THE IMPORTANCE OF *MARLOW*, THE NARRATOR IN CONRAD'S FICTION

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I certify that the thesis entitled "The Importance of Marlow, the Narrator in Joseph Conrad's Fiction" *by Miss Indrani Bora for the Degree of Master of Philosophy of the North Eastern Hill University, Shillong embodies the record of original investigation carried out by her under my supervision. She has been duly registered and the thesis presented is worthy of being considered for the award of M.Phil Degree. This work has not been submitted for any Degree of any other University.*

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(Dr.(Mrs) T. AO)

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INTRODUCTION

Joseph Conrad, in many ways was the true heir of Henry James, Conrad learnt English when he was twentythree, with such remarkable skill, that he can be compared to De Quincey and Ruskin. Furthermore, his being a seaman contributed largely to the wealth of his fiction. But, he is much more than a mere writer of sea-tales. Later his work is largely a reflection of his own personality. His life at sea was not only a source he drew upon for the material of his fiction, but it provided him with convenient microcosms where he could examine human nature and action.

Conrad used the oldest method in English fiction to tell his tales - to gather a number of men round a dinner table and have one of them relate a strange personal experience. Part of Conrad's achievement as a novelist rests on his best creation - Marlow, the narrator in some of his important novels: **Youth, Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim** and **Chance.**

The idea of using a narrator to tell his stories was conceived to overcome his difficulties with expression when Conrad was writing **The Rescue.** In a letter dated 29th March, 1898, addressed to Edward Garnett, one of the most influential publishers of his time, Conrad wrote:

"....I sit down religiously every morning: I sit down for eight hours every day - and the sitting down is all. In the course of that working day of eight hours I write three sentences which I erase before leaving the table in despair. There's not a single word to send you. Not one.....

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

In these circumstances I feel not much inclination to write letters. As a matter of fact, I had a great difficulty in writing the most commonplace note. I seem to have lost all sense of style and yet I am haunted, mercilessly haunted by the necessity of styles. And that story I can't write weaves itself into all I see, into all I speak, into all I think, into the lines of every book I try to read I haven't read for days. You know how bad it is when one feels one's liver, or Lungs. Well I feel my brain I am distinctly conscious of the contents of my head. My story is there in a fluid - in an evening shape. I can't get hold of it no more than you can grasp a handful of water....[1]

After a few more fruitless efforts to write **The Rescue** Conrad then abandoned it.

In order to circumvent this difficulty the character of Marlow was created. Hereafter, Marlow emerged as an important narrative device in Conrad's fiction.

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[1] **Joseph Conrad, A Critical Biography** by Jocelyn Baines. First published by Weidenfeld & Nicholson in 1960.
The edition used here has been published in Pelican Books in 1971. pp. 255, 256. Hereafter cited as Baines.

Virginia Woolf's understanding of Marlow reveals:

> "... Marlow was one of those born observers who are happiest in retirement. Marlow liked nothing better than to sit on deck, in some obscure creek of the Thames, smoking and recollecting; smoking and speculating; sending after his smoke beautiful rings of words until all the summer's night became a little clouded with tobaco smoke. Marlow, too had a profound respect for the men with whom he had sailed; but he saw the humour of them..."[2]

Critics have traced Marlow's origin to Henry James' narrative technique....

> "Seeing him as a development of the Jamesian observer, they have found him a kind of bearded Maisie or a monocled anticipation of Strether... Marlow an amateur philosopher a compulsive talker, and a kind of artist, considers, colours, and shapes his impressions by himself, while Conrad scribbles in his notebook... Marlow's experience is dependent upon memory where it receives further refraction, is distant in time and place..."[3]

The origin of Marlow can be traced back to **The Nigger of the Narcissus** which is a prelude to Conrad's stories featuring Marlow. But, the narrator himself and his role in **The Nigger of the Narcissus** are shadowy, developing gradually, from **Youth** onwards to **Chance**, giving authenticity to Marlow and his voice.

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[1] **The Common Reader. First Series** by Virginia Woolf Published by the Hogarth Press Ltd. London.
First published 1925 Twelfth Impression 1975 Hereafter cited as Woolf.

[3] "Apology for Marlow" by W.Y. Tindall. - From **Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad.** Essays collected in Memory of James T. Hillhouse. Edited by Robert C. Rathburn & Martin, Steinmann Jr.
Published in Great Britain and India by the Oxford University Press.

Conrad's use of the narrative device of Marlow helps dramatize the action and the projection of it through Marlow's eyes. Marlow enabled Conrad to comment on the narrative, while keeping distance from it.

Virginia Woolf says:

> "..... A rough - and ready distinction would make us say that it is Marlow who comments, Conrad who creates"..... [4]

But Marlow does not remain a mere narrator or a spokesman of Conrad or a commentator. He plays increasingly complete roles in Conrad's fiction and develops to the rank of a character, playing an important role in the narrative.

As Henry James aptly put it when he was discussing **Chance**.

> ...."Mr. Conrad's first care on the other hand is expressly to point or set up a reciter, or definite responsible intervening first person singular, possessed of infinite sources of reference, who immediately proceeds to set up another, to the end that this other may conform again to the practice, and that even at that point the bridge over to the creature, or in other words to the situation of the subject, the thing 'produced', shall if the fancy takes it, once more and yet once more glory in a gap" [5]

The purpose of this study will be to trace the importance of Marlow and the gradual development of his role in Conrad's fiction.

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[4] **Woolf.**

[5] **The New Novel - The Art of Fiction and Other Essays** by Henry James with an Introduction by Morris Roberts. Published by Oxford University Press, New York.

CHAPTER I

MARLOW INTRODUCED

It was the end of the summer of 1898 when Conrad laid aside **The Rescue** with which he could not make desirable progress. After twenty years, towards the end of the summer of 1918, he endeavoured to complete the novel. In the Author's Note to **The Rescue**, completed in 1918, Conrad cited the reasons behind his failure earlier.

> ...."The truth is that when **The Rescue** was laid aside it was not laid aside in despair. Several reasons contributed to this abandonment and, no doubt, the first of these was the growing sense of general difficulty in the handling of the subject. The contents and the course of the story I had clearly in my mind. But as to the way of presenting the facts, and perhaps in a certain measure as to the nature of the facts themselves, I had many doubts. I mean the telling, representative facts, helpful to carry on the idea, and, at the same time, of such a nature as not to demand an elaborate creation of the atmosphere to the detriment of the action. I did not see how I could avoid becoming wearisome in the presentation of detail and in the pursuit of clearance. I saw the action plainly enough. What I had lost for the moment was the sense of the proper formula of expression, the only formula that would suit. This, of course, weakened my confidence in the intrinsic worth and in the possible interest of the story - that is, in my invention. But I suspect that all the trouble was, in reality, the doubt of my prose, the doubt of inadequacy, of its power to master both the colours and the shades.
>
> It is difficult to describe, exactly as I remember it, the complex state of my feelings; but those of my readers who take an interest in artistic perplexities will understand me best when I point out that I dropped **The Rescue** not to give myself up to idleness, regrets or dreaming, but to begin **The Nigger of the Narcissus** and to go on with it without hesitation and without a pause. A comparison of any page of **The Rescue** with any page of the Nigger will furnish an ocular demonstration of the nature and the inward meaning

> of this first crisis of my writing life. For it was a crisis undoubtedly. The laying aside of a work as far advanced was a very awful decision to take. It was wrung from me by a sudden conviction that there only was the road of salvation, the clear way out for an easy conscience. The finishing of **The Nigger** brought to my troubled mind the comforting sense of an accomplished task, and the first consciousness of a certain sort of mastery which could accomplish something with the aid of propitious stars. Why I did not return to **The Rescue** at once, then, was not for the reason that I had grown afraid of it. Being able now to assume a firm attitude I said to myself deliberately: 'That thing can wait'. At the same time I was first as certain in my mind that **Youth**, a story which I had then, so to speak, on the tip of my pen, could not wait. Neither could **Heart of Darkness** be put off; for the practical reason that Mr. Wm Blackwood having requested me to write something for the No. M of his magazine I had to stir up at once, the subject of that tale which had been long lying quiscent in my mind; because, obviously, the venerable Maga at her patriarchal age of 1000 numbers could not be kept waiting. Then **Lord Jim**, with about seventeen pages already written at odd times, put in his claim which was irresistible. Thus every stroke of the pen was taking me further away from the abandoned **Rescue**, not without some compunction on my part but a gradually diminishing resistance; till at last I let myself go, as if recognising a superior influence against which it was useless to contend."*

When Conrad faced a dead-lock in the progress of **The Rescue**, the idea of using a narrator to narrate his stories occured to him as a means to tide over his difficulties with expression. Thus, Marlow was created - a character who not only narrated the story, but also commented on different situations and on different people. The creation and the subsequent use of Marlow as the narrator enriched Conrad's fiction.

