

**AN EXPLORATION OF MAJOR EXISTENTIAL ELEMENTS
IN THE PRINCIPAL NOVELS OF JOSEPH CONRAD**

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ABSTRACT

An Exploration of Major Existential Elements
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This study attempts a more detailed and comprehensive consideration of Conrad's existential affinities than has previously been done. Without narrowly adopting any rigid critical stance, it provides a close reading of Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim, Nostromo, Under Western Eyes, The Secret Agent and Victory in the light of a broad range of texts by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Marcel, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus, as well as (more briefly) Berdyaev, Tillich and Buber. Centering on the primary works themselves and engaging the secondary literature when necessary, it also surveys Conrad's letters, prefaces, notes, essays and short stories.

Amid the tangled problem of authorial intent, the study argues that philosophically (and at times stylistically) Conrad displays a distinctly existential attitude, especially towards the self and the world. It explores how Conrad, adopting the dominant existential view that the world has no purpose beyond what the individual ascribes to it, shares the existential position that man must quest to create his own authentic self, a rigorous endeavour closely tied to the sheer freedom of 'abandoned' man that leaves each individual wholly responsible (to himself and others) for his decisions and actions in a world into which he has been 'thrown' by chance. In this quest man must strive to rebel against and overcome a condition of mere functionalism induced by circumambient obstacles, which include other people--who should be made a means to enhancing one's life through commitment and genuine communication and through being fully present to others in an existential sense.

The work further considers how in the interplay of self and world Conrad evokes an existential awareness of life's tragic quality in the tension between limited, subjective man and the absurd, indifferent universe he inhabits, and how Conrad points in an existential way to the supremacy of emotional life over abstract rationality, with particular emphasis on feelings such as alienation, despair, anxiety and nausea--and their conquest by personal resolve and action that transcend nihilism and offer a sense of self-justification.

Rather than discussing all these notions with the hindsight of current but evanescent critical approaches, the study primarily allows the proponents of these existential views to speak for themselves instead of through the deliberate filter of the work's own perspectives--attempting to catch echoes that have largely gone unsounded, thereby revealing an important aspect of Conrad's influential literary modernism.

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Preface

'If you want to be a philosopher, write novels', declared Camus,¹ who along with Sartre first consciously gave fictional form to expressly existential thought. The two were anticipated in many ways by the incipient modernists of the late nineteenth century, who infused their work with a remarkably similar philosophical outlook -- though not of course under the avowed banner of the word existentialism. And not least among these literary modernists is Joseph Conrad, who so presciently anticipated what Arturo Follico describes as 'the nihilism, the vacuity, the despair, and deathly mechanization and depersonification of the existing man in our time'.²

Yet Conrad the existentialist has received surprisingly modest critical attention. Not that his existentialism -- or his adumbration of existentialism -- is a 'strangely neglected topic', to use Kingsley Amis's mocking phrase from Lucky Jim. But though it has indeed been broached in a clutch of articles and in longer works, there remains room for a more detailed and wide-ranging consideration of Conrad's existential affinities, which so powerfully reveal the extraordinary degree of his modernist perspectives.³

This is not to say that Conrad exhibits his existential strain as nakedly or formally as the fiction of Sartre and Camus reveal theirs: he is more subtle, less overtly philosophical. Even so, he is unquestionably open to a more sustained existential reading than are most of the other major

writers before him who at times reveal a kindred intellectual outlook, from the Old Testament prophets to Aeschylus to Shakespeare. In Conrad's case the congruence between his own views and those of existentialists from Kierkegaard to Camus is pervasive and unstrained, leaving little inducement to manipulation. Existential ideas, though new and subterranean, were not entirely unknown in the intellectual life of Conrad's period (1857-1924), thanks mainly to Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and Nietzsche (1844-1900), and later to Jaspers (1883-1969), Marcel (1889-1973) and Heidegger (1889-1976), before the wider spread of existentialism through the works of Sartre (1905-80) and Camus (1913-60). Some of the correspondences between Conrad and twentieth-century French existentialism have been noted often enough before, but too little has been said of Conrad's thorough affinities with the German existentialists and with Kierkegaard (though Conrad's atheistic outlook does not always comport with the Dane's Christian approach).

