained ears seemed to hear distinctly, mingled with her tone of despairing regret, the summing up whisper of his eternal condemnation."

indifferent to and unaffected by man. It is amoral like Koh-ring, not moral or immoral. But man shares in the irrational power of nature, and it can manifest itself destructively in man. The wilderness is "alien to man's social instincts" because society is founded on illusions about man's strength. Only a recognition of man's limitations and the need for compassion can make society "true." The natives are certainly as "virtuous" as the whites; they are neither more nor less capable of "restraint" or surrender. They share man's common fate. "Primitive life" in the jungle is not exactly the same as "'the jungle!'" as a symbol of darkness. But one must certainly agree that the natives are at home in Africa, as Mrs. Hay points out, and that this makes them superior to the white men of the Company whose illusion of power leads them into evil and exploitation.

Mrs. Hay notes the many parallels which Conrad draws between the Congo and England. The point is, I think, that the darkness of the wilderness dwells within all men and resides in London as well as in the jungle. Marlow's audience must be made to comprehend this, to recognize that their feeling of superiority to the Africans is a sham. Mrs. Hay forgets in her condemnation of Marlow that it is he who makes these parallels. (See, for example, pp. 70, 71 of "Heart of Darkness").

¹ "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, p. 140.

² Ibid., p. 157.
This same conflict between the vengeful truth of death and a life sustained by illusions occurs, as we have seen, in the choice which Karain must make between Pata Matara and the sister. The function of the lie in "Karain" as an expression of compassion for human weakness has already been discussed. The lie in "Heart of Darkness," however, is more complex because it also resolves the conflict which, in "Karain," is resolved by the killing of Pata Matara. We can gain a fuller understanding of the implications of the lie told to The Intended by examining this conflict in the other story.

Karain's bond with Pata Matara began as an intense expression of common friendship, but certain similarities to Marlow's "devotion" to Kurtz soon become apparent during their long quest. Karain nurses Pata Matara through illness, but more significantly, he follows him into timelessness:

"We never knew rest; we never thought of home, for our work was not done. A year passed, then another. I ceased to count the number of nights, of moons, of years. I watched over Matara. He had my last handful of rice; if there was water enough for one he drank it; I covered him up when he shivered with cold; and when the hot sickness came upon him I sat sleepless through many nights and fanned his face. He was a fierce man, and my friend."

The temple image which occurs twice in "Heart of Darkness" is also present in a different form; the description of the idols is like the picture of death which Kurtz presents to Marlow in the latter's first glimpse of him:

"We lost ourselves in the fields, in the jungle;

1 "Karain," in Tales of Unrest, p. 34.
2 Ibid., p. 32.
and one night, in a tangled forest, we came upon a place where crumbling old walls had fallen amongst the trees, and where strange stone idols—carved images of devils with many arms and legs, with snakes twined round their bodies, with twenty heads and holding a hundred swords—seemed to live and threaten in the light of our camp fire.

Pata Matara's vengeful pursuit of his sister and her Dutch lover suggests the shades of the wilderness that accompany the memory of Kurtz to the door of The Intended. He appears not as a character in a story with individual traits, but as an embodiment of revenge. Pata Matara also has "'big sunken eyes'" like Kurtz.¹ The vision of Pata Matara which pursues Karain is the vision of Kurtz which follows Marlow. "'He ran by my sister, without footsteps, whispering, whispering—invisible and heard.'"¹ As an embodiment of destructive truth, he threatens the security founded on illusion that is the world of the sister.

Karain finds that he must choose between loyalty to Pata Matara and his idealized vision of the sister. The problem is insoluble because both embody a truth which by itself is only a half-truth. Pata Matara is knowledge of the darkness without compassion—the sister, compassion without a knowledge of the darkness. Her life is more unreal because founded on illusion, but Karain's first response to her is a genuine sympathy for human suffering:²

"Thrice Matara, standing by my side, called aloud her name with grief and imprecations. He stirred my heart. It leaped three times; and three times with the eye of my mind I saw in the gloom within the enclosed space of the prau a woman with streaming hair going away from her

¹ "Karain," in Tales of Unrest, p. 41.
² Ibid., pp. 30, 32.
land and her people. I was angry—and sorry.
Why? . . . Matara brooded by the fire. I sat and thought
and thought, till suddenly I could see again
the image of a woman, beautiful, and young,
and great and proud, and tender, going away
from her land and her people."

The mingling of anger and sorrow foreshadows the combination of
anger and pity which are Marlow's emotions when confronted with
the assurance of The Intended. Karain is angry that she should
believe in her ability to defy the dark power of revenge, sorrowful
over her suffering. The description of the sister also prefigures
another beautiful woman separated from someone or something she
loves—Kurtz' black mistress. This reflects not only
the close connection between the two women in "Heart of Darkness,"
but also the superiority of the black mistress whose world is not
a sham. Karain's vision of the sister is from then on coloured
by illusion, and the black mistress does not come to mind again.

The girl becomes for Karain the idealized embodiment of human
sympathy and love, and he spares her by killing Matara. Karain
has found that his loyalties and sympathies cannot be narrowly
restricted, that the claims of human solidarity can be irresistible.
But Karain's response to her memory is tinged with egoism;
he pities himself and dreams of the security and comfort which
are illusory. He projects his own hardships upon his persistent
vision of the girl until the bond which he feels exists between
them sustains and comforts him:

"In my sleep I saw her face, and was both joyful
and sorry. . . . I thought, walking dizzy and

1 "Karain," in Tales of Unrest, pp. 33, 35, 36. The vision of
the girl in Karain's imagination seems to merge with the projection
of the anima archetype from his unconscious. This archetypal
weary in sunshine on the hard paths of white men—
I thought, She is there—with us!

She gave me courage to bear weariness and hardships. Those were times of pain, and she soothed me

The fire of anguish burned in my breast, and she whispered to me with compassion, with pity, softly—as women will; she soothed the pain of my mind; she bent her face over—the face of a woman who ravishes the hearts and silences the reason of men. She was all mine, and no one could see her—no one of living mankind! Stars shone through her bosom, through her floating hair. I was overcome with regret, with tenderness, with sorrow.

Like The Intended, she is called "'beautiful'" and "'faithful.'"

The big house in which the sister lives surrounded by flowers and cultivated fields is a symbol of human society threatened by the darkness. She sits on a bench in the sunlight "'counting the increase of her pearls.'" When Karain returns at last to his

concept of Carl G. Jung's conveys very forcefully the roles of the girl in Karain's imagination: "... in the realm of...

[man's] psyche there exists an image of the mother and not only of the mother, but also of the daughter, the sister, the beloved, the heavenly goddess, and the earth spirit Baubo. ... she stands for the loyalty which in the interests of life he cannot always maintain; she is the vital compensation for the risks, struggles, sacrifices which all end in disappointment; she is the solace for all the bitterness of life. Simultaneously, she is the great illusionist, the seductress who draws him into life—not only into its reasonable and useful aspects but into its frightful paradoxes and ambivalences where good and evil, success and ruin, hope and despair counterbalance one another" (Carl G. Jung, "The Syzygy: Anima and Animus," from Aion, in Psyche and Symbol, Violet S. de Laszlo, ed., New York, Doubleday & Co., 1958, p. 11).

For Karain the girl presides over the union of his most personal and individual aspirations and the most general and universal urge to transcend one's identity, to unite with the other. What began as a particular response to the suffering of an individual woman enlarges to a longing for union with the ideal form of universal qualities. This longing for the ideal becomes, in turn, inseparable from Karain's private longing for a particular woman, and as such it is subject to frustration. Karain had also created an ideal image of Queen Victoria analogous to the image in his imagination of the sister and his mother: "... we came to suspect that the memory of his mother ... mingled somehow in his mind with the image he tried to form for himself of the far-off Queen whom he called Great, Invincible, Pious, and Fortunate" (p. 13).

world of illusions, he steps out into the pearly light that transfigures the bay.¹

Karain preserves the illusion before the avenging destructive-ness of Pata Matara's attack: "'Matara burst out of the thicket; before him the petals of the torn flowers whirled high as if driven by a tempest.'" But he finds that he is now haunted by another vision, that his sympathetic bond has been transferred to Matara whose fate claims him. His idealized vision of the human spirit is destroyed by the disillusionment which comes to him when the girl does not recognize him, and his memory of Matara represents the knowledge of human weakness and mortality against which only the old man gives him confidence.² The lie gives him peace, but his memory remains with the Europeans. The experience leaves little impression on the narrator, but it has greatly affected Jackson whom he meets in London. Like his counterpart in "Heart of Darkness," the narrator describes the "falling gloom" which threatens London without understanding it:³

"My dear chap," I cried, "you have been too long away from home. What a question to ask! Only look at all this."

A watery gleam of sunshine flashed from the west and went out between two long lines of walls; and then the broken confusion of roofs, the chimney-stacks, the gold letters sprawling over the fronts of houses, the sombre polish of windows, stood resigned and sullen under the falling gloom. The whole length of the street, deep as a well and narrow like a corridor, was full of a sombre and ceaseless stir. Our ears were filled by a headlong shuffle and beat of rapid footsteps and an under-

¹ "Karain," in Tales of Unrest, p. 51.
² Ibid., pp. 41, 42.
³ Ibid., p. 54.
lying rumour—a rumour vast, faint, pulsating, as of panting breaths, of beating hearts, of gasping voices. Innumerable eyes stared straight in front, feet moved hurriedly, blank faces flowed, arms swung.

The imagery suggests not only the latter story, but also *The Secret Agent* in its picture of the street, "deep as a well and narrow like a corridor." Like the Captain in "The Secret Sharer," the Europeans "had been called to the very gate of Infernal Regions to judge, to decide the fate of a wanderer coming suddenly from a world of sunshine and illusions."¹ Although Leggatt does not come from a world of illusions, the darkness here is the same as that of Koh-ring. The non-human and the irrational in which man shares threaten society and man's hopes in both tales, and they also reveal man's mortality and powerlessness here.

The lie which Conrad tells The Intended resolves the conflict that was insoluble for Karain.² Its primary function is, as we have seen, "'for the salvation of another soul,'" and in telling it, Marlow is true to the moral vision of Kurtz' last words. But the lie is the perfect device for this resolution for other reasons as well. In the lie, Marlow remains true to all aspects of his experience. A lie has for Marlow a "'taint of death, a flavour of mortality'" about it, and his deception of The Intended

¹ "Karain," in *Tales of Unrest*, p. 45. Cf. "Such a hush had fallen on the ship that she might have been a bark of the dead floating in slowly under the very gate of Erebus" ("The Secret Sharer," p. 140).

² Conrad may have seen already in "Karain" the possibility of letting the central character use a lie to resolve the conflict. "'I murmured to her in the night. Matara said sleepily sometimes, 'To whom are you talking? Who is there?' I answered quickly, 'No one' . . . [Conrad's ellipsis] It was a lie!'" (p. 34).
carries with it a recognition of man's limitations, of his mortality:  

"You know I hate, detest, and can't bear a lie, not because I am straighter than the rest of us, but simply because it appalls me. There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies—which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world--what I want to forget. It makes me miserable and sick, like biting something rotten would do. Temperament, I suppose."

The lie is a witness to the truth of human inadequacy and suffering. It does not deny the truth, the knowledge of the darkness—rather, it is a tribute to its power. And it affirms Marlow's bond with Kurtz in mortality and corruption for Marlow shares, temperamentally, the preference for the light. The lie emphasizes the precarious nature of civilization and the need for it to be founded on compassion. The Intended shares in all of Kurtz' faults. In saving her, Marlow expresses his sympathy for Kurtz' failure and suffering and opposes the inhuman ideal which she supports. The lie does more to emphasize The Intended's tie with the wilderness than the truth could have done.

The saving lie is finally prompted by another identification. Just as Marlow feels a bond with both Kurtz and the helmsman, and the similarities of the two are stressed, so The Intended is identified with Kurtz' black mistress:

"She put out her arms as if after a retreating...

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1 "Karain," in *Tales of Unrest*, p. 82.

2 "Heart of Darkness," in *Youth*, pp. 160-61. Wilfred S. Dowden has pointed out the link between the two women in his article, "The Light and the Dark: Imagery and Thematic Development in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,*" (Rice Institute Pamphlet, XLIV (April 1957), 33-51, quoted in article, "The Light and Dark Lie," in Conrad's *'Heart of Darkness' and the Critics*, Harkness, ed., pp. 158-60: "This girl had been anticipated by the tragic figure of the native woman who stretched her bare arms over the water toward the departing steamer. . . . The girl and the native woman are kindred spirits" (p. 158).
figure, stretching them black and with clasped pale hands across the fading and narrow sheen of the window. Never see him! I saw him clearly enough then. I shall see this eloquent phantom as long as I live, and I shall see her, too, a tragic and familiar Shade, resembling in this gesture another one, tragic also, and bedecked with powerless charms, stretching bare brown arms over the glitter of the infernal stream, the stream of darkness. She said suddenly very low, 'He died as he lived.'

"'His end,' said I, with dull anger stirring in me, 'was in every way worthy of his life.'

"'And I was not with him,' she murmured. My anger subsided before a feeling of infinite pity."

Marlow's compassion for the black woman, "tragic also, and be­
decked with powerless charms," is added to his sympathy for Kurtz, and the result is a "'feeling of infinite pity'" that en­compasses The Intended as well. Marlow had at first been annoyed at the white woman's pretentions, a dull anger had stirred him because the tragedy of the dark woman had been closer to the truth. Though threatening and ominous like the land itself, she is at home in it. She is not an alien intruder, and she is worthy of compassion as a suffering and fallible individual:¹

"She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and

¹ "Heart of Darkness," in Youth, pp. 135-36. The superiority of the black mistress, whose life is not a sham and whose extremity deserves our sympathy, is apparent in a passage in which she is contrasted to the intruding whites of the company and their "'flabby, pretending, weak-eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly'" (p. 65): "'I pulled the string time after time. They broke and ran, they leaped, they crouched, they swerved, they dodged the flying terror of the sound. 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."

"'And then that imbecile crowd down on the deck started their little fun, and I could see nothing more for smoke,'" (pp. 146-47). The whites shooting at the woman are like the French gunboat "firing into a continent" (p. 62).
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."

But his sympathy for suffering humanity is now all embracing. Without it, life would be "'too dark--too dark altogether. . . .'"

The effect of Marlow's last words is heightened by our view of him sitting "apart, indistinct and silent, in the pose of a meditating Buddha."¹

¹ "Heart of Darkness," in *Youth*, p. 162. Mrs. Hay reveals, I think, the significance of the absence of the lotus flower. However, she regards it as a criticism of Marlow. But the point is, I believe, that all men share in corruption. "To his fellow Englishmen in this moment of wisdom early in the novel Marlow resembles a Buddha preaching in European clothes and without a lotus flower." Later, Marlow will repeatedly fret over the unsuitability of European clothes. As to the lotus, if it symbolizes incorruptibility, he will indeed be forced to do without it. One may reasonably recall here too the Buddha's flight into meditation, away from a decadent society (*Political Novels*, p. 136). Although Stein restricts himself to a discussion of the lotus posture, he shows the importance of sympathy, of "egoless compassion," in the story. His conclusions about the significance of the lotus posture are in accord with my analysis of the total story. "In an exercise of arduous spiritual discipline, symbolized in his physical bearing and studied introversion, 'worn, hollow, with downward folds and drooped eyelids, with an aspect of concentrated attention,' he lives through, to the very limit, a particular role in life. And in suffering its consequences, he fathoms and exhausts its contents. He descends into his own hell of fear, desire, and fleshly limitations, bearing all the suffering of his attachment to matter. At the last moment, he resists the attraction which Kurtz acknowledges. He breaks free from the forces of the flesh. With the story of his spiritual journey told, he sits in the inturned lotus posture, detached from the conditions, the victories, and the vicissitudes of time. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Although qualified to enter nirvana, like the true Bodhisattva, Marlow remains in the world to work for the salvation of all people. In his stage of enlightenment he teaches what his descent into the imperfections of the human soul has taught him—egoless compassion. Cancelling out all personal desire and fear, he has made available to humanity the gift of complete renunciation. To every suffering, striving creature, trapped in the karmic processes (enslavement to matter), he offers the inexhaustible wisdom of selflessness.
This interpretation, without the slightest exaggeration, emerges out of scrupulous focus on the structure of the story. A vision of spiritual reality is framed in the Buddha tableaux" ("The Lotus Posture and 'The Heart of Darkness,'" Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' and the Critics, p. 147).
There are striking parallels between "Heart of Darkness" and "The End of the Tether." Both Kurtz and Whalley seek to make their lives the affirmation of an idea. Kurtz tries to make his actions attest to the validity of an ideal of colonizing and civilizing; Whalley feels not only that the workings of divine Providence are manifest in his own life and career, but also that he can act as an agent of Providence in furthering the welfare of his daughter. The benevolence of both men is naive and egotistical, and their ideals and sensibilities are put to a terrible test and found wanting. The benevolence which Kurtz feels towards the savages is exploded with his words, "'exterminate all the brutes!'" and Whalley's love of his daughter, which expressed primarily a selfish gratification, is made profound and meaningful only with the destruction of his belief in Providence. Both men commit acts of moral degredation, and both discover horror and negation. They are left at death with only an essential vision in a moment of terrible experience. Kurtz' vision is contained in the words, "'The horror! The horror!'" which Marlow affirms is a belief, while Whalley reaffirms his essential bond with Ivy while accepting his guilt in the moment of his suicide.