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*Author's Note to **The Rescue**, First serialised in Britain & U.S.A. as Land and Water, 30 Jan, 31st July, 1919. Romance (NY), Nov.1919-May, 1920 Published as a book under Conrad's authorship in 1920. The edition used here has been published by Penguin Modern Classics first in 1920 and reprinted in 1978, pp.10,11.

In the 1917 Author's Note to the volume in which **Heart of Darkness, Youth - A Narrative**; and Two other Stories appeared, Conrad devoted three paragraphs to Marlow, "with whom my relations have grown very intimate in the course of years". He stated that he did not have any "meditated plan for his capture" and added: "The man Marlow and I came together in the casual manner of those health resort acquaintances which sometimes ripen into friendships. This one has ripend".

Marlow makes his debut as the narrator of Conrad's stories in **Youth**, written in September 1898 Conrad described **Youth** as 'a Narrative', and it is, in fact a recreation of an episode of his life at sea. It is an evocation, a recollection of a mood, of an attitude that cannot be recaptured. Marlow narrates his first visit to the east and voices Conrad's memorable vision of the east:

> 'And this is how I see the East. I have seen its secret places and have looked into its very soul; but now I see it always from a small boat, a high outline of mountains, blue and afar in the morning; like faint mist at noon; a jagged wall of purple at sunset. I have the feel of the oar in my hand, the vision of a scorching blue sea in my eyes. And I see a bay, a wide bay, Smooth as glass and polished like ice, shimmering in the dark. A red light burns far off upon the gloom of the land, and the night is soft and warm. We drag at the oars with aching arms, and suddenly a puff faint and tepid and laden with strange odours of bloosoms, of aromatic woods, come out of the still night - the first sigh

> of the East on my face. That I can never forget. It was impalpable and enslaving, like a charm, like a whispered promise of mysterious delight"[1]

Youth was aiming at a straightforward effect and Marlow is made to play a simple role to give the tone of the narrative, Marlow gives detailed descriptions of people and situations simultaneously. At times he stands back to reflect on the situation he is describing: "There was a completeness in it, something solid like a principle, like an instinct - a disclosure of something secret - of that hidden something, that gift of good or evil that makes racial difference, that shape the fate of nations."[2]

The narrative is given actually by Marlow's periodic references to the setting:

> "However they are both dead, and youth, strength genius, thoughts, achievements, simple hearts - all dies .... No matter".[3] "What could you expect she was tired - that old ship. Her youth was where mine is - where yours is - you fellows who listen to this yarn; and what friend would throw your years and your weariness in your face? We didn't grumble at her. To us aft at least, it seemed as though we had been born in her, reared in her, had lived in her for ages, had never known any other ship. I could just as soon have abused the old village church at home for not being a catherdral."[4]

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[1] **Youth** - First serialized in Britain in Blackwood's Magazine, Sept.,1898. Appeared in Uniform Edition as **"Youth" A Narrative: and Two Other Stories.** Published as a book under Conrad's authorship in 1902. The edition used here, entitled **The Nigger of the Narcissus and other Tales. Youth, The Secret Sharer** and **Treva of the seven Isles** has been published by Oxford Univ. Press, Ely House, London W_1 and reperinted in 1961,1963,'66,'67, p.221.

[2] **Youth**, p.212.

[3] Ibid., p.190.

[4] Ibid., p.200.

Conrad's first use of Marlow in **Youth** represents an overt break with the distance, impersonality and omniscience of third - person narration. Marlow is made to narrate not only all that he had heard and seen in the past, but he is made to narrate his past experience in the narrative present:

> "Yes, I have seen a little of the Eastern seas; but what I remember best is my first voyage there. You fellows know there are those voyages that seem ordered for the illustration of life, that might stand for a symbol of existence. You fight, work, sweat, nearly kill yourself, sometimes do kill yourself, trying to accomplish something - and you can't. Not from any fault of yours. You simply can do nothing, neither great nor little - not a thing in the world - not even marry an old maid, or get a wretched 600 ton cargo of coal to its port of destination."[5]

Marlow embodies what Henry James thought were the two essential faults of first - person narration: "The terrible fluidity of self-revelation" and the fact that the narrating 'I' has the double privilege of subject and object."

Marlow is not clearly seen as fictional object because of the fact that he enjoys the "double privilege of subject and object". He is his own author - an integral part of the narrative. Marlow narrates the story in which he actively takes part, and at the same time he goes through a remarkable experience:

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[5] **Youth**, pp.185,186.

"It was altogether a memorable affair. It was my first voyage as second mate; it was also my skipper's first command"...[6]

Conrad seemed to be at ease, using the narrative device of Marlow for the first time. He realised the advantage of using a character who could not only narrate, but comment on the story as well. Thus Marlow is made to figure in **Lord Jim, Heart of Darkness** and **Chance**, playing increasingly complex roles in each.

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[6]**Youth**, p.186.

CHAPTER II

MARLOW FURTHER DEVELOPED : HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH KURTZ AND JIM

Heart of Darkness started in the middle of December 1898 and completed in the middle of February 1899, is, in Conrad's own words

> "experience pushed a little (and only very little) beyond the actual facts of the case for the purpose of bringing it home to the minds and bosoms of the readers .... That sombre theme had to be given a sinister resonance, a continued vibration that I hoped would hang on the ear after the last note had been struck".*

In order to achieve this effect, Conrad once again used Marlow as the narrator, because he was concerned not only with the events described, but with their impression on a consciousness like his own. Marlow, also, is developed from the shadowy character of **The Nigger of "The Narcissus"** to the actively curious and self-expressive Marlow seen here and in **Lord Jim.**

The setting used is similar to that used in **Youth**: the same group of people drawn together by the "bond of the sea"[1]

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*Baines, p.272.

[1] **Heart of Darkness** - First serialized in Britain in "Blackwood's Magazine", Feb. April 1899, then in Living Age, 18 June - 4 August 1900. Appeared in Uniform Edition as "Youth", published as a book under Conrad's authorship in 1902.

The edition used here has been published by Penguin Modern Classics in 1973 and reprinted in 1980, p.5.

Hereafter cited as H.D.

The people are sitting on the deck of the 'Nellie' and Marlow narrates his experience in the "heart of darkness".

Heart of Darkness is Conrad's only story which is told on board a ship, and in a setting whose time and place - nightfall on the Thames estuary - become important elements in the course of the narrative. The occasion is unique in another aspect as the narrator and his audience are physically immobilised by the tide and are isolated from everything else: the circumstances favour the creation of the required intimacy for the narration of the story. Moreover Marlow's hearers apparently know him well. The particularity of time and place, the physical isolation and the closeness of the group combine to dramatize the narration and the reader's attention is focussed on Marlow who "sat cross - legged right aft, leaning against the mizzen mast."[2]

Marlow is not only a go-between as a voice, but as a mariner, Conrad says

> "He was a seaman but he was a wanderer, too, while most seamen lead, if one may express it, a sedentary life. Their minds are of the stay-at-home order, and their home is always with them - the ship and so is their country - the sea"[3]

Marlow's listeners had nothing to do before the flood receded, and when Marlow, hesitatingly said, 'I suppose you fellows

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[2] H.D., p.6.

[3] Ibid., p.8.

remember I did once turn fresh-water sailor for a bit,[4] they knew that they "were fated before the ebb began to run, to hear about one of Marlow's inconclusive experiences"[5]. Marlow says of the experience:

> "It seemed to throw a kind of light on everything about me - and into my thoughts. It was sombre enough, too - and pitiful - not extraordinary in any way - not very clear either. No, not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light."[6]

Marlow narrates his journey to the "farthest point of navigation and the culminating point"[7] of his experience. He narrates in detail his journey to the heart of the Congo basin, the "heart of darkness", in the course of which he meets Kurtz.