Sartre came to view the word existentialism to have been 'so loosely applied to so many things that it no longer means anything at all' (Humanism 25-6). This is exaggerated of course, but it does point to the existential conviction that existence cannot be trimly fashioned into a system, particularly not an abstract one (which falsifies and constricts). As Nietzsche declares in Twilight of the Idols (25), 'I mistrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity'. In consequence, no two existentialists (just as, say, no two High Romantics) posit precisely the same views. But in spite of the variance among them of

their individual pronouncements, the major existentialists do share a common ground firm enough to support a consideration of it in Conrad that is both rigorous and internally consistent without being dogmatic. It is on the bedrock of this common ground rather than its surface rifts that the ensuing study rests, seeking as it does to demonstrate the ways in which Conrad approximates, rather than diverges from, existential perspectives. Naturally such a reading does not claim a definitive understanding of what Conrad's ultimate intentions are but simply offers one interpretation among many. By concentrating on certain aspects of Conrad I by no means wish to stereotype him and negate his other dimensions; they simply lie beyond my intentions. Ian Watt's Conrad in the Nineteenth Century has already supplied an admirable consideration of the novelist's broader intellectual position.

My exploration focuses on six notable works -- Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim, Nostramo, The Secret Agent, Under Western Eyes and Victory -- considering the varying degrees to which they exhibit particular existential concerns. Since I do not make a case for any programmatic development of existentialism in Conrad, these novels are not examined in strict chronological order. Instead, individual works are discussed according to the extent to which they illustrate the topics under review, with constant cross-reference to the other major novels. I also survey broadly the letters, prefaces, notes, essays and short stories. Though there is de rigueur assessment of previous critical opinion, I try to bypass the bosky cul-de-sacs it often entails. In addition, I strive to circumvent jargon

and 'critspeak' as far as possible in order to be plain, which necessarily entails some loss of sophistication.

Although this study has as its main concern Conrad's philosophical outlook, it does not altogether skirt more purely literary issues. Hence my liberal-humanist stance attempts close attention to the text amid the tangled problem of authorial intent, all the while bearing in mind that to present an existential reading of Conrad is simply to highlight one vein of his work without any assertion that it is the pre-eminent artery. I emphatically do not wish to foist a literary classification on Conrad, who considered himself beyond categorisation, unlike lesser novelists who 'try voluntarily to discover the fettering dogmas of some romantic, realistic, or naturalistic creed' (Notes 7-8). 'The aim of art . . . ', he writes in the preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus' (xliii), 'like life itself, is inspiring, difficult--obscured by mists. It is not in the clear logic of a triumphant conclusion; it is not in the unveiling of one of those heartless secrets which are called the Laws of Nature'. Thus, the artist 'cannot be faithful to any one of the temporary formulas of his craft' (xlii). Certainly an emphasis on his existential qualities by no means leads to a skewed picture of Conrad. With his credo 'Never state: present', he depicts a Nietzschean world of multifarious perspectivity, and it comes as no surprise that he has defied precise pigeonholing.

Though Conrad makes this remark in the context of literary method relating to his argument in the preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus',

according to which psychological states should not be overtly catalogued but be expressed through some sort of external correlative, his idea spills over into his conviction that any presentation of a situation remains a subjective view, not an indisputable assertion of fact. Hence his use of multiple narrators (unreliable at times), each with his own perspective, which is often articulated in speech full of ellipses and uncertain hesitations.⁴ In Heart of Darkness Marlow's stories are characterised as 'inconclusive' (1:51), and his account in Lord Jim is considered an 'incomplete story' (36:253); his narratives have no closure. Conrad frequently juxtaposes his narrators' contrasting points of view and employs digressions, time shifts, and oblique circumlocutions (as various critics have amply pointed out, though seldom in an existential context). There is also an existential quality in Conrad's treatment of repeated motifs such as nature, the sea, ships, cities, jumps, flight and disguise.

The ensuing four chapters closely chart the existential attitudes most fully discernible in Conrad, some of which have been so thoroughly absorbed by our modern perspective as to seem obvious at times. But they were by no means an accepted part of mainstream nineteenth-century ideas. These attitudes in brief are Conrad's approach to the tragic tension between limited man and the indifferent universe he inhabits⁵; to the supremacy of emotional life over rationality, focusing on man in the whole range of his existing as a subjective interpreter of the world; to the role of feelings

such as alienation, despair, nausea, and anxiety; to man's quest for authentic selfhood (with its attendant questions of freedom, decision, action and responsibility); and to interpersonal relationships and the qualities they demand. Some of these are of course commonplaces of Conrad criticism, but they have not been adequately explored in their existential dimensions -- particularly those of the German existentialists.

One is constantly tempted to consider all these notions with the hindsight of present-day critical vantage points, but to do so at every turn would unnecessarily impede discourse. It is therefore not my intention to argue the soundness of the existential attitudes I explore. Nor do I deliberately filter them through my own perspectives, preferring in most cases to let their proponents speak for themselves -- the dominant voices being those of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Marcel, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus, as well as (more briefly) Berdyaev, Tillich and Buber. Let us now turn to them and Conrad without further delay -- which I do with a debt of gratitude to generations of commentators on Conrad and on existentialism, and with warmest appreciation to all who offered me encouragement and advice, in particular Eve Bertelsen at Cape Town and Mark Wollaeger at Yale.