In both works, the trials undergone by the older men become an inspiration to the younger men, Marlow and Van Wyk, whereby they are reconciled to humanity. The younger men develop an egoless compassion for their fellows, Marlow more so than Van Wyk,
and they both tell a lie to affirm their bond with the older men. In doing so they express the recognition of their mortality and their personal involvement with human suffering. But the essential affirmation of the sympathetic bond in the first work lies with Marlow, in the second with Whalley. This suggests a basic difference in focus in the two tales. Although all four men learn, the reader is fully a witness, and is drawn to participate in the actual process of learning, in the experience of only one man in each work. Again it is Marlow in the first tale, Whalley in the second. Van Wyk fades away at the end of the second story. There is also no need for a confrontation between him and Ivy, and Ivy is a minor figure compared to the Intended. "The End of the Tether" is less subtle in its structure and development, and the importance of Whalley's ideals, such as his belief in Providence, is more explicit than in the treatment of Kurtz' values.

Captain Whalley felt a genuine pleasure from living: "he was at home in life." But the kind of trust he placed in life was inadequate because it did not take account of human suffering. It was too much like the artificial luxuriance supplied by the paintings of his wife for their home on the Condor, "garlanded as if for a perpetual festival with an unfading wreath." Whalley had escaped the common trials of human life. He walked "without a stoop, as though his big shoulders had never felt the burden of the loads that must be carried between the cradle and

1 "The End of the Tether," in Youth, p. 171.
2 Ibid., p. 172.
the grave"¹:

... generally his mind seemed steeped in the serenity of boundless trust in a higher power. Mr. Van Wyk wondered sometimes how much of it was due to the splendid vitality of the man, to the bodily vigour which seems to impart something of its force to the soul.²

Van Wyk's cynical assessment of the sources of the older man's belief in Providence, the attribution of it to the accident of his physical constitution, seems to be borne out by the facts of Whalley's life.³ Significantly, the emptiness of his faith is revealed by the accident of his blindness, which permits him insights into life that had escaped him before:⁴

Surely God would not rob his child of his power to help, and cast him naked into a night without end. He had caught at every hope; and when the evidence of his misfortune was stronger than hope, he tried not to believe the manifest thing.

In vain. In the steadily darkening universe a sinister clearness fell upon his ideas. In the illuminating moments of suffering he saw life, men, all things, the whole earth with all her burden of created nature, as he had never seen them before.

Sometimes he was seized with a sudden vertigo and an overwhelming terror; and then the image of his daughter appeared. Her, too, he had never seen so clearly before. Was it possible that he should ever be unable to do anything whatever for her? Nothing. And not see her any more? Never.

Why? The punishment was too great for a little presumption, for a little pride. And at last he came to cling to his deception with a fierce determination to carry it out to the end, to behold her once more with his own eyes.

² Ibid., p. 293.
³ Whalley at one point comes close to recognizing this himself. "Give up! Never! When one is thoroughly weary all sorts of nonsense come into one's head" (p. 185).
⁴ Ibid., p. 324.
This passage reveals that the discovery of the inadequacy of his faith only strengthened his love for his daughter. The sympathetic bond remained as the one thing that gave his existence meaning. He feels closer to his daughter in suffering. The passage also dramatizes Whalley's rebellion against the concept of Providence which had previously guided him. His increasing defiance emphasizes the replacement of Providence in his beliefs by an acceptance of his mortality and a sympathy for human suffering.

Various parallels between Whalley and Massy exist in the story to emphasize the universality and inescapability of the human condition. Whalley's faith is paralleled by Massy's conviction that he can discover a principle underlying the chance results of the Manila lottery:

For days together, on a trip, he would shut himself up in his berth with them: the thump of the toiling engines pulsed in his ear; and he would weary his brain poring over the rows of disconnected figures, bewildering by their senseless sequence, resembling the hazards of destiny itself. He nourished a conviction that there must be some logic lurking somewhere in the results of chance. He thought he had seen its very form.

Both faiths in an order to the phenomena of the world are vain and misplaced. Whalley's pride had been inseparable from his belief and from the benevolence whose bestowal on his daughter he so much relished:

For the rest he considered he was reaping the true reward of his life by being thus able to produce on demand whatever was needed. He had not enjoyed himself so much in a way since his wife had died.

He had hoped to take the place of Providence in providing for his daughter. Even in his defiance of what he regards as God's will

1 "The End of the Tether," in Youth, p. 266.
2 Ibid., p. 175.
"Not even the sign of God's anger could make me forget her"—1 he believes that a principle of justice has been violated in the "visitation" of his affliction. "He had not thought he had deserved it."2 He is forced to fall back on the only thing that afford him any certainty—his sympathetic bond with his daughter, for which he gives up his belief in Providence:3

"... I suppose, the blessed know the secret of grace in God's dealings with His created children... I don't. I know only the child He has given me."

Whalley's sense of outrage and injustice is mirrored darkly in the character of Massy, and the latter's wounded pride is another parallel. The arguments over Massy's coat take on a symbolic significance when we recall that it is the same coat, weighted down with scrap iron, which brings about the destruction of the ship:4

"When I think how I let you lord it over my ship! Do you remember how you used to bullyrag me about my coat and your bridge? It was in his way. His bridge!"

Both men fall into a destructive course when their pride is offended. Whalley's pride had been based on his belief in Providence, Massy's on his ownership of the Sofala.

Whalley's defiance of Providence is described in terms of the descent from Heaven to Hell of a fallen angel. Sterne feels an "awestruck indignation... at the mad and sombre resolution

1 "The End of the Tether," in Youth, p. 301.
2 Ibid., p. 301.
3 Ibid., p. 304.
4 Ibid., p. 319.
that ... seemed to set at nought the common rule of conscience and pretended to struggle against the very decree of Providence."¹

He regards Whalley as a man who had "stood up against God Almighty Himself."² Massy complains that negotiating with Whalley is like "dealing with the devil"³ and that Whalley is a "'blind devil'" who drove him to wreck the ship.⁴ But it was the manner of Whalley's arrival on board the Sofala that had most impressed Massy and that suggests a fall from heaven:⁵

He seemed to have fallen on board from the sky ... Massy had been struck dumb by astonishment in the presence of that imposing old man with a beard like a silver plate, towering in the dusk rendered lurid by the expiring flames of sunset ... It was a dream. He would presently wake up to discover the man vanished like a shape of mist.

The specific act which begins the descent into moral degradation is not the closing of a deal with the corrupt Massy, but rather the acceptance of the need to give a false impression of himself:⁶

He had never before allowed anybody to remain under any sort of false impression as to himself. Well, let that go—for her sake. After all, he had never said anything misleading—and Captain Whalley felt himself corrupt to the marrow of his bones.

¹ "The End of the Tether," in Youth, p. 254.
² Ibid., p. 255.
³ Ibid., p. 233.
⁴ Ibid., p. 331.
⁵ Ibid., p. 270. The theme of rebellion is also emphasized by the description of Whalley as "having been cast out, like a presumptuous Titan, from his heaven" (p. 305).
⁶ Ibid., p. 214.
The significance of the lie as an emblem of man's weakness and corruption has already been discussed fully. Whalley doesn't recognize the moral dangers in his position:¹

No; there was not much real harm in men; and all the time a shadow marched with him, slanting on his left hand—which in the East is a presage of evil.

He is clearly wrong to underestimate the capacity for evil in men, but the full significance of this allusion is not apparent until the next page, a jump that spans three years in time, where we hear Massy say, "'I could never understand that new mania of yours of having this Malay here for your shadow, partner.'"² The Serang is not, of course, evil, but Whalley's reliance upon him because he is himself unfit to command, is evil. The "presage of evil" has become concrete and dangerous.³

The physical correlative of the moral hell into which Whalley has fallen, the Sofala, contains devils who are pitiful rather than rebellious, however. For Massy, life had become "a sort of inferno—a place where his lost soul had been given up to the torment of savage brooding."⁴ In spite of his shiny black jacket⁵ and the "blackened mass" of lottery results over which he pours,⁶

² Ibid., p. 216.
³ The threat of vengeance and destruction inherent in the situation, and Whalley's dependence upon the Serang reminds us of Karsin's predicament and his dependence upon his sword carrier: "Captain Whalley . . . and the little Malay Serang at his elbow, like an old giant attended by a wizened pigmy" (p. 219).
⁴ Ibid., p. 269.
⁵ Ibid., p. 233.
⁶ Ibid., p. 265.
the descriptions of Massy suggest not so much a demonic vitality and ruthless will to evil as they do an absurd madness. Even when loaded down with the scrap iron in the pockets of his jacket, there is something "passive and sad" in the quietness of his "motionless black eyes."¹ Jack, the mad second engineer, who at one point seems to be completely black in his face and figure,² retains an affection for Massy that is human sympathy perverted, that expresses a sympathetic bond inverted:³

"Massy! I love the dirty rascal. He would like to see his poor old Jack starve—but just you look where he has climbed to. . . ."

Whalley's first judgment of Massy --"in the end--a poor devil"--⁴ is accurate, but not for the reasons he believed. As we have already seen, Whalley had underestimated the capacity for evil in men:⁵

Captain Whalley believed a disposition for good existed in every man, even if the world were not a very happy place as a whole. In the wisdom of men he had not so much confidence. The disposition had to be helped up pretty sharply sometimes, he admitted. They might be silly, wrongheaded, unhappy; but naturally evil--no. There was at bottom a complete harmlessness at least. . . . [Conrad's ellipsis]

Faith in one's fellow men cannot be based on a naive optimism, on the belief that men are all basically good. Although Massy is to be pitied, he is still capable of great harm. Whalley's sympathy

¹ "The End of the Tether," in Youth, p. 323.
² Ibid., p. 274.
³ Ibid., p. 312.
⁴ Ibid., p. 215.
⁵ Ibid., p. 289.
for Massy increases like Marlow for Kurtz, in proportion to his knowledge of the capacity for evil within himself and of Massy's suffering. He admits to Van Wyk that he had traded on Massy's misery.\(^1\) But he comes to feel in Massy's presence a sense of human suffering and demands of human sympathy which transcend private guilt and approach the egoless compassion attained by Marlow:\(^2\)

> The near presence of that man brought with it always a recrudescence of moral suffering for Captain Whalley. It was not remorse.

Whalley feels the inevitability of his fact, of his descent into human fallibility and evil. What he gains is a vision of suffering which transcends his personal sense of guilt.

We have already seen that the destruction of Whalley's beliefs intensified his sympathetic bond with Ivy. But conversely, he had joined the Sofala only because of the motives which sprang from this bond; his beliefs were destroyed because he acted on his bond with Ivy. Whalley endured the trials in his heart of darkness, the Sofala, because of the sympathetic bond, and not, as was the case with Kurtz, because the strength of his ideals had demanded the supreme test. The sympathetic bond leads Whalley to a revelation of human misery and to an awareness of his connection with all men, including Massy. But because the emphasis is so totally upon Whalley's

\(^1\) "The End of the Tether," in *Youth*, p. 300.

\(^2\) *Ibid.*, p. 325. Whalley's sensitive awareness of Massy's plight and of his own responsibility toward him is dramatically revealed in the following dialogue: "'You have made me curse the day I was born. ...' /'Mr. Massy,' said Captain Whalley, suddenly, without stirring. / The engineer started violently. / 'If that is so I can only beg you to forgive me.'" (p. 234).
experience aboard the **Sofala**, his bond with Ivy is not very fully
developed in the story. Their relationship is ambiguous because,
although Conrad takes pains to emphasize the depth of feeling
that exists between father and daughter, there is the suggestion
in its treatment that Ivy, like The Intended, lacks perception
and understanding:¹

He never told her of his difficulties, and she
never enlarged upon her struggle to live. Their
confidence in each other needed no explanations,
and their perfect understanding endured without
protestations of gratitude or regret. He would
have been shocked if she had taken it into her
head to thank him in so many words, but he found
it perfectly natural that she should tell him
she needed two hundred pounds.

But the final vision in the story, as Ivy reads her father's
letter, is one of a complete emotional accord that transcends the
hardships of her existence:²

She read no more that day. The hand holding up
the paper to her eyes fell slowly, and her slender
figure in a plain black dress walked rigidly to
the window. Her eyes were dry: no cry of sorrow or
whisper of thanks went up to heaven from her lips.
Life had been too hard, for all the efforts of his
love. It had silenced her emotions. But for the
first time in all these years its sting had depart­
ed, the carking care of poverty, the meanness of a
hard struggle for bread. Even the image of her hus­
band and of her children seemed to glide away from
her into the gray twilight; it was her father's
face alone that she saw, as though he had come to
see her, always quiet and big, as she had seen him
last, but with something more august and tender in
his aspect. . .

There had been whole days when she had not thought
of him at all—had no time. But she had loved him,
she felt she had loved him after all.

¹ "The End of the Tether," in *Youth*, p. 177.
The novel affirms, not the worth of Whalley's strength and fortitude, but rather the value of his experience as an example to Ivy of the need for compassion. The final moral vision it affords lies in the enlightenment which comes with her recognition of the power of sympathy.

The influence of Van Wyk of Whalley's trials is clearly traced in the story. Van Wyk returns to civilization because he has seen the significance of Whalley's sacrifice and dedication. Our initial impression of Van Wyk is reminiscent of Heyst in Victory and of the Planter of Malata:

Fastidious, clever, slightly sceptical, accustomed to the best society... he possessed a latent warmth of feeling and a capacity for sympathy which were concealed by a sort of haughty, arbitrary indifference of manner arising from his early training; and by a something an enemy might have called foppish, in his aspect—like a distorted echo of past elegancies.

Cynical of human motives and skeptical of the benefits of progress, Van Wyk's view of life is the opposite of Whalley's naive optimism. But the sympathetic bond between the two transcends both Van Wyk's skepticism and Whalley's faith. Van Wyk has for many years surrendered to the sweetness of isolation, of retreat from mankind. He has sought to deny his ties with common humanity in his retreat to an Eden-like seclusion. But Van Wyk finds himself committed to mankind once more when he lies to Sterne about Whalley's affliction. The strength of the sympathy which Whalley has engendered

1 "The End of the Tether," in Youth, p. 280.
2 We see the attraction which seclusion and withdrawal have for Van Wyk in a passage which describes his walk back to his house from the Sofala, pp. 289-90.
in Van Wyk overcomes his passivity and negation. It represents a bond between men that transcends particular beliefs and objective truth about the physical universe, that affirms human solidarity in the face of the knowledge that the universe is indifferent to man's aspirations and desires:

He sat on the verandah with a closed book on his knee, and, as it were, looked out upon his solitude, as if the fact of Captain Whalley's blindness had opened his eyes to his own. There were many sorts of heartaches and troubles, and there was no place where they could not find a man out. And he felt ashamed, as though he had for six years behaved like a peevish boy.

His thought followed the Sofala on her way... It seemed necessary that he should come out into the world for a time at least. He had money—something could be arranged; he would grudge no time, no trouble, no loss of his solitude. It weighed on him now—and Captain Whalley appeared to him as he had sat shading his eyes, as if, being deceived in the trust of his faith, he were beyond all the good and evil that can be wrought by the hands of men.

Whalley's experience does indeed carry him "beyond all... good and evil." The reef on which the Sofala goes down suggests moral and physical disaster by its very shape, but its architectural form hints at a further symbolic function parallel to that of the island of Koh-ring, which in "The Secret Sharer" is a negation of all manifestations of human identity and human solidarity:

She followed a broad lane of water, dropping astern, one after another, these crumbs of the earth's crust resembling a squadron of dismasted

1 "The End of the Tether," in Youth, pp. 315-16.
2 Ibid., pp. 241-43.
hulks run in disorder upon a foul ground of rocks and shoals. Some of these fragments of land appeared, indeed, no bigger than a stranded ship.