Marlow hears of Kurtz almost immediately after he arrives in Africa. The chief accountant of the company who 'was amazing, and had a penholder behind his ear"[8], is the first to mention him: "one day he remarked, without lifting his head, "In the interior you will no doubt meet Mr. Kurtz"[9] ...." a first-class agent,"[10] ... a very remarkable

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[4] H.D.., p.10.

[5] Ibid., p.11.

[6] Ibid., p.11.

[7] Ibid., p.11.

[8] Ibid., p.25.

[9] Ibid., p.27.

[10] Ibid., p.27.

person"[11] from then onwards, Marlow often hears Kurtz spoken of and his interest in Kurtz is aroused: "I was curious to see whether this man, who had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort, would climb to the top after all and how he would set about his work when there"[12]. As he hears more about Kurtz, he is excited at the prospect of meeting him, and when it is feared that the boat may not arrive at Kurtz's station before he dies, Marlow has a sense of extreme disappointment.

"I couldn't have been more disgusted if I had travelled all this way for the sole purpose of talking with Mr. Kurtz"[13].

Kurtz had come to Africa armed with grand ideals. In his paper written for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, he wrote: "We whites from the point of development we had arrived at, "must necessarily appear to them (savages) in the nature of super-natural beings - we approach them with the might as of a deity"[14].

Kurtz, "a first class agent"[15] came to Africa for ivory and was obsessed by it. Marlow found that "the word"

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[11] H.D.., p.27.

[12] Ibid., p.67.

[13] Ibid., pp.71,72.

[14] Ibid., p.71,72.

[15] Ibid., p.27.

'ivory' rang in the air, was whispered, was sighed. You would think they were praying to it. A taint of imbecile rapacity blew through it all like a whiff from some corpse"[16] When Marlow met Kurtz he saw:

> "And the lofty frontal bone of Mr. Kurtz: They say the hair goes on growing sometimes, but this - ah - specimen, was impressively bald. The wilderness had patted him on the hand, and, behold, it was like a ball - an ivory ball; it had caressed him and - lo : - he had withered; it had taken, loved him, embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul into his own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation. He was its spoiled and pampered favourite".[17]

Kurtz belonged to "the new gang - the gang of virtue"[18], unlike the common agents. He had "higher intelligence, wide sympathies, a singleness of purpose"[19] which were the requisites "for guidance of the cause intrusted"[20] by Europe. He is "a prodigy" ... "an emissary of pity, and science, and progress"[21].

But Kurtz's ideals degenerated with the influence of the oppressive atmosphere making him write as postscript to his paper "Exterminate all the brutes!"[22] His exploitation of the wilderness took a heavey toll on him. It "caused him

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[16] H.D.., p.33.

[17] Ibid., p.69.

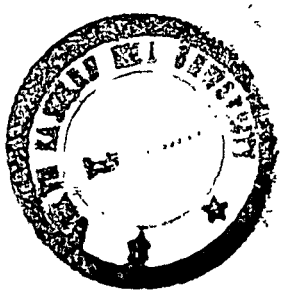
[18] Ibid., p.36.

[19] Ibid., p.36.

[20] Ibid., p.36.

[21] Ibid., p.36.

[22] Ibid., p.72.



to preside at certain midnight dances ending with unspeakable rites, which ..... were offered up to him"[23]. He even got the tribe to follow him"[24] and was in liason with a woman of the tribe.

Marlow too, like Kurtz is subjected to the test of the wilderness: "could we handle that dumb thing, or would it handle us?"[25] He feels its power especially when confronted with the people of the jungle: "a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage"[26]. It was unearthly, and the men were - No, they were not inhuman.... what thrilled you was just the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar"[27]. In spite of Marlow's claim that "if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that 'there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being a meaning in it which you - you so remote from the night of first ages - could comprehend,"[28] he was not 'found

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[23] **H.D.**, p.71.

[24] Ibid., p.80.

[25] Ibid., p.38.

[26] Ibid., p.51.

[27] Ibid., p.51.

[28] Ibid., pp.51,52.

out' by the wildnerness. Marlow managed to hold on to his sanity in spite of the fact that he had to face the wilderness which expressed itself through Kurtz.

Marlow associates with Kurtz against the moral squalor of the pilgrims. He faces a "choice of nightmares"[29].

> "It seemed to me I had never breathed an atmosphere so vile, and I turned mentally to Kurtz for relief - positively for relief .. I had turned to the wilderness really, not to Mr. Kurtz who, I was ready to admit, was as good as buried. And for a moment it seemed to me as if I also were buried in a vast grave full of unspeakable secrets."[30]

However Marlow is able to snatch Kurtz back from the clutches of the wilderness when he is drawn back to it:

> "I tried to break the spell the heavy mute spell of the wilderness - that seemed to draw him to its pitiless breast by the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions."[31]

Marlow was effected by Kurtz whose influence remained even after his death. Marlow refused to hand over Kurtz's papers to the company and he visits Kurtz's Intended to return her letters and portrait.

Marlow was with Kurtz before he died and heard his last words "The horror! The horror!"[32] which Marlow says

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[29] **H.D.**, p.89.

[30] Ibid., p.89.

[31] Ibid., pp.94,95.

[32] Ibid., pp.94,95.

> "was the expression of some sort of belief, it had candour, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth"[33]

Kurtz's last words belie the grand ideals with which he was armed when coming to Africa.

As Marlow assimilates so much experience and so many impressions, he does not remain a mere observer and narrator. His role is constantly undergoing developments. He is aware of Kurtz's personality, which according to the other characters is enigmatic. He hears Kurtz's voice directly and as he hears him in the way he does and as he himself feels the attraction of the wilderness, Marlow is forced into a partnership with Kurtz.

Because of the felt affinity that Marlow develops towards Kurtz, he is highly concerned about the fate of Kurtz, and like Kurtz, the wilderness does not spare him too. He hears the last words uttered by Kurtz but does not disclose them to his Intended. Instead, he lies to her, saying: "The last word he pronounced was - your name"[34] Marlow's final identification with the claustrophobic atmosphere comes with his lying to Kurtz's Intended, which he does against his principles:

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[33] H.D., p.100.

[34] Ibid., p.110.

> "I would not have gone so far as to fight for Kurtz, but I went for him near enough to a lie. 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 appals me. There is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies"[35]

Lord Jim was expanded beyond Conrad's original intention of it being a short story, dealing with only the pilgrim-ship episode. He completed the novel by the 13th or 14th of July, 1920. It ran to over 140,000 words instead of the 20,000 which he had originally planned.

The action in **Lord Jim** is similar to that portrayed in **The Nigger of the Narcissus** ie, a threat to the solidarity of mankind. In **Lord Jim** it is an act of cowardice by Jim.

The "Patna" is carrying a large number of pilgrims to their destination. During the voyage, she strikes something below the surface which holes her badly. Only the officers know of the disaster and they, with the exception of Jim, decide to secretly abandon the ship. Jim does not take any part in their frantic efforts to launch a life boat, but stands dazed, opposing their attempts to make him join them, waiting for the "Patna" to sink. However, Jim jumps to join them when the ship is on the verge of sinking. The ship does not sink and is towed to port by a French gunboat.

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[35] **H.D.** , p.38.

In **Lord Jim**, Conrad is concerned with the analysis of motives. Thus, the central character is Jim, "a simple and sensitive character".[36] As an essential counterpart to Jim, Conrad uses the device of Marlow. Marlow's role now, as Conrad's mouthpiece and a character is to probe, analyse and comment on another's state of mind. He is used as the chief device to develop the theme. Conrad, now gives a new dimension to Marlow's role - that of a critical commentator.

Jim decides to face the inquiry unlike the other officers and it is in the course of this trial that Marlow meets him: "My eyes met his for the first time at that inquiry"[37]. From then onwards Marlow assumes the role of Jim's guardian and his observance of Jim's appearance bears this out.

> "This has nothing to do with Jim, directly; only he was outwardly so typical of that good, stupid kind we like to feel marching right and left of us in life, of that kind that is not disturbed by the vagaries of intelligence of perversions, - of nerves, let us say. He was the kind of fellow you would, on the strength of his looks, leave in charge of the deck - figuratively and professionally speaking"[38].