List of Abbreviations

I did not have access to complete collected editions of Conrad's works, and in-text references to part, chapter and page numbers (as the case may be) for the six novels most frequently cited in this study are to the following editions:

Heart of Darkness, in Youth, Heart of Darkness, The End of the Tether. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, The World's Classics Series, 1984.

Lord Jim: A Tale. Harmondsworth: Penguin Modern Classics, 1957.

Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard. Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1986.

The Secret Agent. Harmondsworth: Penguin English Library, 1984.

Under Western Eyes. Harmondsworth: Penguin English Library, 1985.

Victory: An Island Tale. Harmondsworth: Penguin Modern Classics, 1963.

The following short titles are used for in-text references to frequently cited existential texts; references are to volume, section and page numbers, as the case may be:

Dread: Søren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957.

Essays: Jean-Paul Sartre, Literary and Philosophical Essays. New York: Collier Books, 1962.

Evil: Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.

Existence: Gabriel Marcel, The Philosophy of Existence. London: Harvill Press, 1948.

Humanism: Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism and Humanism. New York: Haskell, 1948.

Idols: Friedrich Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968

Love: Søren Kierkegaard, Works of Love. London: Collins, 1962.

Morals: Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.

Mystery: Gabriel Marcel, The Mystery of Being. Vol. 1. South Bend, Ind.: Gateway Editions, Ltd. n.d. Vol. 2. Chicago: Gateway Edition, Henry Regnery Company, 1960.

Nothingness: Jean-Paul Sartre, Being and Nothingness. New York: Philosophical Library, 1956.

Postscript. Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941.

Power: Friedrich Nietzsche, The Will to Power. New York: Random House, 1967.

Reason: Jean-Paul Sartre, The Age of Reason. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.

Science: Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science. New York: Random House, 1974.

Time: Martin Heidegger, Being and Time. New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1977.

Tragedy: Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy. New York: Vintage Books, 1967.

Zarathustra: Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra. New York: Random House Modern Library, n.d.

1 Being in the World

Axel Heyst, we are told by the narrator of Victory, sought 'detachment from the world' (1:4:40). But, as any major existentialist would be quick to point out, man is inextricably a 'being-in-the-world', existing in unavoidable contingency with all that surrounds him. As Sartre's Roquentin emphasises in Nausea (131), 'Contingency is not a delusion, a probability which can be dissipated; it is the absolute' condition of man. Heyst, as he himself painfully discovered, was ineluctably a physical part of his encircling world, a world that the Sartre of Being and Nothingness (555) regards as offering man little support, leaving him 'abandoned' to his own resources. 'I carry the weight of the world by myself alone without any person or thing being able to lighten it'. Like Professor Mathieu in Sartre's Age of Reason (320), every man is ultimately 'alone' and 'without assistance' in 'a monstrous silence', his presence simply what Heyst calls '"an unforeseen accident"' (3:3:167) in a Sartrean universe where everything is 'superfluous' (Nausea 131). It is a world the Hamlet of Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy (7:60) considers to be filled with 'horror or absurdity', part of 'an irrational necessity'.¹ As Marlow puts it in Heart of Darkness, 'We live, as we dream--alone' (1:82), our life a 'mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose' (3:150).

To most existentialists the world has no absolute meaning, and (as an early reviewer observed) Conrad is a great novelist precisely because he also has 'no theory as to the purpose of life'.² Ian Watt too has stressed that Conrad has no rigidly systematic philosophy, that he pretends to offer no more than partial glimpses of any universals -- rather like Hardy, who

frequently denied the presence of any formal philosophy in his work and saw himself as 'humbly recording diverse readings of phenomena as they are forced upon us by chance and change'.³ The world, after all, as Conrad declares in The Mirror of the Sea (ix), 'seems to be mostly composed of riddles'. "'The whole world is inconceivable to the strict logic of ideas"', remarks Natalia Haldin to the professor of languages who narrates Under Western Eyes. "'And yet the world exists to our senses, and we exist in it"' (2:1:135-6). This contingent relation of lonely man and absurd world is indissoluble. In Heidegger's words from Being and Time (78), 'The compound expression "being-in-the-world" indicates in the very way we have coined it, that it stands for a unitary phenomenon'.

Conrad's sense of the nature of this inextricable condition is in extraordinary agreement with the interpretation of it offered by the most influential of the existentialists, whose positions are in turn often darkened adaptations of Romantic ideas and are a powerful exponent of modernism. Both they and Conrad regard the individual as a solitary being hurled by chance into an irrational world, battling -- and sometimes transcending -- the indifferent obstacles that stalk his pursuit of a fuller life and induce in him an alienating state of anxiety amid his tragic awareness of his own finitude.