The palpitating cloud of their wings soared and stooped over the pinnacles of the rocks, over the rocks slender like spires, squat like martello towers; over the pyramidal heaps like fallen ruins, over the lines of bald boulders showing like a wall of stones battered to pieces and scorched by lightning——.

The Captain of "The Secret Sharer" tempts the black mass of Kohrning to affirm his bond with Leggatt; his triumph over the island represents the strength of human solidarity. There is no physical correlative in action in "The End of the Tether" by which Whalley can make the lesson of human solidarity which he has learned concrete except in his own death. In "The End of the Tether" the significance of the sympathetic bond is revealed, not in success, but in failure and disaster.

The gift that comes to Whalley from his experience is a gift of knowledge. He accepts the knowledge that he shares Massy's guilt and suffering when he loads his own pockets with the scrap iron that has been the instrument of the destruction of the Sofala. But the legacy he thus accepts is one that is common to all men. The pieces of metal have been gathered by Massy from a locked and iron-enclosed storage room filled with the residue of many lives, a "Capharnaum of forgotten things" that express in transubstantiation the ideal significance of human experience:¹

Almost opposite his berth, across the narrow passage under the bridge, there was, in the iron deck-structure covering the stokehold fiddle and the boiler-space, a stateroom with iron sides, iron roof, iron-plated floor, too, on account of the

heat below. All sorts of rubbish was shot there: it had a mound of scrap-iron in a corner; rows of empty oil-cans; sacks of cotton-waste, with a heap of charcoal, a deck-forgé, fragments of an old hencoop, and a brown felt hat, discarded by a man dead now (of a fever on the Brazil coast), who had been once mate of the Sofala, had remained for years jammed forcibly behind a length of burst copper pipe, flung at some time or other out of the engine-room. A complete and impervious blackness pervaded that Capharnaum of forgotten things.

This record is like that contained in the memory of Jack, the second engineer, which issues forth in a persistent and uncontrollable stream during his drunken reveries. The brown felt hat bears the same testimony to the need for human sympathy as the hat in "The Secret Sharer" which preserves the ship against the destructive power of Koh-ring. This description is particularly effective because it recalls an earlier one of Whalley in which we see him sitting as if in a trance in a Capharnaum of his own mortality:

... Captain Whalley, filling the depths of the wicker-chair, seemed to sit benumbed in a

1 "The End of the Tether," in Youth, p. 223: "He remembered the names of men that had died, that had gone home, that had gone to America: he remembered in his cups the names of men whose connection with the ship had been so short that Massy had almost forgotten its circumstances and could barely recall their faces. The inebriated voice on the other side of the bulkhead commented upon them all with an extraordinary and ingenious venom of scandalous inventions."

2 "The End of the Tether" anticipates the treatment of the same theme in "The Secret Sharer." There are also many parallels in the two stories in the use of symbolism. The sea and the shore merge in the earlier story as they do in the latter. The river that cuts into the land to Batu Beru is like the two rivers in "The Secret Sharer."

3 "The End of the Tether," p. 294. Capharnaum is another form for the name, Capernaum, the place in Galilee where Christ taught the doctrine of transubstantiation. "Capernaite" is, "A controversial term for a believer in transubstantiation." (Oxford Universal Dictionary)
canvas tent crudely lighted, and used for the storing of nautical objects; a shabby steering-wheel, a battered brass binnacle on a stout mahogany stand, two dingy life-buoys, an old cork fender lying in a corner, dilapidated deck-lockers with loops of tin rope instead of door-handles.

The universality of Whalley's experience is emphasized by this parallel. Our vision of Whalley merges with that of a nameless dead man whose only monument is the hat invested with symbolic value.

The ironic yet affirmative use of the word Capharnaum hints at the significance of the ship's name, the Sofala. Conrad frequently adopts Judaeic-Christian terms and concepts to his own secular view of the human condition. The striking parallel with the names of two other ships, the Sapphire of "The Black Mate" and the Sephora of "The Secret Sharer," must surely be more than accidental. The limitations of three faiths are revealed in these stories; Johns' supernaturalism, Archbold's reliance on the traditions of the sea, and Whalley's confidence in divine Providence. The experiences of Bunter, Leggatt and Whalley strip bare the pretensions of any ordered code of belief. All three men are left with nothing to sustain them but their bond with their fellow men, but this bond is affirmed in their suffering. The only ideal which can be made concrete in these stories is human solidarity. The name, Sephora, suggests "sephira." The plural form, Sephiroth, means, in the philosophy of the Cabbala, the ten hypostatized attributes or emanations by means of which the Infinite enters into relation with the Finite.\footnote{\textit{Oxford English Dictionary (Universal).} Conrad may also have}
seem, then, if this reading is valid, that the psychic force of the sympathetic bond is the only power that can transcend man's finite state and give ideal existence to his imperfect attributes. This is one sense in which Conrad emphasized the "ideal value of things."

had in mind the Greek word, "Sophia," which means wisdom. However his acquaintance with occult philosophy is seen in the last passage of the essay, "The Life Beyond," in Notes on Life and Letters. In the essay he attacks science and its attempt to encroach upon theology: "And, for the rest, during this transient hour of our pilgrimage, we may well be content to repeat the Invocation of Sar Peladan. Sar Peladan was an occultist, a seer, a modern magician. He believed in astrology, in the spirits of the air, in elves; he was marvellously and deliciously absurd. Incidentally he wrote some incomprehensible poems and a few pages of harmonious prose, for, you must know, 'a magician is nothing else but a great harmonist.' Here are some eight lines of the magnificent Invocation. Let me, however, warn you, strictly between ourselves, that my translation is execrable. I am sorry to say I am no magician.

'O Nature, indulgent Mother, forgive! Open your arms to the son, prodigal and weary."

'I have attempted to tear asunder the veil you have hung to conceal from us the pain of life, and I have been wounded by the mystery . . . [Conrad's ellipsis] Oedipus, half way to finding the word of the enigma, young Faust, regretting already the simple life, the life of the heart. I come back to you repentant, reconciled, O gentle deceiver!'" (pp. 70-1).

Conrad's respect for the life of the unconscious is apparent in his sympathy towards the works of Sar Peladan. Josephin Peladan, called Le Sar (1859-1918), was a French occultist and mystic who wrote, among other works, Les Idees et les Formes: Antiquite Orientale...
CHAPTER III

THE SECRET AGENT

Then the vision of an enormous town presented itself, of a monstrous town more populous than some continents and in its man-made might as if indifferent to heaven's frowns and smiles: a cruel devourer of the world's light. There was room enough there to place any story, depth enough there for any passion, variety enough there for any setting, darkness enough to bury five millions of lives.1

The Secret Agent eludes classification in the narrow compartment of the political novel, but it has not escaped the suspicion that in it Conrad should have dealt more explicitly with the political issues of his day and more accurately with his apparent subject, anarchy and revolution.2 It is, however, a social novel

1 "Author's Note," The Secret Agent, p. xii.

2 The criticisms of the novel made by Irving Howe, "Joseph Conrad: The Political Novels," in Politics and the Novel, New York, Horizon Press & Meridian, 1957, pp. 76-113, are well answered by Elliott B. Gose, Jr., in his article, "'Cruel Devourer of the World's Light': The Secret Agent," NCF, vol. 15 (June 1960), Berkley, University of California Press, pp. 39-51. Gose has demonstrated that Howe's realistic reading is inadequate to an understanding of the work, and that we must take into account its symbolic texture if we are to do justice to Conrad's intention. Gose reiterates an inescapable conclusion as to Conrad's subject: "In fact, as several critics have pointed out, The Secret Agent is less about the shortcomings of a group of conscious anarchists than about the failure of a whole society disintegrating into a state of unconscious anarchy" (p. 40). Conrad did not write under the pressure of "engagement" so formative in the political novels of such twentieth century writers as Koestler, Silone and Malraux. Thomas Mann called the absence of a political stand in The Secret Agent clearly in favour of either society or revolution, of the bourgeois or the proletariat, "evidence of the untrammelled objectivity which is the business of the class-free writer... displayed at its liberating task" ("Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent," in Past Masters, London, Martin Secker, 1933, p. 246).
in the broadest sense of the term. Conrad's main concern is with the adequacy and state of present social institutions and their strength or weakness in sustaining human needs and aspirations. London, which represents all of British society, is both the setting and the chief object of analysis in the novel. As the "cruel devourer of the world's light," it harbours and engenders exploitation, destruction and secrecy, the evils in the novel at which Conrad's scorn is directed. The novel reveals that present society is inadequate in providing links, or institutions, which allow its individual members to communicate with one another. It conveys persistently the effect of the moribund state of society on that moral community in which all men are united by human solidarity. Murder and suicide were the inevitable results of the Verloc marriage, and the Verloc marriage is a reflection of the state of society. The conflict between the needs of the individual and the demands of society results in a silent and unrecognized struggle within the marriage that is carried on in darkness and secrecy. In terms of the action of the novel, Verloc represents the forms and demands of society, Winnie the claims and needs of the individual. The tensions beneath the placid surface

1 In speaking of the serious mood and purpose in which the novel was written, Conrad stated his reasons for employing an ironic method: "... each page of the story ... emerged one after another from a mood as serious in feeling and thought as any in which I ever wrote a line ... Even the purely artistic purpose, that of applying an ironic method to a subject of that kind, was formulated with deliberation and in the earnest belief that ironic treatment alone would enable me to say all I felt I would have to say in scorn as well as in pity" ("Author's Note," The Secret Agent, p. xiii). His pity was kept for the "poignant miseries and passionate credulities" ("Author's Note," p. ix) of a blind and misguided humanity. Anarchists and revolutionaries are attacked in The Secret Agent, not because society is perfect or even wholesome, but because anarchy is "a brazen cheat exploiting the poignant miseries and passionate credulities of a mankind always so tragically eager for self-destruction."
of the marriage reflect the extent to which social organization has broken down and miscarried, and the degree of underlying anarchy and chaos which results when man's best impulses have no communal outlet.

What means of regenerating society are suggested in the novel? The radical overthrow of the old order is certainly not a means of attaining this end. Revolution as it is represented by the anarchists and revolutionsists in the novel is not an alternative to the maintenance of the present state of society. Conrad does not conceive of it as a force to overthrow the old, but as a symptom of the social decay on which it feeds. Conrad made a dis-

1 The impotence of the revolutionaries is the only cause I can assign for what I regard to be an incredible assessment of the novel in Mrs. Hay's otherwise brilliant study of Conrad (Political Novels): "The degree of relief Conrad felt, politically in 1905-6, is one measure of the comedy in The Secret Agent. My reading fully supports Guerard's point that 'the turn to comedy' implies 'a normalizing of interest' and for Conrad a newly 'objective interest in behavior.' [Quoted from Albert J. Guerard, Conrad the Novelist, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958, p. 219]. The Secret Agent shows us the political novelist moved to levity and betraying a new garrulousness, a new willingness to talk politics with the crowd, as if for the first time there appeared a comfortable corner for conversation.

"The novel delivers its wisdom on law and the seeds of social disintegration entirely from the perspective of a man securely confident that the ship of state is not and perhaps never can be seriously threatened. Surely Conrad sees himself, proposing this, as part of the irony" (p. 237). But society is threatened from within; weakness in the revolutionaries does not imply strength in society. The critic who so forcefully reveals Conrad's attack on British complacency in "Heart of Darkness" refers, at one point, to "this humorous view of English life" (p. 243). Mrs. Hay's conviction that "'the turn to comedy' implies 'a normalizing of interest'" has, I believe, misled her. In its comedy as well as its irony and satire, the novel is more reminiscent of Swift than of what we usually call comedy. And no one, to my knowledge, has yet suggested that Gulliver's Travels reflects a degree of relief in Swift's view of man and society. Mrs. Hay's preoccupation with the question of artistic control has obscured the real significance of the book for her. She seems to feel compelled to defend its tone and to suggest that it was conceived in assurance, even complacency, as a good-humoured, lightly satiric, bit of fun. Some of her other
tinction between two forms of revolution. The first is possible when society is in the first phase of decay. It is a protest against what Conrad called "the oppressive degeneration of legality," yet it remains an affirmation of the value of that principle. The second form of revolutionary activity is the only kind possible when society is in the second phase of dissolution in which the principle of legality is not recognized at all. It cannot bring about any change in the moribund state of society because it reflects and shares that state. He developed the distinction in a passage dealing with the possibility of revolution in Russia from the essay, "Autocracy and War," written in the same year that he probably began work on The Secret Agent:

She is not an empty void, she is a yawning chasm open between East and West; a bottomless abyss that has swallowed up every hope of mercy, every aspiration towards personal dignity, towards freedom, every redeeming whisper of conscience ... there is in it no ground for anything that could in the remotest degree serve even the lowest interests of mankind—and certainly no ground ready for a revolution. The sin of the old European monarchies was not the absolutism inherent in every form of government; it was the inability to alter the forms of their legality, grown narrow and oppressive with the march of time. Every form

judgments on the novel will indicate the extent of our disagreement. She regards Inspector Heat as "the coolest and wisest political head in the book" (p. 241). "Sir Ethelred's absorption with nationalization of the fisheries come[g] across in a spirit of pure fun" (p. 247). Finally: "And British institutions, however susceptible to caricature, give Winnie and her family their solid characters. The almshouse to which her mother consigns herself, however depressing, is as trustworthy as the corner policeman" (p. 255). She might have said, as trustworthy as the grave: "a charity cottage (one of a row) which by the exiguity of its dimensions and the simplicity of its accommodation, might well have been devised in kindness as a place of training for the still more straitened circumstances of the grave" (The Secret Agent, p. 160). Mrs. Hay does note that Winnie's experience "makes the difference." It makes the novel "profoundly disturbing" (p. 239).

1 Notes on Life and Letters, pp. 100-101.
legality is bound to degenerate into oppression, and the legality in the forms of monarchical institutions sooner, perhaps, than any other. The revolutions of European States have never been in the nature of absolute protests en masse against the monarchical principle; they were the uprising of the people against the oppressive degeneration of legality. But there never has been any legality in Russia; she is a negation of that as of everything else that has its root in reason or conscience.

English society had not, of course, abandoned the principle of legality, and the essential worth of its political institutions is undiminished. But the degree of social decay which hampers their operation is apparent, ironically enough, in the quality of the revolutionaries they breed. Although much of their activity is directed against the continent, we always see them in relation to British government and society. They are symptomatic of the more widespread decay. The "idealistic conception of legality" and the "sentimental regard for individual liberty"—the British political heritage opposed by Vladimir and the Professor at opposite ends of the spectrum—have lost their efficacy in the moribund state of society, until "every ennobling desire of the

1 This quotation discloses an ambiguity in Conrad's attitude toward revolution as marked as his obvious distrust of it. Revolution was justified, to Conrad, only when undertaken in defence of the principles which were the basis of the nation's strength. How a nation such as Russia, in which "there never has been any legality," could establish such a principle without a revolution Conrad seems not to have considered. But I do not believe that we can quarrel with his insight that one political evil breeds another. The distinction between a futile reaction within a nation against a tyrannical order and a revolution whose guiding spirit is a reinstatement of legality may also throw some light on his attitude toward his father's activities. Conrad maintained that Apollo Korzeniowski was a rebel against Russian domination, and not a revolutionary at all. But he seems to have been equivocal in his assessment of the worth or futility of his father's conspiracies. As a defender of legality, Apollo could only have been ennobled by his activities. Mrs. Hay's discussion of this whole question is of great value.
heart, every redeeming whisper of conscience" is swallowed up in the void. The likeness of the world of *The Secret Agent* to Conrad's description of Russia gives a measure of his concern.  

The quotation from "Autocracy and War" and the Professor's remarks in chapter IV of *The Secret Agent* both underline the primacy of the concept of legality in Conrad's political thought and make it clear that this principle affords the strength of British institutions and differentiates them from Russian society. No drastic reforms of the old order are necessary, and even a revolution to re-embody legality, while seemingly impossible because of the advanced stage of social disintegration, is also highly undesirable. E.B. Gose finds the supremacy of legality in the novel stated in the symbolic significance of the sun:  

In fact, on a symbolic level we find in Conrad's use of the sun, the imagistic counterpart of that "idealistic conception" which the Professor feared and which alone can take the place of man's ineffectual attempts to dispel the encroaching darkness.  