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[36] **Lord Jim** - Author's Note to Lord Jim. Novel first serialized in Britain in 'Blackwood's Magazine in Oct. 1899 - Nov. 1900. Published under Conrad's authorship in 1900 by J.M. Dent & Sons.

The Edition used here has been published by Penguin Modern Classics in 1949 & twice reprinted in 1983 - p.7.

Hereinafter as L.J.

[37] **L.J..**, p.32.

[38] Ibid., p.39.

The trial over, Marlow speaking of Jim says:

> "I looked at him. The red of his fair sunburnt complexion deepened suddenly under the down of his cheeks, invaded his forehead, spread to the roots of his curly hair, His ears became intensely crimson, and even the clear blue of his eyes was darkned manyshades by the rush of blood to his head. His lips pouted a little, trembling as though he had been on the point of bursting into tears. I perceived he was incapable of pronouncing a word from the excess of humiliation. From disappointment to - who knows? Perhaps he looked forward to that hammering he was going to give me for rehabilitation, for appeasement? Who can tell what relief he expected from the chance of a row? He was naive enough to expect anything; but he had given himself away for nothing in this case. He had been frank with himself - let alone with me in the wild hope of arriving in that way at some effective refutation and the stars had been ironically unpropitious. He made an inarticulate noise in his throat like a man imperfectly stunned by a blow on the head. It was pitiful."[39]

Furthermore, he says:

> ...."I don't pretend I understood him. The views he let me have of himself were like those glimpses though the shifting rents in a thick fog - bits of vivid and vanishing detail, giving no connected idea of the general aspect of the country. They fed one's curiousity without satisfying it, they were no good for purposes of orientation. Upon the whole he was misleading. That's now I summed him up for myself after he left me late in the evening."[40] ....

Marlow hears Brierly's opinion on Jim ".. a decent man would not have behaved like this to a full cargo of old rags in bales"[41]. He is told of Jim's father who "seemed rather to fancy his sailor son"[42]. Marlow, unable to forget his conversation with Brierly attends court the next day,

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[39] **L.J.**, pp.61,62.

[40] Ibid., p.63.

[41] Ibid., p.56.

[42] Ibid., p.57.

having both Jim and Brierly under his observation. Thus, he is able to critically observe Jim during the trial and at the same time, create a kind of distance in order to gain critical advantage.

In spite of his critical position, Marlow takes genuine interest in Jim who recounts the Patna episode and the circumstances leading to his jumping from the ship.

"I had jumped-.... "It seems"....I knew nothing about it till I looked up .. I wished I could die". There was no going back. It was as if I had jumped into a well - into an overlasting deep hole..."[43]. It caused Marlow to comment: "Nothing could be more true he had indeed jumped into an everlasting deep hole. He had tumbled from a height he could never scale again"...[44]

The certificates of Jim and the other officers are cancelled - the punishment: "The court .... Gustav so-and-so master .... native of Germany ... James so-and-so. ... mate ... certificates cancelled"[45].

Marlow seems to develop an increasing understanding of Jim. He is "the only man who was capable of appreciating

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[43] L.J., pp.88,89.

[44] Ibid., p.89.

[45] Ibid., p.124.

all the tremendous magnitude"[46]. Jim had no work and did not like to go back to his people: ".... Brierly had said, "that the old person in Essex seemed to fancy his sailor son not a little."[47]

"I can't tell you whether Jim was especially "fancied", but the tone of his reference to "my Dad" was calculated to give me a notion that the good old rural dean was about the finest man that ever had been worried by the cares of a large family since the beginning of the world. This, though never stated, was implied with an anxiety that there should be no mistake about it, which was really very true and charming, but added a poignant sense of lives far off to the other elements of the story. "He has seen it all in the home papers by this time," said Jim. "I can never face the poor old chap"[48].

Marlow not only understands Jim, but also sympathises with him and feels for him. "I was concerned as to the way he would go out. It would have hurt me if, for instance he had taken to drink"[49]. So he procures jobs for him. Moreover, Jim knew that he was doomed and he had no way.

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[46] L.J., p.65.

[47] Ibid., p.65.

[48] Ibid., p.65.

[49] Ibid., p.171.

"I had jumped - hadn't I?" he asked, dismayed. "That's what I had to live down. The story didn't matter[50] ....

Jim first worked for De Jongh, than for Blake and Engstrom, then for the Yucker brothers. Whenever the Patna incident was mentioned, Jim would suddenly leave without any proper explanation to his employers.

"To fling away your daily bread so as to get your hands free for a grapple with a ghost may be an act of prosaic heroism. Man had done it before (though we who have lived know full well that it is not the haunted soul but the hungry body that makes an outcast), and men who had eaten and meant to eat everyday had applauded the creditable folly. He was indeed unfortunate, for all his recklessness could not carry him out from under the shadow"[51]. Jim's punishment caused him to move further eastward seeking personal rehabilitation, to "begin with a clean slate"[52].

Marlow gets him employment with Stein, in Patusan which proved to be the turning point of his life. Patusan is "a remote districtt of a native ruled state"[53] and it is here, that he made his mark and earned the title of Tuan or Lord Jim.

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[50] **L.J.**, p.104.
[51] Ibid., p.150.
[52] Ibid., p.142.
[53] Ibid., p.168.

Marlow says of Jim's work in Patusan: "He left his earthly failings behind him and that sort of reputation he had, and there was a totally new set of conditions for his imaginative faculty to work upon."[54]

Jim lived up to his ideals and heroically met his death at the hands of Doramin. Marlow's comment on Jim and his fate is "He is one of us - and have I not stood up once, liked an evoked ghost, to answer for his eternal constancy?[55] He says "My last words about Jim shall be few. I affirm he had achieved greatness...."[56], and feels that in death, Jim had at last achieved the greatness he longed for all his life. Jim's heroic death made up for his cowardly jump.

Marlow voices Conrad "He is one of us"[57] and plays out the role allotted by his creator to probe analyse and comment on Jim's state of mind.

Thus one sees Marlow's gradual development from a mere observer - narrator into an active participant in the events of the novel, as seen in **Lord Jim**. As a narrative device, Marlow provides Conrad with the necessary distance which every good writer must keep with his work.

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[54] **L.J.**, p.167.

[55] Ibid., p.313.

[56] Ibid., p.172.

[57] **L.J.** - Author's Note p.8.

In **Heart of Darkness**, Marlow is curious and self-expressive. He gradually matures to appear as an active participant in the events of the novel and at the same time, narrate the story and comment on the incidents as seen in **Lord Jim.**

CHAPTER III

A NEW LIGHT ON MARLOW : HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS WOMEN

Of all Conrad's novels, **Chance**, is perhaps the least dependent on a source in his experience or in his reading. He was pleased with his achievement in **Chance**: "It's the biggest piece of work I've done since **Lord Jim**. As to what will happen when launched - I am very much less confident. And its a pity. One doesn't do a trick like that twice"*. His apprehension was in vain - he became a best seller. The sea figures largely in **Chance**, enabling the public and his reviewers to reaccomodate Conrad in his position as a writer of sea tales.

More than Conrad's other novels, **Chance** was written 'thinking of the public'. It was the only novel with chapter headings and he re-wrote the ending to make it 'nicer'.**

Chance was Conrad's immediately successful novel containing reflections on life:

> "....surely life must be amused somehow. It would be still a very respectable provision if it were only for that end. But from that same provisions of understanding, there springs in us compassion, charity, indignation the sense of solidarity; and in minds of any largeness an inclination to that indulgence which is next to affection."[1]

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*Baines - p.456,

**Baines - p.458.

[1] **Chance** - First written as Inquiry into the Loss of the Titanic 'Chance'; a Tale in Two parts. First serialised in Britain & U.S.A. in "New York Herald" 21st Jan - 30th June 1912. Published as a book under Conrad's authorship in *1913*. The edition used here was published by Penguin Modern Classics first in 1974 & reprinted in 1975 & 1984. Here, pp.105, 106.

> "....I call a woman sincere when she volunteers a statement resembling remotely in form what she really would like to say, what she really thinks ought to be said if it were not for the necessity to spare the stupid sensitiveness of men. The woman's rougher, simpler, more upright judgement, embraces the whole truth, which their tact, their mistrust of masculine idealism, ever prevents them from speaking in its entirety. And their tact is unerring we could not stand women speaking the truth. We could not bear it. It would cause infinite misery and bring about most awful disturbances in this rather mediocre, but still idealistic fool's paradise in which each of us lives his own little life - the unit in the great sum of existence. And if they know it. There are merciful"..[2]

In his words,

> "It's the sort of stuff that may have a chance with the public. All of it about a girl and with a steady run of references to women in general all along.... It ought to go down."*

In **Chance** too, Conrad used a mode of narration used before: Marlow narrates the story to an annonymous author of the book who interrupts the narrative from time to time to comment or to criticise. Here the interruptions are usually protests against Marlow's misogyny:

> "You expect a cogency of conduct not usual in women', said Marlow. The subterfuges of a menanced passion are not to be fathomed. You think it is going on the way it looks, whereas it is capable, for its own ends, of walking backwards into a precipice."[3]

To this extent Marlow can be regarded as a character in the novel, not as Conrad's mouthpiece. Marlow has several sources of knowledge: the Fynes, Powell and Flora herself.

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[2] **Chance**, p.126.

* Baines, p.458.

[3] **Chance**, p.94.

These characters relate what they have been told and Marlow becomes their confidant.

The main reason for Marlow's newly acquired status is that he is no longer a mere narrator but an active participant with definite views of his own:

> "As to women, they know that the clamour for opportunities for them to become something which they cannot be is as reasonable as if mankind at large started asking for opportunities of winning immortality in this world, in which death is the very condition of life. You must understand that I am not talking here of material existence. That naturally is implied; but you won't maintain that a woman who, say, enlisted for instance (there have been cases) has conquered her place in the world. She has only got her living in it - which is quite meritorious, but not quite the same thing."[4]

He continues,

> "Women can stand anything. The dear creatures have no imagination when it comes to solid facts of life. In sentimental regions - I won't say. It's another thing altogether. They shrink from or rush to embrace ghosts of their own creation just the same as any fool man would."[5]

And again,

> "You say I don't know women. May be. Its just as well not to come too close to the shrine. But I have a clear notion of woman. In all of them, termagant, flirt, crank, washerwoman, blue stocking, outcast and even in the ordinary fool of the ordinary commerce there is something left, if only a spark. And when there is a spark there can always be a flame..."[6]

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[4] **Chance**, pp.236,237.

[5] Ibid., p.291.

[6] Ibid., p.292.

Marlow meets the two female characters of the novel, Mrs. Fyne and Flora during separate occasions, but fails to establish rapport with Mrs. Fyne. He does not meet Mrs. Fyne after Flora's elopement. He does not think much of her and voices his dislike for feminine self-assertion through the character of Mrs. Fyne. Her father's cruelty causes her to regard her surroundings in a cold, detached manner. She is 'neutral' towards her children, she makes a dupe of her husband and their marriage produces only daughters. She dislikes the subordinate position of women and Flora's elopement with her brother arouses her indignation because Flora has behaved like a woman. However, Marlow argues:

> "In other words, that she can't forgive Miss de Barral for being a woman and behaving like a woman. And yet this is not only reasonable and natural, but it is her only Chance. A woman against the world has no resources but herself. Her only means of action is to be what she is...."[7]

He further says:

> ".....Mrs Fyne did not want women to be women. Her theory was that they should turn themselves into unscrupulous sexless nuisances. An offended theorist dwelt in her bosom somewhere..."[8]

Marlow's relationship with flora is different from that with Mrs. Fyne. He knows her story, prevents her from committing suicide and, to a certain extent understands her, causing him to comment.

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[7] Chance, p.161.

[8] Ibid., pp.162,163.

> "....Nothing is truer than that, in this world, the luckless have no right to their opportunities - as if misfortune were a legal disqualification"[9]

He is her confidant and he alone knows of her attempted suicide:

> "And I wanted to ask you ... I was really glad when I saw you actually here. Who would have expected you here, at this spot, before this hotel! I certainly never... You see it meant a lot to me. You are the only person who knows ... who knows for certain..."[10]

> "...When I saw you I didn't know why you were here. I was glad when you spoke to me. This is exactly what I wanted to ask you for. I wanted to ask you if you ever meet Captain Anothony - by any chance - anywhere - you are a sailor too, are you not? - that you would never mention - never that - that you had seen me over there."[11]

Marlow points out the importance of the part played by chance, which serves to create an awareness of evil. The first crisis in Flora's life comes as a result of chance, the disaster occurs because of the collapse of De Barral's fortunes, an event which is totally unrelated to Flora. Marlow feels that the night the disaster occurs is Flora's last night spent in:

> "....unconsciousness of the world's ways, the unconsciousness of danger, of pain, of humiliation, of bitterness, of falsehood...."[12]

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[9] Chance, p.163.

[10] Ibid., p.198.

[11] Ibid., p.199.

[12] Ibid., p.91.

Chance structurally resembles **Lord Jim**. It has a narrator who not only comments, but also takes part in the action. Marlow as projected here, is ironic. He constantly reminds the readers that what he is saying is ironic. His remarks to Mrs. Fyne are banter. The 'desire of laughter' is at his 'very lips' when he hears how Fyne ran down the hotel staircase to arrest Flora's flight from her governess:

"Fyne bounded out of the room. This is his own word. Bounded! He assured me with intensified solemnity that he bounded; and the sight of the short and muscular Fyne bounding gravely about the circumscribed passages and staircases of a small, private hotel, would have been worth any amount of money to a person greedy of memorable impressions. But as I looked at him, the desire of laughter at my very lips..."[13]. Marlow sees 'something comic' about Flora standing outside the hotel while Fyne tries to dissuade Anthony from marrying Flora. When Flora tells Marlow how she was saved by Anthony the night she left the Fyne's house to commit suicide. Marlow coughs "down the beginning of a most improper fit of laughter..."[14].

However, Marlow's role in **Chance** differs from that in **Lord Jim**. In **Lord Jim**, Marlow helps Jim at all times and identifies himself with Jim's moral dilemma. But

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[13] **Chance**, p.111.

[14] Ibid., p.183.

in **Chance**, he never sees the hero Captain Anthony, he has a brief talk with the heroine, Flora, and he has a short glimpse of De Barral in a friend's office and he does not meet the Fynes after Flora's elopement.

Marlow appears for the last time in Conrad's fiction in **Chance**. It is here that his role is seen in a concrete form, playing a definite part in the course of the narrative. He graduates to a 'round' character from the shadowy one seen in **The Niger of the Nircissus.**

Henry James aptly sums it up:

> "....Mr. Joseph Conrad's **Chance** is none the less a signal instance of provision the most earnest and the most copious for its leaving ever so much to be said about the particular provision effected. It is none the less an extraordinary exhibition of method by the fact that the method is, we venture to say, without a precedent in any like work."...[15]

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[15] James.

CONCLUSION

A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE VARYING ROLES OF MARLOW

The requisites for narrative art are a story and a story teller. It revolves around the teller and the tale and the teller and the audience. Generally, narrative art can be viewed from three angles, the characters, the narrator and the audience. The gradual sophistication of narration has given rise to a fourth angle - a clear demarcation between the narrator and the author.

Conrad's favourite narrative device is that of the narrator who relates a story from his past to a group of men in a club or aboard an anchored yacht as in **Youth** and **Heart of Darkness**. This narrator, in many cases is Marlow. A true gentleman, discursive, basically serious but given to occasional pungent irony, Marlow is an alter-ego of Conrad himself, Conrad as he thought his better self to be or as he would like to have been.

A noteworthy feature of Conrad's fiction is the achievement of a profound sense of mystery and oppressive dimness and gloom in a torrential downpour, or in an impenetrable jungle, or in a man's soul. But his greatest achievement is that of the character of Marlow, for whom he has more than one kind of use and he is always more than a

master — mariner. Marlow is a main participant in the events of the narrative giving the author a freedom of presence.

The action in Conrad's fiction is never seen at first hand - it is seen in reflection, through the eyes of others. The plot lies in the centre, but it is seen only at second hand or third hand. This technique lends an air of authenticity to the narrative.