That is, the darkness of primordial night, of inanimate nature, to which the sun once gave the heat and light of life, has begun to pull metropolitan man back to itself, to death and dissolution. Despite the many lights erected by the genius of modern technological society, the city will remain dark as long as it is cut off from the saving ideal of the sun. The sun imagery certainly does have this function in the novel.  

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1 Cf. the description of London at the top of this chapter and this remark on the Russian people: "the ghost of Russian might . . . cutting off from air, from light, from all knowledge of themselves and of the world, the buried millions of Russian people" ("Autocracy and War," p. 86).

But the "oppressive degeneration of legality" has already occurred, and we are still faced with the question in the novel of how it is to be revived and revitalized. The mere principle is subject to a loss of effective power; no principle has a strength sufficient in itself to prevent the encroachment of chaos and darkness.\(^1\) The source of the strength which must be made to invest the principle is indicated, I believe, by another meaning which attaches to the sun image. E.B. Gose suggests, in fact, that the sun is a complex symbol in the novel when he refers to its function of giving "the heat and light of life." We must look for the full significance of the symbol in this connection between life and the ideal. The sun also represents the motive force of compassion which must inhabit social organization before it can be effective in fulfilling man's needs.

The power of compassion is evident in the only bond of sympathy and understanding found in the novel,\(^2\) the sympathetic bond which links Stevie, Winnie and Ossipon in a chain of common experience. Sympathetic identification is destructive to those who experience it, however, because the atrophied state of society

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\(^1\) Cf. Wright's comment on Inspector Heat: "Having no moral convictions, he asks only whether a procedure is legal, and he does not hesitate to protect an anarchist if the man can be useful to him. The numerous short inserts emphasizing his characteristics seem evidence of the author's appreciation of the fact that law and order themselves as creations of society easily lose their exalted purpose and become mere rules of a game played in high earnest, and so far as the paid contestants are concerned, for the sheer sake of winning" \((\text{Romance and Tragedy}, \text{p. 186})\). See also Wright's discussion (pp. 189-90) of the hierarchy of "scorn, wonder, and compassion" \((\text{The Secret Agent}, \text{p. 100})\) implicit in the inter-relation of these three "perspectives."

\(^2\) Winnie's mother, like Winnie herself, makes a futile private contract for Stevie's welfare. In spite of the breach of social decorum involved in the slander of Winnie, she gains admission to
prohibits a general outlet for the compassion felt by the individual. The power of compassion generated by the sympathetic bond not only does not find a form for its expression but is even intensified when the process of social dissolution which has called the bond into being is accelerated. The individual in his exposure to this process is forced to feel contained within himself the motive force which had previously been infused throughout the whole social order and its principles. The effect upon him is described as stunning and enchanting. But society pays a heavy price for its perversion of human compassion and feelings. That same power which must be employed to revitalize society and its principles acts to destroy it when it goes unrecognized and unacknowledged. Winnie's compassion for Stevie reaches the ultimate degree of intensity and is released as pure power when she learns of his death. Winnie responds as if the sun had been "suddenly put

an alms-house, so that Verloc will have one less person to look after. Conrad describes her as "heroic and unscrupulous and full of love for both her children" (p. 161). Her affection is natural and basically innate in its origin in the maternal instinct. It is outside the scheme of the sympathetic bond, and it does not share in the power which stems from the preternatural quality of Winnie's love for Stevie. Her selfless abnegation in Chapter III contrasts with the motives of the other characters and underscores Conrad's high valuation of renunciation. The events of the novel and the placing of this scene just before the chapter in which Winnie learns of Stevie's death indicate that the corruption of society has rendered renunciation and personal virtue largely ineffectual.

See pp. 20-6 of this Introduction for a general comparison of the role of the sympathetic bond in The Secret Agent with its role in other works, and for a discussion of its destructive potential.
out in the summer sky and assumes, symbolically, the identity of her dead brother. The destructive energy of which Winnie is the vessel takes its revenge upon society in the murder of Verloc. The symbolic counterpart of the actual explosion which killed Stevie releases the compassion behind social organization as it signals its breakup. Winnie's own destruction is inevitable because she has no ties left and now dwells in a state of "evil freedom." In writing the novel, Conrad sought to depict the qualities in man which created society, and which can destroy it.

Conrad's "concentrated purpose" required, for its fullest expression, a symbolic background for the action of the novel. E.B. Gose, as we have seen, has documented many of the image patterns and nature's anti-human function in the novel. There is no need, therefore, to survey them here in order to show the condition of society, but a brief review of some of the major image patterns will show their particular relevance to the fate of Stevie and Winnie. The mud and slime of Conrad's London symbolize the chaos into which society can sink and the oblivion that threatens to

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1 The Secret Agent, p. 244.

2 Conrad, in his "Author's Note," The Secret Agent, p. x, relates how, in a simple conversation with a friend, he made the following estimate of an anarchist bomb outrage, and how the friend provided him with the information that grew into the story of The Secret Agent: "Presently, passing to particular instances, we recalled the already old story of the attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory; a blood-stained inanity of so fatuous a kind that it was impossible to fathom its origin by any reasonable or even unreasonable process of thought. For perverse unreason has its own logical processes."

3 In my analysis I quote some of the same passages and refer to many of the same images discussed by Gose in his article. But my conception was arrived at independently, although my indebtedness to Dr. Gose is much more widespread and significant.
swallow up the individual. Winnie is able to resist the temptation to throw herself onto the street from her bedroom window because, "her instinct of self-preservation recoiled from the depth of the fall into that sort of slimy, deep trench."\textsuperscript{1} Ossipon walks over the "carpet of mud" on the streets of London "where the dust of humanity settles inert and hopeless out of the stream of life."\textsuperscript{2} The image of the stream of life appears significantly in other passages in the novel. When Ossipon emerges from the Silenus Cafe, he steps into the "cross-currents" of the traffic which represents humanity in the mass. But the first impression we are given is of the mud and filth that waits passively to receive more of the debris of society:\textsuperscript{3}

It was a raw, gloomy day of the early spring, and the grimy sky, the mud of the streets, the rags of the dirty men harmonized excellently with the eruption of the damp, rubbishy sheets of paper soiled with printers' ink. The posters, maculated with filth, garnished like tapestry the sweep of the curbstone.

Winnie's description of Verloc's last words suggests that Stevie is part of the "rubbish" which society has discarded. He is the "dust of humanity"--"smash[ed] in the dirt" by Verloc:\textsuperscript{4}

"... 'Come here,' after telling me I had helped to kill the boy. You hear, Tom? He says like this: 'Come here,' after taking my very heart out of me along with the boy to smash in the dirt." She ceased, then dreamily repeated twice: "Blood and dirt. Blood and dirt."

\textsuperscript{1} The Secret Agent, p. 254.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., p. 300.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., p. 79.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., p. 290.
Not only does Stevie's blood mingle with the dirt, but the rags that cover his mangled body remind us of the rags of the street in the earlier quotation. Winnie's sympathy and sacrifice have been ineffectual in preserving Stevie from the process of social dissolution symbolized by the explosion.¹

As mud receives the body of Stevie, so water receives Winnie in her suicide. She is overcome by the tendency toward dissolution in society which she had combatted unknowingly by her sympathy for Stevie. The mist that envelopes Winnie as she leaves the shop determined to throw herself from a bridge has "a foretaste of drowning." The "abominable cold" which Verloc catches on the day of the explosion symbolizes his moral condition, and Ossipon tells Winnie before he abandons her that he has "'got chilled through.'" ² Verloc has been immersed in evil so long, in fact, that he suffers from moral corrosion. When he appears

¹ The pervasive use of images of the forest also provides a commentary on the condition of society. This pattern of images supplements the descriptions of the inorganic city whose darkness and immobility contain the threat of annihilation for mankind, and it suggests that society is in danger of retrogression to an earlier age of disorder and violence. (Cf. E.B. Gose, p. 50).

When Winnie had sought a hiding place for the money given her by Verloc, the "abode of her married life appeared to her as lonely and unsafe as though it had been situated in the midst of a forest" (p. 201). Sir Ethelred, whose namesake was the Saxon King known as The Unready, works in an office whose green light gives it "something of a forest's deep gloom" (p. 217). Heat has the moustache of a Norse rover (p. 116). In his mechanical operation of society's sanctions and conventions, he poses as great a threat to the stability and well-being of English society as do the revolutionists. Ossipon at one point in the novel is described as having the "aspect of a Norwegian sailor bored with the world after a thundering spree" (p. 52). Most of the characters of the novel are represented as animals to suggest their inhumanity and participation in the anarchy of the forest. Another pattern of images in the novel, that of deserts and prisons, connects the forest and the inorganic. When the dissolution of society accelerates, the forest turns into a desert.

² The Secret Agent, p. 293.
in the sunlight, he is rusty.\(^1\) Even the London sunlight itself is rusty as it struggles to clear away the mist that obscures it.\(^2\) But the explosion which kills Stevie is "something like a heavy flash of lightning in the fog."\(^3\) The only character concerned to defend "the idealistic conception of legality," the Assistant Commissioner, despises the rain and fog of London which symbolically produce the moral darkness he wants to dispel, a darkness "as vast as a sea."\(^4\) The irritant of the weather can be equated with the irritating activities of Mr. Vladimir and the Russian Embassy that the Assistant Commissioner is determined to end.

The use of the image of the river of life to show Winnie's reasons for choosing Verloc as a marriage partner implies the existence of a norm from which she has been forced to depart. In most instances, however, the river image turns into a flood which threatens both the individual and the institutions of society with annihilation. The sensation of drowning and the faintness which overtakes Winnie "like a great sea"\(^5\) are her private experience of the "destroying flood" suggested by Verloc's blood.\(^6\) The

\(^1\) The Secret Agent, p. 12.

\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 26-7.

\(^3\) Ibid., p. 87.

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 102. Mud and water combine to form darkness as revealed in the description of the Assistant Commissioner's walk in the rain: "He advanced at once into an immensity of greasy slime and damp plaster interspersed with lamps, and enveloped, oppressed, penetrated, choked, and suffocated by the blackness of a wet London night, which is composed of soot and drops of water" (p. 150).

\(^5\) Ibid., p. 270.

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 265.
Assistant Commissioner's imagination sense it as he looks at the street, "wet and empty, as if swept clear suddenly by a great flood." When the legitimate aspirations of mankind are impossible of fulfilment, ordered society is in danger of complete destruction. The results of the Verloc marriage are emblematic of the dangers which face society as a whole. The same tensions which produce a ripple on the "placid pool" of the marriage are capable of creating a tidal wave which can engulf society.

The institutions of society are operated like machines in the novel, with attention only to form and not to purpose. Chief Inspector Heat of the Special Crimes Division is disturbed by the Professor, not as a menace to society, but because he does not play by "the rules of the game." Heat has a professional regard for thieves, however, because "the mind and instincts of a burglar are of the same kind as the mind and the instincts of a police officer. Both recognize the same conventions ... Products of the same machine, one classified as useful and the other as noxious, they take the machine for granted in different ways, but with a seriousness essentially the same." Heat makes society liveable, but he doesn't do the job thoroughly. He performs his duty like a tight-rope artist, with skill, but he knows that he is only playing a role. Unlike the Assistant Commissioner, who is always aware of the mist and fog that surrounds London, Heat

1 *The Secret Agent*, p. 100.
4 In contrast to Heat, the Assistant Commissioner is genuinely
is willing to go along with conservative abuses, such as the use of foreign spies, if it will make his job easier. Even the feeling which above all others should serve to elevate one's moral claims, that of having "the moral support of his kind,"¹ is made to seem mean in Heat. He possesses "the vulgar love of domination over our fellow-creatures,"² and in symbolic terms, he has "the purposeful briskness of a man disregarding indeed the inclemencies of the weather."³ Heat also has little regard for justice. He is willing to have Michaelis falsely convicted because he is not protected by "the rules of the game."⁴ He acts on personal motives when he goes to Brett Street to question Verloc, and when there, he hangs "in the wind, swayed by his

concerned to combat Vladimir's attack upon the "sentimental regard for individual liberty" (p. 29) that makes the latter despise England. By nature he is "not easily accessible to illusions," and he has a "general mistrust of men's motives and of the efficiency of their organization" (pp. 99, 100). His desire for adventure and his distaste for office work cause him to take charge personally of the investigation, and in the clothes which he assumes to do so, he looks like a "vision of a cool, reflective Don Quixote" (p. 147). Unlike Heat, however, who uses the system to enhance his reputation, he is an individual working within the system. He informs Sir Ethelred of his plans whereas Heat tries to keep his involvement with Verloc a secret. The Assistant Commissioner feels on his quest a loss of identity and a "sense of loneliness, of evil freedom" (p. 148), which anticipates Winnie's sensation after she has murdered Verloc. But he is aware of the dangers of his situation because his previous experience had been in "tracking and breaking up certain nefarious secret societies amongst the natives" (p. 99). Heat's appearance reminds him of a native chief he had known and whose duplicity had made him dangerous.

¹ The Secret Agent, p. 96.
² Ibid., p. 122.
³ Ibid., p. 96.
⁴ Ibid., p. 122.
passions like the most private of citizens."¹

The collective efforts of the revolutionists promise even less than the mechanical workings of society. They are formed by society, and in their reaction against the worst abuses in society, they come to embody them. They react not with compassion but with violence and inhumanity. The Professor's assessment of them is just. He asserts that because they want to revolutionize society, they are "the slaves of the social convention, which is afraid of you; slaves of it so much as the very police that stands up in the defence of that convention."² However, the Professor's alternative is even more terrible. Conrad continually refers to the revolutionists as childlike in their evil and ignorance of worldly conditions. Sir Ethelred, who works like a machine, says that he cannot tolerate the "innocence of nasty little children."³ Karl Yundt is in his second childhood; he takes a "constitutional crawl"⁴ in the mornings, and only malevolence survives in his "extinguished eyes." He has no pity "for anything on earth," and invokes death and destruction for the good of humanity.⁵ Yundt's whole career has been a fraud; he has never done anything but explicit

¹ The Secret Agent, p. 204. Heat is in contrast to the Professor in two significant respects which are not to his credit. His lack of "true wisdom" has facilitated his rapid promotion (p. 84), and he has made use of his insight that, "as a general rule, a reputation is built on manner as much as on achievement" (p. 85).

² Ibid., p. 69.

³ Ibid., pp. 138-39.

⁴ Ibid., p. 52.

⁵ Ibid., p. 42.
explore the evil passions and suffering of humanity.\textsuperscript{1}

Present in Verloc is the evil and decay of all the groups dissected in the novel: the revolutionaries, the extreme reactionaries represented by Vladimir, and the conservatives who, typified by Heat, reflect the present state of English institutions. Verloc is "temperamentally identical with his \textsuperscript{Revolutionary} associates," and has "subtle moral affinities" with Vladimir.\textsuperscript{2} Although a member of a "revolutionary proletariat--which he undoubtedly was,"\textsuperscript{3} he had remained "loyal to his employers, to the cause of social stability."\textsuperscript{4} He is also extremely bourgeois in his marital sentiments. He is "thoroughly domesticated,"\textsuperscript{5} and his repose and serenity are the most precious things he has wrested from life.\textsuperscript{6} Also, he "loved his wife as a wife should be loved--that is, maritally, with the regard one has for one's

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{The Secret Agent}, p. 48. Although his judgment remains harsh, Conrad has more sympathy for Michaelis. His childishness is angelic (p. 303) and saintly: "He was like those saintly men whose personality is lost in the contemplation of their faith. His ideas... formed in all their contradictions and obscurities an invincible and humanitarian creed..." (p. 107). He has developed his dialectics of economic determinism in the "mental solitude more barren than a waterless desert" (p. 45) of his prison cell. Although his theories are as barren as the prison which saw their inception, and the description of his saintliness is ironic, he commands some sympathy because he is more of a victim than an exploiter. And though he is ignorant of worldly conditions, he has learned the lesson of suffering and is concerned about the "effect that may be produced by any given economic change upon the happiness, the morals, the intellect, the history of mankind" (p. 50). His very concern for humanity has been perverted and turned into arid and disembodied prophecy by society. Significantly, he is the only character outside the Verloc family who is said to like Stevie (p. 189).