Youth heralded the entry of Marlow into Conrad's fiction. As the novel aims at a straight forward effect, Marlow is made to play a simple role : to give the tone of the narrative. Here, before an audience consisting of "a director of companies, an accountant, a lawyer"[1] and Conrad, between whom "there was the strong bond of the sea, and also of the fellowship of the craft, which no amount of enthusiasm for yatching cruising and so on can give, since one is only the amusement of life and the other is life itself"[3], Marlow ruminates about his past, about "the good old days"[3] - about his first voyage to the East, the rostalgia and the sense of achievement accompanying it. Since the East formed such an important ingredient of his experience, his thoughts of it are requoted here:

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[1] **Youth**, p.185.

[2] Ibid.,

[3] Ibid.,

> "And this is how I see the East. I have seen its secret places and have looked into its very soul, now I see it always from a small boat, a high outline of mountains, blue and afar in the morning; like faint mist at noon; a jagged wall of purple at sunset. I have the feel of the oar in my hand, the vision of a scorching blue sea in my eyes. And I see a bay a wide bay, smooth as glass and polished like ice, shimmering in the dark. A red light burns far off upon the gloom of the land, and the night is soft and warm. We drag at the oars with aching arms, and suddenly a puff of wind, a puff faint and tepid and laden with strange odours of blossoms, of aromatic wood, comes out of the still night - the first sigh of the East on my face. That I can never forget. It was impalpable and enslaving, like a charm, like a whispered promise of mysterious delight."[4]

Marlow describes the voyage of the "Judea" as one of "those voyages that seem ordered for the illustration of life, that might stand for a symbol of existence".[5] He revives the glamour of youth: 'O youth! The strength of it, the faith of it, the imagination of it![6] Oh, the glamour of youth! Oh, the fire of it, more dazzling than the flames of the burning ship ....[7] and that of the East: "Bangkok! I thrilled"[8] "To Bangkok! Magic name, blessed name. Mesopotamia wan't a patch on it![9]

Here Marlow seems to voice Conrad's vision of the East.

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[4] **Youth**, p.221.

[5] Ibid., p.185.

[6] Ibid., p.195.

[7] Ibid., pp. 213,214.

[8] Ibid., p.188.

[9] Ibid., pp.197,198.

> "...For me all the East is contained in that vision of my youth. It is all in that moment when I opened my young eyes on it. I came upon it from a tussle with the sea - and I was young - and I saw it looking at me. And this is all that is left of it! Only a moment; a moment of strength, of romance, of glamour - of youth! A flick of sunshine upon a strange shore, the time to remember, the time for a sigh..."[10]

Marlow narrates his past experience in the narrative present. Marlow narrates the story in which he actively takes part and he goes through a remarkable experience as well. Thus he is an essential part of the narrative, being his own author.

Heart of Darkness presents Marlow as the "skipper of a river steamboat"[11], on its way to the heart of the Congo basin, in the course of which he meets Kurtz.

Marlow's eagerness to meet Kurtz builds up gradually, as he hears more and more about this "remarkable person"[12]. When Marlow finally meets Kurtz, he sees that Kurtz who had come to Africa armed with grand ideals, was in the grip of the pervading evil atmosphere which "had taken, loved him, embraced him got into his veins, consumed his flesh and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish initiation. He was its spoiled and pampered favourite"[13]

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[10] **Youth**, p.226.

[11] **H.D.**, p.12.

[12] Ibid., p.27.

[13] Ibid., p.69.

He also sees that,

> "... His covering had fallen off, and his body emerged from it pitiful and apalling as from a winding-sheet. 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 man 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"[14]

Kurtz was expected to do well in Africa: "Oh, he will go far, very far", ..."He will be a somebody in the Administration before long. They, above - the council in Europe, you know - mean him to be"[15]. But his ideals degenerated and instead of suppressing the savages and their savage customs, he become a part of it all. He is deified by the savages leading to his taking part in their rituals and 'unspeakable rites and his liason with a tribal woman.

Marlow too, is unable to avoid the influence of wilderness. It affects him unknowingly but powerfully. Like Kurtz, he too shakes off the bonds of civilisation. When Marlow's helmsman is killed in the savages' attack on his ship, and Marlow's shoes are filled with the helmsman's blood, he says: "...To tell you the truth, I was morbidly anxious to change my shoes and socks"[16] "... I flung one shoe over-

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[14] **H.D.**, pp.85,86.

[15] Ibid., p.28.

[16] Ibid., p.67.

board, and became aware that that was exactly what I had been looking forward to -"[17]. But Marlow's defiance of civilisation and its restraining bonds is short-lived and he manages to rein his sanity unlike Kurtz.

Kurtz has a strong influence on Marlow, which continues even after Kurtz is dead. Marlow refuses to hand over Kurtz's papers to the company but visits Kurtz's Intended to return her letters and her portrait. Marlow was with Kurtz before his death and heard his last wonds. "The horror! The horror!"[18] But he does not disclose anything to Kurtz's Intended, he lies to her: "The last word he pronounced was your name"[19] However, Kurtz's last words belie his initial grand ideals.

Marlow is aware of Kurtz's personality and hears him directly, and moreover, he also feels the attraction of the wilderness. Thus he is forced into a kind of partnership with Kurtz, and he turns to Marlow for support. This is where the narrator's objectivity is lost and his identification with the protagonist becomes apparent. This marks a change in the stage of Marlow's development.

As Marlow gathers so much of experience and so many

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[17] **H.D.**, p.67

[18] Ibid., pp.94,95.

[19] Ibid., p.110.

impressions, he does not remain a mere observer who narrates the story. His role is constantly developing. He is, in Conrad's own words "A most discreet, understanding man".

Conrad intended **Lord Jim** to be a short-story, but it over-ran his intention. The first three chapters are told in the ordinary way, by a third person omniscient author. We are given a general account of Jim in the days when he was a water-clerk in the Eastern Port, his childhood home and training and then his voyage as the chief mate of the 'Patna' in the Indian Ocean upto the time of the collision of the 'Patna'. It is only in Chapter IV that Marlow is introduced as one of those who latter attend the trial of Jim and his fellow officers for deserting their ship. It is from this point onwards that Marlow takes over the narrative.

Marlow's role here, as Conrad's mouthpiece and a character in the narrative is to probe, analyse and comment on another's state of mind. He is the chief device used to develop the theme of the novel. Marlow, now, is projected as a critical commentator who creates a kind of distance between Jim and himself in order to gain critical advantage.

Marlow meets Jim at the latter's trial. He genuinely feels for Jim, understands him and even procures jobs for

him. In short, he assumes the role of Jim's "guardian angel"[20]

Jim did not have any work and he did not want to go back home - he could not face his father. Jim felt guilty for deserting the 'Patna': ..."I wished I could die"[21], he told Marlow: "There was no going back. It was as if I had jumped into a well-into an everlasting deep hole..."[22] Marlow realised that Jim had "... jumped into an everlasting deep hole. He had tumbled from a height he could never scale again"[23], and so, helped him.

Jim first worked for De Jongh, then for Blake and Engstrom, then for the Yucker brothers and whenever the 'Patna' episode was mentioned, he would leave without any explanation to him employers Jim moved further eastward seeking personal rehabilitation and a chance to begin things afresh, to make up for his earlier failure.

Jim's employment with Stein in Patusan, through the good offices of Marlow, gave Jim a final but a golden chance to fulfil his dreams. He earned the title of Tuan or Lord Jim. Finally, his heroic death at the hands of Doramin erased all his "earthly failings"[24]. Marlow feels that

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[20] L.J., p.31.

[21] Ibid.., p.39.

[22] Ibid.,

[23] Ibid.,

[24] L.J.., p.167.

by his death, Jim made up for his cowardly jump.

Besides playing his allotted role, that of probing, analysing and commenting on Jim's states of mind, Marlow gradually develops into an active participant in the events of the narrative, and at the same time, he not only narrates the story, but also comments on the incidents. Marlow provides Conrad with the required distance every good writer desires to keep with his work.

Marlow's role in **Lord Jim** can be compared to that of Nelly Dean in Emily Bronte's **Wuthering Heights**. In the Introduction to **Wuthering Heights**, Bombay Dobree writes about Emily Bronte's use of the character of Nelly Dean.

> "But how was Emily Bronte to find someone who would always be, who could plausibly be, there, just when it was absolutely necessary for her to be present? She had recourse to the confidential servant, brought up with the children of the family, necessarily involved in all their affairs. But then, how can an uneducated woman have the knowledge - of complex circumstances, of outrageous sentiments, of words, of artful story - telling - to satisfy the requirements of a story at that level, to be a trustworthy witness? Emily Bronte was quite aware of the difficulty: almost as soon as Ellen Dean begins to take up the tale, she reassures her temporary master: 'I have undergone sharp discipline, which has taught me wisdom : and then, I have read more than you would fancy, Mr. Lockwood .....' We too are at the moment reassured : and soon we cease to question or to care. It is true, on examination, that only a very highly cultured, literary woman, could speak and discuss as Nelly does at the end of the book : but by that time verisi-militude a has ceased to matter - to anyone for whom the means of communication offered by novels has any validity at all.
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> .... Nelly is brilliantly thought out and executed; nothing more clearly reveals the power of a novelist than making

the vehicle of communication really convey the intuition, and not merely relate events. Since she is the confidante of so many people, the story does not suffer from the usual defect of the narrator method, that of seeing people from only one point of view .... Lockwood too is admirably conceived as a narrator; he never has to be drawn into the emotional development; he is external, detached, though he is not unnecessary to the story. For he is all unconsciously an agent, and we realise at the end it was his visitation by the ghost of Cathy (if we choose to regard his nightmare as such) that precipitated Heathcliff is final crisis. Apart from that, however, he is outside the story. His role is to add convincing evidence to what Nelly tells us through him, since he has no need to lie, no subconscious urge to conceal, reveal, or justify. He clinches Nelly's statements: he confirms for us the ghastly truth of what she tells. It is through this quite disinterested person that from the very beginning we feel the tension of the whole story ...

Nelly, then, is not a mere mechanical vehicle; she is part of the emotional texture, not simply chorus to the tragic scene in company with the hideous Joseph. She is there at every one of the crucial moments except the tremendous opening one where Lockwood sees Heathcliff frantically imploring Cathy's ghost to come in. It is to her that Cathy says: "I am Heathcliff"; it is to her that Heathcliff says: "My soul's bliss kills my body, but doesn't satisfy itself. It is she who is present at the last despairing interview between the two eternal lovers, where at once both Heaven seems to open and Hell to gape. Nevertheless all the time Emily Bronte is in control - perhaps Ellen Dean was her sheet anchor in this respect. But then she can be broken away from Lockwood, the detached - or almost detached - observer comes back to report to us directly: and how ingeniously, we note, Emily Bronte had sent away for a few months, so that Nelly can tell him the rest of the story quickly."*

Nelly, like Marlow, narrated the past in the narrative present:

***Wuthering Heights** - First published in England in 1847 under the pseudonym of Ellis Bell. The 1850 edition was edited by Currer Bell.

The edition used here has been published by Rupa and Company by arrangement with Wm. Collins & Sons & Co. Ltd., England, first in 1977 and reprinted in 1981 with the Introduction by Bonamy Dobrie.

> "But, Mr. Lockwood, I forget these tales cannot divert you. I'm annoyed how I should dream of chattering on at such a rate: and your gruel cold, and you nodding for bed: I could have told Heathcliff's history, all that you need hear, in half a dozen words".[25]

Just as Marlow is the confidant of Jim, Nelly too enjoys the confidence of the major characters in the novel. This places her in a vantage point, through which she can give a clear and first hand account of the happenings and characters in the novel.

The readers are allowed entry into the Linton family through Healthcliff's description of them to Nelly and to Nelly's narration of the same to Lockwood:

> "...it was beautiful - a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre and shimmering with little soft tapers. Old Mr. and Mrs. Linton were not there; Edgar and his sisters had it entirely to themselves. Shouldn't they have been happy? We should have thought ourselves in heaven: And now, guess what your good children were doing? Isabella - I believe she is eleven, a year younger than Cathy - lay screaming at the farther end of the room, shrieking as if witches were running red-hot needles into her, Edgar stood on the hearth weeping silently, and in the middle of the table sat a little dog, shaking its paw and yelping; which, from their mutual accusations, we understood they had nearly pulled in two between them."[26]

Catherine Earnshaw confesses her love for Heathcliff as well as her decision to marry Edgar, not Heathcliff to Nelly, and her reasons for doing so, which marks a turning

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[25] **Wuthering Heights** - pp.87,88.

[26] Ibid., p.75.

point in the course of the events of the narrative:

> "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now"[27] ..."If Heathcliff and I married, we should be beggers? Whereas, if I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother's power."[28]

Nelly's description of Heathcliff to Lockwood provides an insight into Heathcliff's character and some of his action:

> "Rough as a saw edge, and hard as whinstone. The less you meddle with him the better" ... Do you know anything of his history?"
>
> "It's a cuckoo's sir - I know all about it : except where he was born, and who were his parents, and how he got his money, at first. And Hareton has been cast out like an unfledged dunnock: The unfortunate lad is the only one in all this parish that does not guess how he has been cheated."[29]

Thus, both Nelly Dean and Marlow, are not mere narrators, but important characters, playing out definite roles allotted to each of them, by their respective creators. Nelly Dean appears to manipulate some of the characters as well a part of the action. Marlow, however, becomes a part of the larger framework of the narrative.

Marlow makes his last appearance in Conrad's fiction in **Chance**. Here, he narrates the story to an annonymous author

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[27] **Wuthering Heights**, pp.104,107.

[28] Ibid,

[29] Ibid, p.63.

who interrupts the narrative to comment or to criticise. The authorial interruptions are usually protests against Marlow's misogyny:

"A woman is not necessarily either a doll or an angel to me. She is a human being, very much like myself"[30]. Marlow is full of scorn for a woman, to a certain extent.

Marlow's role here, can be compared to that in **Lord Jim**, where he is the confidant of **Jim**. In **Chance** also, he is the confidant of the Fynes, Powell and Flora who relate to him what they have been told. This accounts for the several sources of his knowledge.

But Marlow is unable to establish rapport with Mrs. Fyne as well as Flora as he is a seafaring man and has little to do with a woman. He does not meet Mrs. Fyne after Flora's elopement with Captain Anthony. He does not think much of Mrs. Fyne and through her character, he voices his dislike for feminine self-assertion:

> "...I learned the true nature of Mrs. Fyne's feminist doctrine. It was not political, it was not social. It was a knock-me-down doctrine - a practical individual doctrine ... it was something *like this: that no consideration, no delicary, no tenderness,* no scruples should stand in the way of a woman (who by the mere fact of her sex was the predestined victim of

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[30] **Chance**, p.54.

> conditions created by man's selfish passions, their vices and their abominable tyranny from taking the shortest cut towards securing for herself the easiest possible existence. She had even the right to go out of existence without considering anyone's feelings or convenience, since some women's existence were made impossible by the shortsighted baseness of men".[31]

She dislikes the subordinate position given by society to women and she is indignant at Flora's elopement with her brother because Flora has behaved like a woman.

However, Marlow's relation with Flora differs from that with Mrs. Fyne. He prevents her from committing suicide, knows all about her and understands her. He alone knows of her attempted suicide and Flora too trusts him with her secret.

Marlow underlines the crucial role played by chance in the turn of events in the novel to create an awareness of evil.

Lord Jim and **Chance** resemble each other by virtue of their structures. But, Marlow in **Chance** is ironic, and he is constantly reminding the readers that what he says is ironic. The point of difference between the two novels is again, Marlow's action. In **Lord Jim**, Marlow comes to Jim's aid at each step and also identifies himself with Jim's moral dilemma. But in **Chance**, Marlow never meets the hero Captain Anthony, he has a brief talk with Flora,

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[31] **Chance**, p.59.

he has a short glimpse of De Barral in a friend's office and he does not meet the Fynes at all after Flora's elopement. Marlow's character passes through stages of development, to emerge finally in Conrad's **Chance** as a part of the dramatis personae from the position of Conrad's spokesman.

Conrad was struggling for expression while writing **The Rescue**. "...My story is there in a fluid - in an evading shape. I can't get hold of it. It is all there - to bursting, yet I can't get hold of it no more than you can grasp a handful of water". He continued struggling for a few more weeks, then laid aside **The Rescue** and Marlow appeared on the scene. Through Marlow, Conrad tides over his difficulties with expression. As a narrative device, Marlow provided actuality and authenticity to the events described.