\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., p. 53.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., p. 245.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., p. 239.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., p. 52.
chief possession."¹ He is so mechanical, so given to concern for only the outward form and operation of things, that he can deal comfortably with Heat. He is described as being so like a mechanical figure, he is temperamentally so in accord with the mechanical operation of society's institutions, that he has "an automaton's absurd air of being aware of the machinery inside of him."² Verloc's mission in life is the protection of the social mechanism, not its perfectionment or even its criticism.³

Verloc's moribund state and the Verloc marriage are linked to London, the city, and to society. As Stevie is the "unconscious presiding genius" of Winnie's toil in life,⁴ so Verloc epitomizes in spirit the moral decay of society as it is mirrored by the descriptions of the city. The darkness and silence of London have their counterparts in the character of Verloc. The physical city symbolizes in part the indifference of the physical universe to man. Verloc's distress at the revelation that all is not well and that his repose and serenity are precarious is intensified by his vision of London as an "enormity of cold, black, wet, muddy, inhospitable accumulation of bricks, slats, and stones, things in

¹ The Secret Agent, p. 179.
³ Ibid., p. 15. Verloc looks forward with peace and resignation to a term in prison—a place as safe as the grave—for his part in the Greenwich Park explosion (p. 235). The qualities of a prison suit Verloc perfectly, but not because he is one of the socially drowned. Rather, because he has within himself the worst qualities of society, he is at home in the desert of prison which is for him not even punitive.
⁴ Ibid., p. 243.
themselves unlovely and unfriendly to man."¹ But the physical
and the non-physical merge in the novel. Horses stand "perfectly
still, as if carved in stone,"² and a police constable seems a
"part of inorganic nature, surging apparently out of a lamp-post."³
Verloc himself is "a soft kind of rock" as he walks along a street
that reveals "the majesty of inorganic nature, of matter that
never dies."⁴ When society becomes mechanical, it becomes de-
humanized, and man is on the verge of annihilation. Life and non-
life are then inseparable, and death has no meaning, mortality is
unfelt. This inhuman vision which Verloc sees outside is also
within himself.

When Winnie feels the full weight of her isolation after the
murder of Verloc, she senses that the "whole town of marvels and
mud, with its maze of streets and its mass of lights, was sunk in
a hopeless night, rested at the bottom of a black abyss."⁵ Winnie
has already recognized that Verloc and London are part of the same
existence;⁶

The street, silent and deserted from end
to end, repelled her by taking sides with
that man who was so certain of his impunity.

¹ The Secret Agent, p. 56.
² Ibid., p. 225.
³ Ibid., p. 114.
⁴ Ibid., pp. 13-4.
⁵ Ibid., pp. 270-71.
⁶ Ibid., p. 254.
The triangular shape of Brett Place which is traced by Winnie and Ossipon in their walk is emblematic of Verloc, secret agent, and symbolizes his spiritual union with the city. Winnie and Ossipon are surrounded by the "darkness and solitude of Brett Place, in which all sounds of life seemed lost as if in a triangular well of asphalt and bricks, of blind houses and unfeeling stones." Their total isolation emphasizes the claims of human solidarity which Ossipon toys with and violates.

The silence and immobility of London are reflected in the Verloc marriage, and reign in the house of Verloc throughout the novel. When Winnie kisses Verloc in the "brooding silence" of the parlour, he remains "preserved in hieratic immobility." Conrad has Ossipon hint at the parallel between the Verloc marriage and social dissolution when he wonders "whether the hidden causes of that Greenwich Park affair did not lie deep in the unhappy circumstances of the Verlocs' married life." The marriage of Winnie and Verloc is one of the imperfect unions sanctioned by an imperfect society. Verloc works for the preservation of the status quo of his own family as well as of society as a whole. His marriage is a perfectly just result of his career. He has been loyal to his affections as he has been to the cause of social stability.

1 The Secret Agent, p. 276.

2 Ibid., p. 195. This Judas kiss delivered to a false Christ figure in whom Winnie has reposed all her confidence foreshadows the murder and Winnie's dependence on Ossipon who is also a false Christ or Apollo figure.

3 Ibid., p. 277.

4 Ibid., p. 239.
The mutual isolation of Winnie and Verloc comes inevitably from the secrecy of their lives. It is also inevitable that Verloc will exploit Stevie, as he has manipulated so many others, when he discovers that Stevie can serve his purpose.\(^1\) The indifference of Winnie and Verloc to any real communication with each other or with other people raises a symbolic wall between them that also shuts them out from reality:\(^2\)

Winnie's philosophy consisted in not taking notice of the inside of facts [i.e., the motives and personalities of others]; she assumed that mother took what suited her best. As to Mr. Verloc, his intense meditation, like a sort of Chinese wall, isolated him completely from the phenomena of this world of vain effort and illusory appearances.

When Winnie first learns the truth of Stevie's tragic death, she can do nothing but hide her face in her hands, thus maintaining the wall between her and Verloc. When Verloc finally does see her face, "her features are set into a frozen, contemplative immobility addressed to a whitewashed wall with no writing on it."\(^3\)

Violence and disintegration are implicit in the Verloc union from its inception. Verloc tells Winnie, in a statement the irony of which is hidden from him, that he has "stood the risk of having a knife stuck into me anytime these seven years we've been married."\(^4\) He has failed to realize that the seeds of violence are present in his marriage as well as in his relationship with the revolutionists. When we see Verloc advancing to kiss Winnie

\(^1\) Conrad has Verloc say, ironically: "'Strike me dead if I ever would have thought of the lad for that purpose!'" (p. 257).

\(^2\) *The Secret Agent*, p. 154. Hagen and Gose discuss this passage.


in an earlier scene, "something wild and doubtful in his expression made it appear uncertain whether he meant to strangle or to embrace his wife."\(^1\) Winnie has married Verloc only to provide security for Stevie. When she learns that Stevie is dead, the motive of her seven years of married life is destroyed. The "bargain"\(^2\) is at an end. She regains complete freedom by killing Verloc—it is he and not death, she feels, that had taken Stevie away.\(^3\) But her freedom is turned to anarchy by the murder, to the "sinister freedom" of the Professor who is able to dwell in the absence of all human ties. Winnie now is a moral corpse, just as Verloc is a physical corpse; they are now in complete accord for the first time since their marriage—the accord of death upon which their marriage had been based:\(^4\)

She leaned forward on her folded arms over the side of the sofa. She adopted that easy attitude not in order to watch or gloat over the body of Mr. Verloc, but because of the undulatory and swinging movements of the parlour, which for some time behaved as though it were at sea in a tempest. She had become a free woman . . . . She was a woman enjoying her complete irresponsibility and endless leisure, almost in the manner of a corpse. She did not move, she did not think. Neither did the mortal envelope of the late Mr. Verloc resting on the sofa. Except for the fact that Mrs. Verloc breathed these two would have been perfectly in accord: that accord of prudent reserve without superfluous words, and sparing of signs, which had been the foundation of their respectable home life . . . . And after the striking of the blow, this respectability was continued in immobility and silence.

\(^1\) The Secret Agent, p. 196.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 261.
\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 246-47.
\(^4\) Ibid., pp. 263-64.
Winnie now embodies the force of death which she has released against Verloc:¹

He [Ossipon] positively saw snakes now. He saw the woman twined round him like a snake, not to be shaken off. She was not deadly. She was death itself—the companion of life.

By the act of murder, she has assumed the qualities of London which had previously invested Verloc. In the darkness of Brett Place, "her black form merged in the night, like a figure half chiselled out of a block of black stone."²

The degeneration and inhumanity of society are opposed throughout the novel by the operation of the sympathetic bond between Stevie and Winnie. The only other opposition comes from the Assistant Commissioner in his defence of individual liberty against Vladimir,³ from the mother of Winnie and Stevie and from Stevie himself. The relationship between brother and sister is an expression of sympathy, of the recognition of the need for compassion for man's limitations and misguided follies. Winnie loves Stevie in spite of his shortcomings. This affection is in contrast to Verloc's egotistical belief that he is loved for himself,⁴ that he could and should be loved for his merits alone. His "mistaken impression that the value of individuals consists in

¹ The Secret Agent, p. 291.
² Ibid., p. 280.
³ Even the Assistant Commissioner has a personal motive in wishing to protect the innocent Michaelis from persecution as John Hagen Jr. points out in his article, "The Design of Conrad's The Secret Agent," p. 160. His cynical nature restricts the growth of compassion in his character, but it also suits him to deal with the moral evil with which he is faced. He seems to be self-critical, and his defence of liberty is genuine.
what they are in themselves"¹ is an expression of pride and of blindness to man's mortality, to man's limitations. Winnie's instinctive maternal feeling for Stevie is representative of the primeval human instincts which society cannot accommodate, cannot release and channel within its own organization. But the very resistance and antagonism toward her love for Stevie which Winnie encounters in her father and in society only strengthens her sympathetic bond with him. The latent maternal protective instinct had sprung into effective existence, and with overwhelming force, because of the hardships faced too early in Winnie's life and in Stevie's life.

The inevitable development of the sympathetic bond outside the social order results in the warping of Winnie's character and makes necessary some kind of private adjustment to the demands of society. The very power that could be regenerative, that must be harnessed in order to revitalize society's institutions, becomes destructive in the novel because it goes unrecognized and unacknowledged. The force of the sympathetic bond, ironically, destroys the Verloc marriage which epitomizes the condition of society. The symbolic embodiment of the spirit of death in Winnie after the murder represents the triumph of the present state of society. The power of compassion developed within the sympathetic bond is not lost, however. It is transferred symbolically to Ossipon, and the radical psychic transformation which he undergoes testifies to its strength.

¹ The Secret Agent, p. 233.
Winnie's maternal affection for Stevie grew into the only passion of her life—a "passion of indignation, of courage, of pity, and even of self-sacrifice."\(^1\) But the early development of her protecting compassion had made it morbid.\(^2\) Her attachment to Stevie unsuited her for the usual commerce of living, both temperamentally and in the circumstances which it imposed. The need to provide for Stevie and to protect him from an indifferent society prevented her from achieving happiness within the social framework by marrying the son of the butcher. The claims of human solidarity isolated her because of the faults within society. Her selfless dedication could have no improving effect within society. The strength of the sympathetic bond with Stevie had, in symbolic terms, the power of a spell upon her:\(^3\)

It was a life of single purpose and of a noble unity of inspiration, like those rare lives that have left their mark on the thoughts and feelings of mankind. But the visions of Mrs. Verloc lacked nobility and magnificence. She saw herself putting the boy to bed by the light of a single candle on the deserted top floor of a "business house," dark under the roof and scintillating exceedingly with lights and cut glass at the level of the street like a fairy palace.

Her marriage with Verloc is the private contract, or "bargain" which Winnie makes with society. In order to look after Stevie, she must meet the demand that she marry someone who can support both of them. But she reposes undue confidence in the security which this compromise brings. The bargain she has made is a bad one; society represented by Verloc, will betray it. The breakdown

\(^1\) The Secret Agent, p. 174.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 58.

\(^3\) Ibid., pp. 241-42.
of communication and the failure of society to fulfil the expectations of its members become apparent. Winnie and Verloc are both intent on making the other responsive to their claims. They assume that the other is capable and willing to fulfil these claims without examining the other's needs and motives. And Winnie's compassion stops short with Stevie; her renunciation and sacrifice are swallowed up within the Verloc home. The marriage is a crime against life and a submission to the evil within society. It does not have the inherent strength necessary to maintain itself. Winnie's domestic state is represented by an image of stagnant water:

Mrs. Verloc pursued the visions of seven years' security for Stevie loyally paid for on her part; of security growing into confidence, into a domestic feeling, stagnant and deep like a placid pool, whose guarded surface hardly shuddered on the occasional passage of Comrade Ossipon ....

The trust which Winnie places in face values is reflected in the belief about Verloc which she inculcates in Stevie, the "doctrine of his supreme wisdom and goodness." Her ultimate illusion comes when, watching Verloc take Stevie for a walk to prepare him for the bombing attempt, she feels that they are like father and son. The punishment for her acquiescence begins when she accepts the Embassy secret service money from Verloc. The receipt of the money is represented as a fatal wound. When she remembers that she has hidden the money in her bosom, she clutches at her breast,

1 The Secret Agent, p. 243.
2 Ibid., p. 173.
3 Ibid., p. 235.
"as if she had felt a sharp pain there."¹

In contrast to Winnie, Stevie's sympathy is diffused and all encompassing. But he is even less able than Winnie to embody his compassion in effective action, and because he wants to act so desperately, he is easily manipulated. The very mental deficiencies which make it impossible for him to communicate and act upon his sympathy prevent him from receiving the isolation and indifference found in society's more normal members and in its enemies. He is out of accord with his environment, not only because of his mental deficiencies, but also temperamentally in his sympathetic nature. He is easily diverted from the duties of an errand boy by the "dramas of fallen horses, whose pathos and violence induced him sometimes to shriek piercingly in a crowd, which disliked to be disturbed by sounds of distress in its quiet enjoyment of the national spectacle."² The qualities of his nature are best revealed in the section of the novel which describes the cab ride to the charity cottage. The ride itself is a metaphor for human life in its progress towards death. The voice of Winnie's mother sounds like a wail of pain as the cab is "rattled, jingled, jolted" over the streets of the city.³ The cab looks in its "macabre detail, as if it were the Cab of Death,"⁴ the immutable fact of man's mortality implicit in life, and the horse which draws it is "the steed of apocalyptic misery."⁵ The wages received by the driver, the "night cabby," symbolize "the

¹ The Secret Agent, p. 281.
² Ibid., p. 9.
³ Ibid., p. 163.
⁴ Ibid., p. 170.
⁵ Ibid., p. 167.
insignificant results which reward the ambitious courage and
toil of a mankind whose day is short on this earth of evil."¹
Stevie is not indifferent when faced with this revelation of
human misery and man's impotence before it. He does not share
Verloc's "philosophical unbelief in the effectiveness of every
human effort,"² and unlike Winnie, "he wished to go to the bot­
tom of the matter."³ He seeks a cause and a concrete remedy,
but he rejects the possibility of taking the horse and cabman to
bed with him because he is reasonable.⁴ Because he is also "a
moral creature," he is struck with a "sense of indignation and
horror at one sort of wretchedness having to feed upon the
anguish of the other" which he can express in only one word--
"'Shame!'"⁵ Another single word, like the one Stevie utters in
protest at the whipping of the horse, is repeated by Verloc at
his death--"'Don't.'"⁶

Stevie is the only pure revolutionary in the novel. He has
within him both the constructive sympathy with suffering and the
evil impulses for destruction:⁷

The tenderness of his universal charity had two
phases as indissolubly joined and connected as
the reverse and obverse sides of a medal. The
anguish of immoderate compassion was succeeded
by the pain of an innocent but pitiless rage.

¹ The Secret Agent, p. 165.
² Ibid., p. 12.
³ Ibid., p. 173.
⁴ Ibid., p. 171.
⁵ Ibid., p. 263.
⁶ Ibid., p. 168.
⁷ Ibid., p. 169.
He does not suffer from wounded vanity and ambition like the Professor, the anarchist, nor does he exploit the sufferings of others like Karl Yundt. Instead, his compassion is manipulated by others. Stevie's compassion is first aroused to a frenzy by the tales of injustice of two office-boys. His demonstration against the building with fireworks foreshadows his attempt upon the Greenwich Observatory and his death. Winnie has a vision of the mingling of brotherly flesh and bone with the green and earth of the park:

... all spouting up together in the manner of a firework ... after a rainlike fall of mangled limbs the decapitated head of Stevie lingered suspended alone, and fading out slowly like the last star of a pyrotechnic display.

The fireworks demonstration also presents an image of social revolution:

An awful panic spread through the whole building. Wild-eyed, choking clerks stampeded through the passages full of smoke, silk hats and elderly business men could be seen rolling independently down the stairs.

Stevie is next aroused in the novel by Karl Yundt's figurative speech of social injustice. He swallows Yundt's talk "as though it had been swift poison." Stevie now shares Yundt's malevolence, for he has come under the spell of Yundt's "evil gift." Yundt's poison acts upon Stevie's innate capacity for sympathy, which his experience has developed fully. Verloc has only to lead Stevie, now the complete revolutionary, to act. He takes Stevie away to

1 The Secret Agent, p. 260.
2 Ibid., p. 9.
3 Ibid., p. 51.
self-destruction and martyrdom.

Yundt's description of social abuses which Stevie swallows like poison introduces another pattern of images in the novel, those relating to cannibalism:

"Do you know how I would call the nature of the present economic conditions? I would call it cannibalistic. That's what it is! They are nourishing their greed on the quivering flesh and the warm blood of the people--nothing else."