Conrad made use of the character of Marlow in **Youth**, **Lord Jim**, **Heart of Darkness** and **Chance**. Commencing with **Youth**, Marlow is made to play increasingly complex roles in **Lord Jim**, **Heart of Darkness** and finally, in **Chance**. Marlow reflects the subjective consciousness of the protagonist in **Lord Jim**. In **Youth**, he is the writer's mouthpiece and gives the tone of the narrative. Finally in **Chance**, he is seen in a different light. He is misogynistic and sardonic. He figures as a character in the novel, playing an important role in it.

However, at this juncture, Conrad differs from George Eliot, an omniscient author.

George Eliot uses mottoes at chapter heads, which indicate the mood of the chapter, whether happy or sad: For example, the motto at the chapter head of chapter 2 indicates her intention. Dorothea's impression of Casaubon is compared to that of Don Quixote's encounter with Mambrino's helmet:

> "Seest thou not you cavalier who cometh toward us on a dapple - grey steed, and weareth a golden helmet 'What I see', answered Sancho, 'is nothing but a man on a grey ass like my own, who carries something shiny on his head'. 'Just so', answered Don Quixote, 'and that resplendent object is the Helmet of Mambrino"[32].

It is often seen that a motto summarises the action in the chapter and adds a maxim to it.

Unlike Conrad, who uses Marlow, George Eliot herself narrates the story. Her presence is strongly felt in the course of the narrative, in the event of her comments, which appear, sometimes to be general and sometimes didactic.

> "The fact is unalterable, that a fellow - mortal with whose nature you are acquainted solely through the brief entrances and exists of a few imaginative weeks called courtship, may, when seen in the continuity of married companionship, be disclosed as something better or worse than what you have pre-conceived, but will certainly not appear altogether the same."...[33]

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[32] **Middlemarch** by George Eliot : First published in 1871-'72. The edition used here was first published in the Penguin English Library in 1965. Reprinted in 1965, 1968 & 1969. Here, Chapter 2, p.38.

[33] **Middlemarch**, p.227.

She continues:

> "We are not afraid of telling over and over again how a man comes to fall in love with a woman and be wedded to her, or else be fatally parted from her. It is due to excess of poetry or of stupidity that we are never weary of describing what King James called a woman's 'makdom and her fairnesse', never weary of listening to the twanging of the old Troubadour strings, and are comparatively uninterested in that other kind of 'makdom and fairnesse' which must be wooed with industrious thought and patient renunciation of small desires? In the story of this passion, too, the development varies: sometimes it is the glorious marriage, sometimes frustration and final parting. And not seldom the catastrophe is bound up with the other passion, sung by the Troubadours. For in the multitude of middle-aged men who go about their vocations in a daily course determined for them must in the same way as the tie of their cravats, there is always a good number who once meant to shape their own deeds and alter the world a little. The story of their coming to be shapen after the average and fit to be packed by the gross, is hardly ever told even in their consciousness, for perhaps their ardour in generous unpaid toil cooled as imperceptibly as the ardour of other youthful loves, till one day their earlier self walked like a ghost in its old home and made the new furniture ghastly. Nothing in the world more subtle than the process of their gradual change! In the beginning they inhaled it unknowingly; you and I may have sent some of our breath towards infecting them, when we uttered our conforming falsities or drew our silly conclusions: or perhaps it came with the vibrations from a woman's glance."[34]

George Eliot's narrative technique causes her to encroach on the narrative. She is present in the narrative, in person, while Conrad does so through Marlow. His subtle presence is projected through the character of Marlow. George Eliot in the light of an omniscient author, is present in the narrative.

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[34] **Middlemarch**, pp.173,174.

> ..."She would never have disowned anyone on the ground of poverty : a De Bracy reduced to take his dinner in a basin would have seemed to her an example of pathos worth exaggerating, and I fear his aristocratic vices would not have horrified her."[35]

At the same time, she also tries to make readers see things from her point of view:

> ..."But Fielding lived when the days were longer (for time, like money, is measured by our needs), when summer afternoons were spacious, and the clock ticked slowly in the winter evenings. We belated historians must not linger after his example; and if we did so, it is probable that our chat would be thin and eager, as if delivered from a camp-stool in a parrot house. I at least have so much to do in unravelling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web, and not dispersed over that tempting range of relevancies called the universe."[36]

George Eliot's use of mottoes at Chapter-heads is regarded by critics as her attempts to advice the readers as to how they should feel about a certain part of the story.

The Nigger of the Narcissus is the first of Conrad's novels, set against the background of the sea. Jocelyn Baines in **Joseph Conrad. A Critical Biography** says, that more than anything else, it contains ..." the essence of his experience at sea and of his views on the particular conduct of life".*

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[35] **Middlemarch**, pp.83,84.

[36] Ibid., p.170.

*Baines - p.226.

This novel is the final result of Conrad's apprenticeship as a novelist. In his own words, it is an "effort to present a group of men held together by a common loyalty and a common perplexity in a struggle not with human enemies, but with the hostile conditions testing their faithfulness to the conditions of their own calling". The Nigger of **the Narcissus** projects a threat to human solidarity through the characters of Jimmy and Donkin.

In this novel too, Conrad uses a narrator. But his role is not marked like that of Marlow. Here, the narrator is a shadowy figure — he remains annonymous, and occasionally reveals himself through the use of 'we' or 'us'.

> ....."He seemed to take a pride in that death which, so far, had attended only upon the ease of his life; he was overbearing about it, as if no one else in the world had ever been intimate with such a companion; he paraded it unceasingly before us with an of affectionate persistence that made its presence indubitable, and at the same time incredible ... We hesitated between pity and mistrust, while on the slightest provocation, he shook before our eyes the bones of his bothersome and infamous skeleton. ...It interfered daily with our occupations, with our leisure, with our amusements. We had no songs and no music in the evening, because Jimmy (we all lovingly called him Jimmy, to conceal our hate of his accomplice) had managed with that prospective decease of his, to disturb even Archie's mental balance .... Our singers became mute because Jimmy was a dying man.... True he was always awake, and managed, as we sneaked out on deck to plant in our backs some cutting remark, that for the moment made we feel as if we had been brutes, and afterwards made us suspect ourselves of a being fools. We spoke in low tones within that to 'c' sle as though

it had been a church. We ate our meals in silence and dread..."[37]

and appears individually as 'I' or 'we' at the end, after the crew has been paid off:

> "As I came up I saw a red-faced, blowsy woman.... I was passing him at the time .... I nodded and passed on ...."[38]

> "I never saw them again. I never met one of them again.... Haven't we, together and upon the immortal sea, wrung out a meaning from our sinful lives?"[39]

The writing of this novel, gave Conrad the most pleasure. He always had a special feeling for it "the story by which, as a creative artist, I stand or fall, and which, at any rate, no one else could have written. A landmark in literature, I can safely say, for nothing like it has ever been done before". He scaled greater heights, achieving much more. Nevertheless, **The Nigger of the Narcissus** is regarded as a masterpiece of poetic realism in Conrad's works.

However, the narrative would have acquired a much better shape had the narrator been given a more concrete role e.g., like that of Marlow, in later works. The role and character of Marlow adds a distinctive flavour to Conrad's work.

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[37] **The Nigger of the Narcissus** - first appeared in Britain in New Review, Aug-Dec, 1897. First published under Conrad's authorship in 1898 in England and in 1897 in America.

The edition used here has been published as **The Nigger of the Narcissus And Other tales Youth, The Secret Sharer, Freya of the Seven Isles** by Oxford University Press, Ely House, London W$_1$. Here, pp.42,43.

[38] **The Nigger of Narcissus**, pp.179-181.

[39] Ibid.,

Marlow provides Conrad with the distance between himself and his work. Thus, Conrad does not intrude into the narrative like George Eliot does. Further, through the use of Marlow, Conrad voices himself and overcomes his difficulties with expression. At the same time, the narrator Marlow, in Conrad's fiction develops from the shadowy figure in **The Nigger of the Narcissus** to that of a character in the dramatis personae.

Marlow merges with the narrative - Conrad weaves the character of Marlow into the larger framework of the narrative - Henry James says:

> "The fusion has taken place, or at any rate a fusion; only it has been transferred in wondrous fashion to an unexpected, and on the whole more limited place of operation; it has succeeded in getting effected, so to speak, not on the ground but in the air, not between our writer's idea and his machinery but between the different parts of the genius itself....."[40]

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[40] James, p.206.

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