The description is prophetic of Stevie's own end. The remains of his corpse when they are spread out for Heat's inspection resemble "the by-products of a butcher's shop." Winnie has traded her butcher-boy lover for this horror. Stevie is, in fact, the victim of a cannibalistic sacrifice presided over by the guardian of the social order, Verloc. When Verloc returns from Greenwich Park, he recoils from food with a sombre aversion. As his conscience abates and his appetite increases, however, he eats the roast beef which represents Stevie's funeral meats with a gluttony that suggests cannibalism:

The piece of roast beef, laid out in the likeness of funeral baked meats for Stevie's obsequies, offered itself largely to his notice. And Mr. Verloc again partook. He partook ravenously, without restraint and decency, cutting thick slices with the sharp carving knife, and swallowing them without bread.

An early scene in the novel which describes Stevie's reaction to a story of military cruelty makes clear Verloc's authoritarian

1 The Secret Agent, p. 51.
2 Ibid., p. 88.
3 Ibid., p. 193.
role and promises the revenge of Stevie's death in Verloc's murder: 1

"I had to take the carving knife from the boy," Mrs. Verloc continued, a little sleepily now. "He was shouting and stamping and sobbing. He can't stand the notion of any cruelty. He would have stuck that officer like a pig if he had seen him then. It's true, too! Some people don't deserve much mercy."

Winnie kills Verloc with this same carving knife, with the same knife that he uses to cut the beef, when, as we shall see next, she has symbolically assumed the identity of the dead Stevie.

The murder of Verloc is, in part, a parable of the forces of revolution destroying a moribund society.

The murder of Verloc is the second of three instants of suffering which form a chain of human experience that binds Stevie, Winnie, and Ossipon. Winnie had made her own social contract with Verloc based upon her sympathy with Stevie's suffering. Stevie's moment of ultimate suffering came in the instant of the explosion, the first of the chain. To Inspector Heat, "it seemed impossible to believe that a human body could have reached that stage of disintegration without passing through the pangs of inconceivable agony." 2 Stevie had been the source of Winnie's light, and when he died her sun went out: 3

Mrs. Verloc remained immovably seated. She kept still as the population of half the globe would keep still in astonishment and despair, were the sun suddenly put out in the summer sky by the perfidy of a trusted providence.

1 The Secret Agent, p. 60.
2 Ibid., p. 87
3 Ibid., p. 244.
But the energy of the explosion is transferred to Winnie, whose pyrotechnic vision of Stevie's destruction has already been quoted. The physical equivalent of the psychic disturbance to which Winnie is subjected is suggested in these terms:

... [Winnie's] moral nature had been subjected to a shock of which, in the physical order, the most violent earthquake of history could only be a faint and languid rendering ... .

The explosion releases not only destructive energy, but also light seen as a flash of lightning in the fog. The fog had obscured the sun's light, the symbol of understanding and compassion for suffering. Stevie's acute experience of suffering is passed on to Winnie, who has both the light of the explosion and its destructive energy. The transference of energy is symbolized by the effect upon her eyes of the news of Stevie's death:

But the lamentable circumstances of Stevie's end ... dried her tears at their very source. It was the effect of a white-hot iron drawn across her eyes ... .

Only her eyes had betrayed the fact that she would act against Verloc. They had "seemed like two black holes, felt to her as if they were enveloped in flames." In them the light of the sun is finally obscured for her by the darkness of London and death. They enlarge and blacken to foreshadow her ultimate oblivion in the final act of destruction—her suicide. After the murder, her eyes are "big, dry, enlarged, lightless, burnt out like two black holes in the white, shining globes."

1 The Secret Agent, p. 255.
2 Ibid., p. 241.
4 Ibid., p. 260.
5 Ibid., p. 296.
At the actual moment of committing the murder, Winnie is invested symbolically with the identity of Stevie. The description of Winnie as "under the locking power of a spell" suggests that the claims of her sympathetic bond with Stevie, which is described in terms of enchantment, still operate after Stevie's death. The transference of identity is first suggested when Winnie sits in the "place where poor Stevie usually established himself of an evening with paper and pencil for the pastime of drawing those coruscations of innumerable circles suggesting chaos and eternity." The identification is complete as Winnie advances with the carving knife to kill Verloc:

As if the homeless soul of Stevie had flown for shelter straight to the breast of his sister, guardian, and protector, the resemblance of her face with that of her brother grew at every step, even to the droop of the lower lip, even to the slight divergence of the eyes.

Stevie's blow against the German soldier officer who had torn half-off the ear of a recruit has finally been struck, and its recipient is Verloc.

1 The Secret Agent, p. 212.
2 Ibid., p. 237.
3 Ibid., p. 262.
4 Thomas Moser shows that the use of the carving knife also symbolizes effectively Winnie's repudiation of the private contract of her marriage to Verloc. She repudiates her intimate and conventional marriage relationship with Verloc by stabbing him with the carving knife which had been "previously identified with him," and whose Freudian significance is obvious (Joseph Conrad, p. 93). This interpretation does not contradict mine, because Winnie had married Verloc only for Stevie's sake. The symbolic use of Verloc's hat suggests that compassion should be felt even for him. The hat in Conrad usually symbolizes, as it does in "The Secret Sharer," man's mortality and the need for compassion for man's weakness and limitation. The true sense of the scene Ossipon beholds in the
Winnie's desperate plunge in despair from the deck of the channel steamer is the third instant of suffering in the novel. Ossipon bears the burden of Winnie's death and carries on her experience. He had exploited Winnie as he had innumerable other women. He had appeared to Winnie "like a radiant messenger of life." But he was a false Apollo; he denied the claims of human solidarity. In taking the money from Winnie, he gave himself a moral wound from which he can never fully recover:

He received it without a word, and seemed to plunge it deep somewhere into his very breast.

This description duplicates the description of Winnie when she remembers that she has the Embassy money secreted in her bosom. After Ossipon has abandoned Winnie, he feels compelled to trace a path through "the enormous town slumbering monstrously on a carpet of mud under a veil of raw mist." He walks "through Squares, Places, Ovals, Commons, through monotonous streets with unknown names where the dust of humanity settles inert and hopeless out of the stream of life." On his journey he stops on a bridge and is fascinated by the river, "a sinister marvel of still shadows and flowing gleams mingling below in a black silence," which seems to transport to him the mystery of human life. He

parlour is revealed to him "through the contemplation of the hat" (p. 285). But the ironic content of this use is more obvious. Verloc, in the conceit which comes from his sense of power in his secret profession, has ignored his mortality and limitations. "Mr. Verloc flung himself heavily upon the sofa, disregarding as usual the fate of his hat" (p. 259). "Night, the inevitable reward of men's faithful labours on this earth, night had fallen on Mr. Verloc" (pp. 287-88).

1 The Secret Agent, p. 274.
2 Ibid., p. 293.
3 Ibid., p. 300.
has never before contemplated the human condition; his moral
nature had never been awakened. But he has now submitted himself
to the vision of human suffering. Ossipon cannot sleep when he
returns home until the sun throws its light upon him. The sunlight
represents the revelation of the human condition which has come
to him and symbolically transfers Winnie's tragic suffering and
despair on to Ossipon. But like the explosion which had destroyed
Stevie and which transferred both light and destructive energy
upon Winnie, the sunlight has a two-fold nature. It reveals the
redemptive power of human sympathy and, like a benediction upon
Ossipon, it permits him finally to sleep. And in the destructive
part of its nature, it will sweep away all of his illusions and
never again permit him to rest complacent in the satisfaction of
profiting from the miseries of others.

The truth which has come to Ossipon embodied in the sunlight
remains with him in the newspaper account of Winnie's suicide,
which he pulls out of his pocket, where his heart beats against
it, "as if suddenly compelled by some mysterious force."¹ It has
replaced the money which had given him a moral wound, but it too
is buried destructively within him. His life has so long been
based on deception and fraud that he cannot break out of his
isolation. The claims of human solidarity prevent him from ever
again manipulating the emotions of other people, but he can find
no alternative that will permit him to live. The only intelligible
formulation which he can find for his new understanding are
the trite journalistic phrases, "'An impenetrable mystery seems

¹ The Secret Agent, p. 306.
destined to hang for ever over this act of madness or despair."

But as Conrad has earlier said of Winnie:

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

And Ossipon now knows that behind Winnie's "white mask there was struggling against terror and despair a vigour of vitality, a love of life that could resist the furious anguish which drives to murder." Ossipon defends Michaelis' utopian plan for human happiness from the attack of the Professor and refutes the latter's negation of all compassion and his refusal to recognize his mortality: "'Mankind wants to live— to live... eternity is a damned hole. It's time that you need.'"

At the end of the novel, we are left with a choice between the "incorruptible Professor" who averts his eyes "from the odious multitude," and the transformed Ossipon, the last link in the chain of sympathy. The Professor believes that blood alone puts

1 The Secret Agent, p. 307.
2 Ibid., p. 298.
3 Ibid., p. 308.
4 Ibid., p. 305.
5 Ibid., p. 311. Conrad's description of the Professor's glasses provides a masterful image of the combination of wisdom and blindness. His black, heavy-rimmed spectacles make him appear owlish. Their resemblance to searchlights emphasizes both the keenness of his perception and the fundamental moral blindness of his vision.
a seal of greatness, and depends upon death for his strength:

"They the police depend on life . . . whereas I depend on death, which knows no restraint and cannot be attacked. My superiority is evident."

He has worked absolutely alone for years and believes that individuals are "not of the least consequence." The futility of his life and the profound error of his beliefs are apparent in his opinion that "'there are no such things!' as madness and despair anymore, that "'all passion is lost now.'" At the end of the novel, he passes on "unsuspected and deadly, like a pest in the street full of men." He represents destructive energy alone; he is a force completely untouched by compassion.

Conrad suggests in The Secret Agent that the social order can be regenerated if the sympathy and compassion of its individual members are made to work within it. The sympathy which is perverted in the novel into a destructive force by a moribund society must be harnessed within the social framework. Conrad's ideal of a stable society which permits the fullest development for his good and happiness of the inherent faculties within man is implicit in the novel. Unless his best faculties of sympathy and compassion are permitted release, man will be swallowed up in the darkness within, as society will be engulfed by the darkness

1 The Secret Agent, p. 304.
2 Ibid., p. 68.
3 Ibid., p. 72.
4 Ibid., p. 309.
The Professor and Vladimir despise England for its "idealistic conception of legality" and its "sentimental regard for individual liberty" respectively. These principles which are necessary to the maintenance of a stable society must be based on a recognition of the need for compassion and of man's mortality. The revitalizing energy of sympathy for individual suffering which is represented symbolically in the novel by the light of the sun is what gives life to these principles. A mechanical and dehumanized society can only merge into the darkness and immobility of its inanimate setting.

1 Cf. Mrs. Hay on Nostromo: "A realist in politics, a personalist in human relationships, Monygham comes as close as any character in Conrad's fiction to proposing the marriage of politics and morality which Conrad saw as the perhaps unattainable goal of human history" (Political Novels, pp. 208-09).
The Rover also indicates that the full significance of the sympathetic bond is revealed by the light it throws on Conrad's view of society. The novel presents a glimpse of a society in chaos. All of its characters have been profoundly affected by the process of social dissolution which they have experienced. Conrad was temperamentally and intellectually unable to conceive of individuals existing apart from a social context; The Rover, of all his novels, makes most explicit man's dependence upon a healthy society. Once again we shall see that social organization must meet man's needs and will remain strong only as long as it is founded on compassion. As in The Secret Agent, the individuals most affected by the disintegration of social order are described, symbolically, as experiencing the force of an explosion, the shock of which stuns and enchants them. The sympathetic bond arises between them when they feel love and sympathy, and it acts to reclaim them for life. The urge to live returns to Escampobar in the person of Peyrol. He does not find the fulfilment of his life which he seeks, however, until he abandons the dream of peace which had impelled his return home and sacrifices his life for his country and the sufferers at Escampobar with whom he feels

1 See pp. 21-27 of the Introduction of this thesis for a comparison of The Rover and The Secret Agent and for a general discussion of the connection between the sympathetic bond and society.
a bond of sympathy. His individual commitment to his country and his renunciation in action make possible a return to the normal state and breaks the spell that hangs over Escampobar. The reconciliation of the major characters with their homeland begins in the private bonds which they feel with their fellows. Society is built anew in the novel, and is seen to be dependent on these fundamental human ties.

_The Rover_, in its analysis of the character of Peyrol, is the story of alienation from and reconciliation with one's homeland. Peyrol had fled the land after the death of his mother left him without ties. The young Peyrol's terror had been reinforced by his impression of the chaotic state of society on the waterfront of Marseilles:

1. . . . the last thing that had nearly overwhelmed him at the age of twelve with another kind of terror was the riot of sound and the multitude of mankind on the quays in Marseilles, something perfectly inconceivable from which he had instantly taken refuge behind a stack of wheat sacks after having been chased ashore from the tartane.

With no other ties to hold him, he was impelled by the urge to escape, to abandon all ties with his native land, and joined the international fraternity of The Brotherhood of the Coast. Years later he hears the rumours and reports of a new order, one radically different from the old, yet not unlike the Brotherhood of the Coast in its principles. 2. Driven by his revived yearning for home and his vague hopes that he may now be able to find a place

1 _The Rover_, p. 24.

2 _Ibid._, p. 5.
of refuge and serenity for himself on shore—"his instinct of rest had found its home at last"—Peyrol follows the track to his childhood neighbourhood.

Gustav Morf has emphasized "the sweetness of return" in Peyrol's sensations and cites part of a passage which demonstrates the increasing strength of Peyrol's feelings of kinship with the natives of his homeland:

... here, on this Southern shore that had called to him irresistibly as he had approached the Straits of Gibraltar on what he had felt to be his last voyage, any woman, lean and old enough, might have been his mother; he might have been any Frenchman of them all, even one of those he pitied, even one of those he despised. He felt the grip of his origins from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet ... .

1 The Rover, p. 31. Peyrol is not, of course, carried away with with revolutionary, or any other, enthusiasm. We learn that "what he had gone through ... with all the graduations of varied experience of men and passions between, had put a drop of universal scorn, a wonderful sedative, into the strange mixture which might have been called the soul of the returning Peyrol" (p. 25). Peyrol's scorn extended also to the revolution, for "he acquired the revolutionary jargon quickly enough and used it on occasion, with secret contempt" (p. 25). Yet his curiosity was aroused sufficiently that he consorted with Republicans in Toulon and had looked forward to meeting "the shore breed. Those who had made the Revolution safe. The real thing" (p. 2). As Morf notes (Polish Heritage, p. 185), his reply to accusations ['desertion'] about his past is that "if there was anything of that sort it was in the time of kings and aristocrats" (p. 4). Peyrol's attitudes reveal a fundamental conflict within Conrad himself about his ties with Poland and his political convictions. As Morf states, one of the assumptions of The Rover is that "true patriotism must needs be above political divisions" (p. 182). Mrs. Hay discusses at some length the question of Conrad's allegiance to Poland.

2 Morf, Polish Heritage, p. 181.

3 The Rover, p. 98.
This kinship is presented, characteristically, by the mechanism of the sympathetic bond. Peyrol identifies with the feeling and condition of the people he meets. His response to the cripple is one of warm comradeship and respect for his "activity, audacity, and intelligence." He thinks about him with "a slight shudder at the thought: 'Suppose I had been born like that.' Ever since he had put his foot on his native land such thoughts had haunted him. They would have been impossible anywhere else." Peyrol adopts Michael as his "crew" after the latter has lost his dog. He thus frees Michael from his life in isolation on the circum­scribing lagoon. Nor can he leave Michael behind on the mission that will mean death for both of them:

"If I had gone away by myself, I would have left you marooned on this earth like a man thrown out to die on a desert island."

But Peyrol's involvement is more intensely sustained at the Escampobar farm. He says to Real, "'I am old Peyrol and this place, as lonely as a ship at sea, is like a ship to me and all in it are like shipmates.'" We learn of his relations with Real that he "was the first human being to break through that schooled reserve which the precariousness of all things had forced on the orphan of the Revolution." The communion between Real and Peyrol is intense and silent; the two men experience a sympathetic

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1 The Rover, p. 93.
2 Ibid., p. 98.
3 Ibid., p. 253.
4 Ibid., p. 44.
5 Ibid., p. 71.
The midnight meeting of Lieutenant Real and Peyrol was perfectly silent. Peyrol, sitting on the bench outside the salle, had heard the footsteps coming up the Madrague track long before the lieutenant became visible. But he did not move. He did not even look at him. The lieutenant, unbuckling his sword-belt, sat down without uttering a word. The moon, the only witness of the meeting, seemed to shine on two friends so identical in thought and feeling that they could commune with each other without words.

This immobility of the two figures suggests the spell under which they still live. In its completeness it is like the silence and rigidity that give Escampobar itself the quality of a petrified land. The sympathetic bond, though firmly established between the two men, can be made effective only by action on Peyrol's part.

Peyrol's attraction to Arlette is also detached and transcendent:

This one was a lovable creature. She produced on him the effect of a child, aroused a kind of intimate emotion which he had not known before to exist by itself in a man. He was startled by its detached character.

The effect of Peyrol on Arlette is no less strange. Catherine says that, "'it was like a miracle happening'".

"Don't you know that the first time Arlette saw you she spoke to you and that it was the first time I heard her speak of her own accord since she had been brought back by that man, and I had to wash her from head to foot before I put her into her mother's bed."

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1 The Rover, p. 203. This rapport does not, however, reduce the ambiguity of their relations. Their accord is instinctive and apart from the social and political issues into which they are drawn; cf. "This naval officer was not a man he could trust; to whom he could, for instance, tell the story of his prisoner and what he had done with him" (p. 214).

2 Ibid., p. 88.

3 Ibid., p. 169.

4 Loc. cit.
Peyrol's rehabilitation to his native land is, however, not the only major theme of the novel or the only area in which the sympathetic bond operates. The redemptive love between Real and Arlette is equally significant. Their histories reveal Conrad's preoccupation with the pathology of society in dissolution, and the consequent isolation of the individual. Their love overcomes finally the psychologically crippling effects of their early suffering, and thereby makes possible for them a normal life in a stable society. As Paul L. Wiley shows, the two themes are linked by Peyrol's final patriotic sacrifice, which serves to re-establish the normal state. Wiley describes *The Rover* as "one of his strongest affirmations—almost a parable, in fact—of the superiority of life over death, of the normal over the abnormal."\(^1\)

The bond of love and affection between Real and Arlette is actually similar to the bond of sympathetic identification which each has with Peyrol. Real sees in Arlette an image of the suffering of the Revolution which he has himself undergone. Their similar past experience and present isolation make their attraction to one another more intense. Both have been victims of revolutionary blood baths in their childhood; both are consequently so isolated from their fellows that they are in a state of enchantment; and both have the spell upon them broken by their love and Peyrol's sacrifice. They gaze intensely at one another, devouring with their eyes what they cannot reach out and claim. Their growing affection acts against the crippling effects of their exper-

\(^1\) Wiley, *Conrad's Measure*, p. 188.
ience and aids in their reconciliation to their country. The closest parallel found in other works by Conrad is the relationship between Falk and Herman's niece.

Like Arlette, Real was orphaned by the Revolution, and like Peyrol, whom he resembles in many aspects of his character and history, he ran away to sea where he "found another standard of values":¹

In the course of some eight years, suppressing his faculties of love and hatred, he arrived at the rank of an officer by sheer merit, and had accustomed himself to look at men sceptically, without much scorn or much respect. His principles were purely professional and he had never formed a friendship in his life—more unfortunate in that respect than old Peyrol, who at least had known the bonds of the lawless Brotherhood of the Coast.

Peyrol was preserved from the death-like rigidity of spirit which possesses Real by his ties of mutual dependence and support in the Brotherhood. Real's life was less sustaining, though within the ranks. He has had to suppress his "faculties of love and

¹ *The Rover*, pp. 70-71. Morf has shown the connection between Peyrol's sensations at returning home and Conrad's ties with Poland. The possession of the tartane suggests a desire to maintain a connection with a part of one's past. On the other hand, Peyrol's sea is described as the wanderings of a "disinherited soul" (p. 142). But I believe there are more autobiographical overtones in Real's character and experience. Real, like Conrad, had found "another standard of values" at sea. Even though he is a "'child of the Revolution'" (see letter from Conrad to Garnett, Dec. 24, 1923, Garnett, *Letters from Joseph Conrad*, pp. 298-99, quoted in Hay, *Political Novels*, p. 317), he cannot forget that he is ci-devant (*The Rover*, p. 172). This suggests Conrad's fidelity to the memory of Poland which Hay discusses at length, and his conflict between revolution and conservatism. Real has "no place in the world to go to" (p. 209). His principles are a defense against life and all his "softer emotions" have been killed by the Revolution. Real is like Conrad in his urge to commit suicide (p. 211). He is restrained only by the thought that his life belongs to his country.
hatred." The navy is for him only a dehumanized institution; his early experiences have prevented him from feeling committed to any mutual endeavour with his fellows.

At this point in the narrative, Real has not yet surrendered to his love for Arlette and "could not—or perhaps would not—tell even to himself why it was that he came there." Real resists, though haunted by the recollection of it, "the forbidden vision of Escampobar with the figure of that distracted girl, mysterious, awful, pale, irresistible in her strangeness." But it is not merely because Arlette is suffering under the madness of her spell that the vision is a forbidden one. To return to Escampobar is to return to the haunting vision of childhood suffering and death embodied by Arlette. He is driven back to the farm to purge himself of the effects of his childhood experience. Peyrol says of Real that, "'it is as if you had been bewitched in your cradle':

Lieutenant Real got up as if moved by a spring. "Bewitched," he repeated, standing very stiff: "In my cradle, eh? . . . [Conrad's ellipsis] No, I don't think it was so early as that."

Until he recognizes the full force of the spell upon him and submits to his love and sympathy for Arlette, he cannot fully come to life. Lying beside Peyrol on the bench outside the house, Real presents the appearance of a corpse. He has realized that to leave the claims of life made upon him by Arlette is

1 _The Rover_, p. 71.
2 _Ibid_., p. 211.
3 _Ibid_., p. 206.
4 _Ibid_., p. 206.
to return to a death in life. When Peyrol reminds him that he must soon leave Escampobar and Arlette to face death or capture on his mission, his eyes are the "eyes of a dead man."

Arlette's early experiences were more gruesome even than those of Peyrol and Real. Unable to escape the mainland as they had, Arlette was driven mad. Forced by Scevola to join in the outrage of the Jacobins, she reappeared before her Aunt Catherine a week after the death of her parents, "like a corpse out of a grave, with a blood-soaked blanket over her shoulders and a red cap on her head."\(^1\) She too would remain dead to life till redeemed by love. She had suffered a baptism of blood that marked and isolated her, and she had felt the urge to throw herself into the water—a symbol of escape from the horrors of the land throughout the novel:\(^2\)

"I ran in the midst of them, Monsieur l'Abbe," Arlette went on in a breathless murmur. "Whenever I saw any water I wanted to throw myself into it, but I was surrounded on all sides, I was jostled and pushed and most of the time Scevola held my hand very tight... The wine, the pavements, the arms and faces, everything was red. I had red splashes all over me. I had to run with them all day, and all the time I felt as if I were falling down, and down, and down. The houses were nodding at me. The sun would go out at times. And suddenly I heard myself yelling exactly like the others. Do you understand, Monsieur l'Abbe? The very same words!"

Arlette's impulse was to seek her own annihilation, to escape by drowning. Her ordeal is described in terms of the Fall of man.\(^3\)

\(^1\) The Rover, p. 91.

\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 153-54.

\(^3\) It is a mistake to apply mechanically the theme of the Fall of man in an interpretation of the novel as Wiley does. Escampobar
She shares in the beastial unrestraint unleashed by the dark side of man's nature. Imagery of the deluge appears in the novel to describe the annihilating flood of violence unleashed by the disintegration of society.

The force of the shock suffered by Arlette was so great that she felt the sun go out for her. References to the end of the world also colour the description of the night of the evacuation from Toulon as it was seen from Escampobar: ¹

Then came a night as if the world were coming to an end. All the sky was lighted up, the earth shook to its foundations, and she felt the house rock, so that jumping up from the bench she screamed with fear. That night she never went to bed. Next morning she saw the sea covered with sails, while a black and yellow cloud of smoke hung over Toulon. A man coming up from the Madrague told her that he believed that the whole town had been blown up.

The force of war and revolution rending the social fabric as an external event is compared by Conrad to complete annihilation. The war as an internal event affecting the mind and feelings of Catherine generates a psychic power which stuns and arrests her as it does Real and Arlette. Arlette is haunted by the memory of past horrors. She can not live solidly in the physical world, nor can she gaze directly at objects because of the dreaded vision which she senses lurking behind them, "some mutilated vision of the dead." ² Real first described her as a shadow in the moon-

¹ The Rover, p. 90.
² Ibid., p. 49.
light. After watching the inhabitants of the village chase Scevola back to Escampobar, she leaves Peyrol's room "with no more sound than a shadow."1 And Real tells Peyrol that, "'I know her shadow.'"2 Real can understand fully Arlette's experience through his own and through his sympathy and love for her.

Not only is Arlette herself like a shade and under a spell, but Escampobar and the surrounding region is an enchanted land. The enchantment is maintained, symbolically, by the moon's light throughout the novel. Looking at the farm buildings from a distance, Peyrol is strongly "affected by their deserted appearance."3 Life appears to have been petrified, and "amongst the unchangeable rocks at the extreme end of the Peninsula, time seemed to have stood still and idle."4 To Captain Vincent aboard the Amelia, "the pervading stillness of the moon, riding on a speckless sky, seemed to pour her enchantment on an uninhabited planet."5 On returning to the ship after his mission ashore,

1 The Rover, p. 43.

2 Loc. cit. Arlette embodies, as I have suggested above, the darker side of his own experience. She is, in fact, a representation of the shadow archetype which Jung discusses: "The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real . . .

"Closer examination of the dark characteristics—that is, the inferiorities constituting the shadow—reveals that they have an emotional nature, a kind of autonomy, and accordingly an obsessive or, better, possessive quality." ("The Shadow," from Aion, in Psyche and Symbol, p. 7).

3 Ibid., p. 140.
4 Ibid., p. 40.
Bolt conveys to Captain Vincent that "he believed the confounded spot to be bewitched" and that Symond had apparently been "spirited away by some supernatural means." Scevola declares that, "'this is an accursed spot.'" With the affective destruction of society, normal life is rendered impossible. The characters in the novel are as dehumanized and immobile as their natural surroundings. They inhabit a waste land that will be able to sustain life once more only when the spell that holds them is unlocked by the force of human claims.

Real is first attracted to Arlette because she is, for him, the embodiment of death in life. Catherine says of Real, "'Well if it isn't for her that he is coming back then it must be because death has beckoned to him . . . . a man who has received a sign from death—nothing can stop him!'" Real's attraction to annihilation complements Arlette's madness. They must purge the death and madness of their spells to establish their love in the real world. His initial self-contempt—loving a woman who is body without mind suggests the perverse in his feeling—is dispelled by the sudden illumination that this body represents the gate to life as well as to death, that this human envelope is pure "body":

"Body without mind! Body without mind! he repeated with angry derision directed at himself.

1 The Rover, p. 59.
2 Ibid., p. 63.
3 Ibid., p. 180.
4 Ibid., p. 214. Like the sister in "Karsin," Arlette also represents the anima archetype. "'All in her is seduction, mystery, enchantment.'" The dream of peace which she brings Real is not,
And all at once he thought: "No. It isn't that. All in her is mystery, seduction, enchantment. And then—what do I care for her mind!"

The relationship between Falk and Hermann's niece provides a close parallel. Falk is attracted to the flesh as such of Hermann's niece, the sexual possession of which will provide the physical negation of his cannibalistic experiences. But as long as the spell remains, annihilation will overshadow life in them. When Arlette locks them in his room together, Real feels "utterly bereft of all his senses." The "livid immobility of his face" suggests death until he is brought back to life by Arlette's touch. From then on their love balances in an unstable equilibrium between physical communion in the real world and a shadowy, dream-like and eternal release from life:

He came back to life with a low and reckless exclamation, felt horribly insecure at once as if he were standing on a lofty pinnacle above a noise as of breaking waves in his ears, in fear lest her fingers should part and she would fall off and be lost to him for ever . . . Her eyes were closed and the expression of her unsmiling face was that of a delightful dream, something infinitely ethereal, peaceful and, as it were, eternal.

While Arlette's voice cuts him "off from all reality", the "soft grip of her hand . . . [is] his only contact with the world." as it is in "Karain," totally false. But she does embody a vision of destructive self-forgetfulness that threatens Real. See also pg. 158 below for a discussion of other overtones in the relationship between Real and Arlette.

Motifs from folk-lore have also compounded the difficulties of interpreting Conrad's intentions. For instance, Arlette is clearly a sleeping beauty figure (p. 229). A more complete interpretation of the novel would require an examination in terms of folk-lore and Jungian psychology.

1 The Rover, p. 215.
2 Ibid., p. 215.
3 Ibid., p. 216.
4 Ibid., p. 218.
When they hear Catherine outside the door, Arlette reaffirms her love with a long and intense embrace which brings annihilation closer to Real:1

To him the stillness seemed to extend to the limits of the universe. The thought "Am I going to die?" flashed through that stillness and lost itself in it like a spark flying in an everlasting night. The only result of it was the tightening of his hold on Arlette.

An aged and uncertain voice was heard uttering the word "Arlette" . . . Real felt as if it had saved his life. They separated silently.

But when the last touch of her hand ceases, his hold on life also weakens:2

The room became dark suddenly. He thought, "A cloud over the moon, a cloud over the moon, an enormous cloud," while he walked rigidly to the window, insecure and swaying as if on a tightrope. After a moment he perceived the moon in a sky on which there was no sign of the smallest cloud anywhere. He said to himself, "I suppose I nearly died just now."

Just before they part, their love is described as enchanted: "they stood like a pair of enchanted lovers bewitched into immobility."3

Arlette's love for Real is also tinged with unreality until the spell is broken. Peyrol thinks to himself that, "'She sat and stared at him as if he had been gilt all over, with three heads and seven arms on his body'--a comparison reminiscent of certain idols he had seen in an Indian temple."4 Arlette, we learn, is "stunned because Lieutenant Real was not free from all

1 The Rover, p. 222.
2 Ibid., p. 224.
3 Ibid., p. 223.
4 Ibid., p. 179.
earthly connections, like a visiting angel from heaven depending only on God to whom she had prayed."¹ Real awakens in Arlette a pagan affirmation of life, one which must be sanctioned and aided by Peyrol before it can express itself in normality and marriage.

To the Abbe, Arlette is a "heathen": "White as her skin was, the blackness of her hair and of her eyes, the dusky red of her lips, suggested a strain of Saracen blood. He gave her up without a sigh."² But the Abbe's doctrine of renunciation, unlike Peyrol's sacrifice, is a denial of life. He is coldly inhuman.

With Real alone can she feel herself a living being in the physical world, and "experience that strange satisfying consciousness of her own existence which nothing but Real's presence could give her; a sort of unimpassioned but all-absorbing bliss, warmth, courage, confidence!"³ Declaring her love for Real to Catherine, Arlette says, "'I am awake now!'"⁴ Through the strength given her by her love for Real, she can reassert the claims of life within her and defy the spell that had constricted her spirit and negated her body:⁵

"And if I have been possessed," she argued to herself, "as the Abbe said, what is it to me as I am now? That evil spirit cast my true self out of my body and then cast away the body too. For years I have been living empty. There has been no meaning in anything."

¹ The Rover, pp. 175-76.
² Ibid., p. 159.
³ Ibid., p. 160.
⁴ Ibid., p. 146.
⁵ Ibid., p. 159.
Peyrol recognizes the new strength within her; he is "staggered by the brilliance of life within her that seemed to pale the flames of the lamp." The new impact of her identity is so overwhelming that Peyrol, "whom only that morning the powerful grasp of Lieutenant Real found as unshakable as a rock, felt all his strength vanish under the hands of that woman." The energy of the social explosion which had stunned her into madness is now partially liberated to reinforce the urge to live.

1 The Rover, p. 174.

2 Ibid., p. 175. As Paul L. Wiley points out, Peyrol is stunned by this vitality in Arlette. He is in danger of losing the "detached quality of his sympathetic and paternal affection for her and of feeling an entirely sexual love. "Intense physical enchantment robs Peyrol of strength, and the still active feelings of vigorous age supply fuel to his emotion . . . " (Conrad's Measure, p. 191). Peyrol becomes jealous of Real. He is tempted to let Real die by letting him complete the mission, whereas he finally undertakes it himself. "The fact that he decides quickly for the second alternative does not obscure the point that the decision itself, like that faced by Lingard, lies between the claims of a human pair and those of personal desire" (Conrad's Measure, p. 192). Peyrol taunts Real with his impending death, even though he has decided to sacrifice himself in place of Real. In fact, it is more likely that Peyrol does not decide to undertake the mission himself until Arlette runs to the tartane in search of Real.

Moser believes that Conrad's tendency to treat love idealistically in his latter work was counter to his real beliefs. Conrad, he suggests, could depict women convincingly only as objects of pity or as dangerous antagonists to the men they attract. He finds a triangular relationship in all the novels in which love is present. Allied to the woman are the lover and an impotent rival who is usually related to the woman. It is the woman, not the lover, who overcomes the rival and who possesses the real strength in the love relationship. Moser's case, I believe, is thoroughly convincing and clearly demonstrated. The operation of the sympathetic bond and the theme of social regeneration obscure the image of Arlette as sexually rapacious women, but it is nonetheless present in the novel. The death which Real sees embodied in Arlette and which he must tempt is primarily the effect of social dissolution, but it is also to some extent the death of sexual surrender. The impotent rival in the novel is ostensibly Scevola, but Peyrol is clearly in the same position. His antagonism toward Real is, in its most intense
Arlette is fought over and guarded in the novel by both Catherine and Scevola. Both characters represent modes of life which are abnormal and destructive. The image of a barren, lifeless desert presided over by Catherine is opposed by animal imagery associated primarily with Scevola. Catherine represents self-denial, abnegation, barren stoicism, and rejection of life; Scevola, egotism, excess, lust, and animal energy. Arlette must establish a middle course of response and commitment to life tempered with measure and restraint, of intelligent and sentient self-awareness tempered by self-control. Catherine's face is like a carving in the "marvellous immobility of its fine wrinkles." She sits in the kitchen "like a presiding genius of the house taking its rest, and unreadable in its immobility." She is like "an old sibyl risen from the tripod to prophesy calmly atrocious disasters," and Peyrol thinks of her as a witch. The full extent of her negation and its link with the image of the desert is revealed when she is confronted by the revivified Arlette: "The moments, the expression of his jealousy and frustration at losing his command of Arlette. Again, however, the sexual conflict is beneath the surface. Peyrol is also the presiding spirit of Escampobar. He has, as we have seen, turned away from active life to an existence of false peace and security in the petrified world of Escampobar which he rules. He keeps order in Escampobar (p. 214), and he can give Real to Arlette: "Arlette, as if mechanically, was whispering to herself the magic name, 'Peyrol, Peyrol!' then cried: 'I want Eugene now. This moment.'" (p. 246). See also footnote 4, pp. 153-54 of this chapter.

1 The Rover, p. 80.
2 Ibid., p. 162.
3 Ibid., p. 170.
profile of Catherine . . . became if possible harder; a sharp carving of an old prophetess of some desert tribe."¹ Her life had been crushed by the force of her passion, impossible of fulfilment, for the priest with whom she had fallen in love at eighteen. At first the gentle kindness of her brother sustained her in her isolated despair. After his death, she had only Arlette remaining to her:²

"I can think of nothing but that niece of mine. We two have nobody but each other in the world," she went on, reproducing the very phrase Arlette had used to Real.

The protection of Arlette from Scevola becomes her only purpose in life. She feels intensely the pitiful suffering of the girl in a way reminiscent of Winnie's devotion to Stevie:³

"I took her upstairs. She was as helpless as a little child. I undressed her and examined her all over. She had no hurt anywhere. I was sure of that—but of what more could I be sure? I couldn't make sense of the things she babbled at me. Her very voice distracted me. She fell asleep directly I had put her into my bed, and I stood there looking down at her, nearly going out of my mind with the thought of what that child may have been dragged through."

A genuine bond of sympathy exists between the two women. However, Catherine fears the return of human impulses which she sees reviving in Arlette because of her own knowledge of the destructive power of passion and her despair of the possibility of human happiness resulting from her vision of Revolution. She cannot

¹ *The Rover*, p. 174.
help Arlette to return to life and must resist, with the full force of her negation, the emergence of the life energy imprisoned within Arlette. She has "a superstitious fear of that niece restored to her from the terrors of a Judgment Day in which the world had been given over to the devils."\textsuperscript{1} Her view of Arlette's destiny is that of Abbe of the village church.\textsuperscript{2} She appears like an apparition to Real in his room and speaks "like a cruel fate that had to be faced."\textsuperscript{3} She tells him that "'she is my niece, and you know that there is death in the folds of her skirt and blood about her feet. She is for no man.'"\textsuperscript{4} Her negation is so great that Conrad presents her as an allegorical figure of death:\textsuperscript{5}

A strange, dim, cold light filled the room; a light he did not recognize for anything he had known before, and at the foot of his bed stood a figure in dark garments with a dark shawl over its head, with a fleshless predatory face and dark hollows for its eyes, silent, expectant, implacable . . . . "Is this death?" he asked himself, staring at it terrified. It resembled Catherine. It said again: "Ecoutez." He took away his eyes from it and glancing down noticed that his clothes were torn open on his chest. He would not look up at that thing, whatever it was, spectre or old woman . . . .

The bond between Arlette and Catherine is destructive and inhuman. It maintains the death and enchantment that surrounds Arlette. Catherine's complete renunciation had been necessary, however, in guarding Arlette from Scevola. It preserves Arlette from further

1 \textit{The Rover}, p. 145.
2 \textit{Ibid.}, p. 156.
3 \textit{Ibid.}, p. 225.
4 \textit{Loc. cit.}
5 \textit{Loc. cit.}
harm, but it must give way before the superior claims of life.

Scevola represents the evil in all men that can burst forth uncontrollably. He is the dark side of man, "a poor thing" like Massy in "The End of the Tether." His room is described as the lair of an animal.\(^1\) He has the "defensive grin of some small wild animal afraid of being cornered,"\(^2\) and runs "like a hare" from the townspeople.\(^3\) He has "long canines" which betray the "restless panther lurking in the man."\(^4\) Symonds calls him "a regular savage."\(^5\) The stable fork Scevola uses as a weapon is like the unwieldy instrument selected by Ortega in "The Arrow of Gdd." It suggests, symbolically, both the trident of Neptune and the devil's pitchfork. The irrational forces when uncontrolled in man become diabolical:\(^6\)

That fellow, who had a beard, was like a sparrow in body compared with the other [Peyrol] ; but he was armed dangerously with something that looked to Symonds like either a trident or fishgrains on a staff. "A devil of a weapon that," he thought, appalled.

Scevola shares in the inhuman energy of destruction that threatens man in the novel and is symbolized by the annihilating flood.

Arlette's first urge toward an active life is called forth by Peyrol. The pagan affirmation which grows in Arlette and will tolerate no restraint finds a model in the character of Peyrol.

\(^1\) *The Rover*, p. 161.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 80.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 81.
\(^4\) Ibid., p. 181.
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 257.
\(^6\) Ibid., p. 195.
It is the pagan commitment to life of Peyrol—"the whole robust personality of Peyrol with its quiet vitality . . . antagonistic to the notion of death"\(^1\)—that attracts and first revives Arlette. He attracts her as a messenger of life with a force unrecognized by Real—"a messenger from the unknown entering the solitude of Escampobar."\(^2\) He is described as a fallen angel, and like all men he has potential for evil:\(^3\)

He leaned over the big tiller, and seemed to be hovering above the lieutenant's shoulder. "What's this infernal company?" murmured the latter without even looking at Peyrol.

But he accepts the legacy of his humanity and exerts fully his own innate strength. Wiley has emphasized the Ulyssean qualities of Peyrol:\(^4\)

Although the myth of the redemption of a wasted land appears plainly enough in *The Rover*, the rescuer is Ulyssean rather than knightly—as such features of the story as Peyrol's return home after long wandering, the Telemachus—like situation of Real, and the final launching forth of the old hero to renewed toil upon the sea obviously suggest.

Wiley also points out that Peyrol's actions reveal a profound defiance of his own weakness, of fate, and of "life's petty deceptions."\(^5\) While traversing the ravine to reach the tartane before his last voyage, Peyrol is arrested by the faint sound of distant thunder that presages a change in the weather. His faculties are

\(^1\) *The Rover*, p. 72.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 219.
\(^3\) Ibid., p. 238.
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 193.
completely absorbed in the contemplation of the elemental forces against which he must struggle:  

On that sea ruled by the gods of Olympus he might have been a pagan mariner subject to Jupiter's caprices; but like a defiant pagan he shook his fist vaguely at space which answered him by a short and threatening mutter.

In his strength and fortitude, his skepticism, and his vital stoicism, he is a controlled and integrated being. "In Peyrol even extreme astonishment was deliberate."  

Arlette knows that she must appeal to Peyrol, that the urge to live which she feels is fully developed and mirrored only in him. This urge makes an irresistible claim upon Peyrol's own nature, which he had sought to deny in seeking peace. Arlette runs to the tartane like one of the goats that inhabit the rocks of Escampobar to prevent the departure of Real:  

Arlette flew down the slope. The first sign of her coming was a faint thin scream which really the rover alone heard and understood. He pressed his lips in a particular way, showing his appreciation of the coming difficulty. The next moment he saw, poised on a detached boulder and thinly veiled by the first perpendicular shower, Arlette, who, catching sight of the tartane with the men on board of her, let out a prolonged shriek of mingled triumph and despair: "Peyrol! Help! Pey-----rol!" ..., "Well leaped! Sacre nom! ... [Conrad's ellipsis] "Well leaped!" And he muttered to himself soberly: "She will break her legs or her neck."
"I see you, Peyrol," screamed Arlette, who seemed to be flying through the air.

Peyrol's sacrifice saves them both from the annihilation which

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1 The Rover, p. 237.
2 Ibid., p. 174.
3 Ibid., pp. 247-48.
separation would have meant for them:  

The rain swept over the tartane with an angry swishing roar to which was added the sound of water rushing violently down the folds and seams of the precipitous shore vanishing gradually from his sight, as if this had been the beginning of a destroying and universal deluge— the end of all things.

When Arlette lay unconscious on the deck of the tartane, Real, "his bare head dripping with rain water, looked as if he had just saved her from drowning."  

But the rain also acts, symbolically, as a baptism in the irrational that fully rekindles and releases the fundamental life energy that has been locked within, while at the same time cleansing Arlette's earlier baptism in blood.  

When Real passes the kitchen on the way to the lookout, he is "streaming with water as if he had fought his way up from the bottom of the sea." He too is now reclaimed for life, though their union is still dependent upon the re-establishment by Peyrol of a normal and meaningful relationship to society. Real appears to Arlette like a "vision of a lost man calling to her to follow him to the end of the world."  

However, when they reach the lookout tree and discover that Peyrol has undertaken the mission, the "sense of triumphant life" is supreme. Real recognizes finally that Arlette is a gift of life—"a gift prayed for instead of a stumbling block for his pedantic conscience."

1 The Rover, p. 248.
2 Ibid., p. 249.
3 Ibid., p. 254.
4 Ibid., p. 258.
5 Ibid., p. 260.
6 Ibid., p. 259.
Peyrol's final redemptive act is necessary to remove the spell from Escampobar and to make possible the union of Real and Arlette. Real's love for Arlette is not enough by itself to complete the transformation. Both Real and Arlette have ties with the past which cannot be resolved until the energy of social dissolution which has bewitched them both is released positively. Neither can break these ties alone. Their ultimate union depends upon the resolution of their social history. Peyrol, Real and Arlette have all suffered unjustly in their own country, but they must all be prepared to sacrifice for it, to aid in its redemption. The sympathetic bond acts centrifugally in the novel to bring the characters out of their defeat and isolation into an involvement with the whole society. The primary lesson of the bond in "Heart of Darkness" was seen to be the supremacy of egoless compassion for all mankind. In The Rover, it is the necessity for a stable and ordered society on which man's well-being depends, and it is affirmed by an exalted patriotism. Real, we know, "was in the power of his own word."\(^1\) Until his mission is completed, he cannot be fully alive in the physical world. Arlette cannot achieve happiness until the tartane of her Royalist parents is used as the instrument of that mission. Peyrol, unlike Real and Arlette, of plebian origins, must also affirm his ties with his native land. When Real informs him that he is considered "disparu" in the official records in Toulon, his feelings pass "in a flash from melancholy to fierceness."\(^2\) Peyrol cannot dismiss the information: "It seemed to rankle, as Lieutenant Real

\(^1\) The Rover, p. 220.

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 107.
observed with some surprise; or else it was something inarticulate that rankled, manifesting itself in that funny way.\textsuperscript{1}

It is the sensation of having no existence in his native land that rankles. Peyrol has filled the role of an observer of the English ship. He tells Real that, "They need not have sent you on the\textsuperscript{2} duty" . . . . "I have been watching her now for a month . . . ."

The final voyage of the tartane with Peyrol in command resolves all the ties with the past of the inhabitants of Escampobar. It has a thematic function similar to the lie in "Heart of Darkness." The destructive power of the Revolution is purged, symbolically, in the death of Scevola, the false patriot. Michael has found a meaningful bond only with Peyrol, and when Peyrol commits himself to a fatal endeavour, so must he. Catherine need no longer be the guardian of Arlette, and Real has no longer the impediment of his "word" to stand between himself and Arlette. The corpses of the three men are lain in the cuddy where Royalist dead had lain after the Massacre, and the sinking of the ship parallels the explosions of the Toulon Massacre:\textsuperscript{3}

All at once it vanished, like a flame blown upon, bringing to the beholders the sense of having been left face to face with an immense, suddenly created solitude.

But whereas the explosions in Toulon resulted in complete social

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{The Rover}, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 281. The situation during the Toulon massacre is reproduced in the imaginations of Arlette and Catherine just before Peyrol undertakes the mission. Catherine feels completely alone as she had been during the fateful period. Arlette exper-
chaos represented by the extinction of the sun, this final "explosion" affirms as it snuffs out the clear flame of self-sacrifice.

The final epitaph given Peyrol by Real and Arlette is that, '"he was not a bad Frenchman.' / 'Everything's in that,' murmured the cripple . . . ."1 Peyrol's sacrifice serves to redeem society and to re-establish a condition of normalcy. The sympathetic bonds which have united the three main characters of the novel are based on sympathy for human suffering and the longing to find one's place in a stable society. The final resolution of the bonds produces an exalted self-sacrifice on the part of one and a normal union of the other two.

Conrad affirmed once again, in the last novel he completed, that the basic and asocial power of human sympathy must serve as the foundation for social accord and stability. Only in The Rover, of all the works of his latter period, did he look behind those few simple ideas, such as fidelity and duty, which he invoked so persistently in his later life.2 He sought the basis of all social

ences a vision of Real being killed by a revolutionary mob: "She had seen Real set upon by a mob of men and women, all dripping with blood, in a livid cold light, in front of a stretch of mere shells of houses with cracked walls and broken windows, and going down in the midst of a forest of raised arms brandishing sabres, clubs, knives, axes. There was also a man flourishing a red rag on a stick, while another was beating a drum which boomed above the sickening sound of broken glass falling like rain on the pavement. And away round the corner of an empty street came Peyrol whom she recognized by his white head, walking without haste, swinging his cudgel regularly. The terrible thing was that Peyrol looked straight at her, not noticing anything, composed, without a frown or a smile, unseeing and deaf, while she waved her arms and shrieked desperately to him for help" (pp. 245-46).

1 The Rover, p. 286.

2 Conrad was, I believe, working towards such a re-examination in Victory. It is probably the most interesting of his other later novels, in spite of its melodrama.
ties and found it once more in the inescapable claims of human solidarity. As in his early and middle periods, he showed the inadequacy of traditional virtues and beliefs unless they are rooted in a general compassion for all men and in the recognition of man's weakness and limitations. Conrad's conviction that man needs "compassionate pity in this life" was primary in his thought; he did not feel a complacent trust "of men's motives and of the efficiency of their organization." His emphasis on the need for a stable society was not the result of optimism or conservatism, but of his awareness of man's weakness. Man's dependence upon a social organization that meets his needs is what gives meaning to duty and fidelity. The claims of human solidarity transcend the arbitrary dedication to fixed and external standards of conduct. But Conrad achieved, in The Rover, a resolution of the conflict in his belief. Peyrol's sacrifice and recognition of duty, an example of the renunciation which can inhabit action, becomes the means whereby the power of compassion embodied in the sympathetic bond between Real and Arlette is liberated within the framework of a stable society. Peyrol has lived as a free man outside the "tradition," and his reliance upon his own inner strength and will to live have largely preserved him from the corruption that invests a moribund society. But sympathetic imagination and trust in human feeling bring to him a sense of the need for a stable society. His selfless dedication vindicates that trust in life which is revealed as an imperative by the sympathetic bond.
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