The existential flavour in Conrad's evocation of man's relation to the world will be readily evident in the wide sampling of parallels offered in the next several pages, which are intended as an orientating prelude to a somewhat fuller consideration in subsequent chapters of related matters such as man's quest for what existentialists call 'authentic' existence; man's radical freedom that makes him terrifyingly responsible for his

actions; and the sense of redemptive self-justification that comes with successful interpersonal bonds.

*

The world, says Sartre, is the sum of animate and inanimate 'obstacles' encountered by the individual self in the wider realm of being, which Heidegger characterises as something indefinite that we can have no mental picture of. Being is what Marlow in Lord Jim calls the 'one colossal Presence' (35:251) that man is 'open' to, as Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism' puts it (Basic Writings 228-9). For Sartre, being simply 'is' and has two fundamental forms: being-in-itself, or l'Être-en-soi, and being-for-itself, or l'Être-pour-soi. (I hope to limit convoluted use of such neologisms.) Being-in-itself is the self-contained, non-conscious being of an entity, its material being -- a stone is a stone, 'simply there, wholly brute' (Nothingness 506), obdurate with what Jim's Marlow terms 'the stubborn soul of things' (27:201-2). Being-for-itself, on the other hand, is the mode of existence man achieves by separating himself from sheer being-in-itself through fashioning his desired self in a world into which he has gratuitously been 'thrown', as Sartre and Heidegger phrase it.

Thus Jim initially finds himself among men 'who, like himself, [were] thrown there by some accident' (2:16). Only later (as we shall see in the next chapter) does he manage to create for himself an identity that surmounts the insensate world around him.⁴ His starting position, though, is one of being 'thrown there'. 'To exist', remarks Sartre's Roquentin, 'is simply to be there' (Nausea 131), so that Heidegger describes an

individual's fundamental existence as 'being there', or Dasein, a mode of being (sein) that derives from a particular position (Da) which the existent occupies at a particular time -- a view Conrad held long before Sartre and Heidegger, illustrating as he does that man (as William Bysshe Stein has observed)⁵ is basically an historical being immersed in a flux of impermanence.

This is the shared condition of all men. 'What men have in common', writes Sartre in Anti-Semite and Jew (60), 'is not a "nature" but a condition, that is, an ensemble of limits and restrictions: the inevitability of death, the necessity of working for a living, of existing in a world already inhabited by other men. Fundamentally this condition is nothing more than the basic situation, or, if you prefer, the ensemble of abstract characteristics common to all situations'. There is, as he puts it in Existentialism and Humanism (46), a 'human universality of condition', made up of 'all the limitations which a priori define man's fundamental situation in the universe'. And Conrad's many international locales, as Adam Gillon mentions, represent microcosms of this 'universal human condition' with its 'divided human soul' and man's search for values.⁶ In Marcel's words from the appendix to his Metaphysical Journal (322), the only thing 'given to me beyond all possible doubt is the confused and global experience of the world inasmuch as it is existant'.

Clearly, then, the existentialist considers man to be physically part of an absurd world, unable to avoid engaging it. 'Without the world', says Sartre, 'there is no selfness, no person' (Nothingness 104). Yet in the same breath he insists also that 'without the person, there is no world': the very notion world as the individual experiences it rests on man. The Heidegger of Being and Time (417, 75) agrees. 'If no Dasein exists, no

world is "there" either'; essentially, 'life . . . is accessible only in Dasein. The ontology of life is accomplished by way of a privative Interpretation'.

This is so because any individual's conception and experience of the world derive from his own particular, limited point of view. When a person speaks of the world he means only what he is aware of in connection with it, and he can never claim to mean everything that is. Indeed, linguistically world stems from the Old English compound weor-old, in which weor means man and old means age or era. Thus, etymologically world means era of man. This implies that there is no world (as humanity understands it) without man, but not of course in the sense of esse est percipi: the absolute existence of material objects is not dependent on the mind that perceives them, and the sheer corporeal world would continue without the presence of men -- although the Marlow of Lord Jim had the distinct feeling that Patusan would indeed cease to exist without his presence: 'I felt that when tomorrow I had left it for ever, it would slip out of existence, to live only in my memory till I myself passed into oblivion' (33:243). And David Daiches has broadly remarked⁷ that the Marlow of Heart of Darkness too leaves the impression that there is no reality beyond individual experience.

Spelling out for a moment longer the existentialists' emphasis on perspectivism, we find them claiming that man can know only so much and no more about the world, that each individual projects his own viewpoints into it beyond the material evaluations offered by science. As Tillich observes in his Systematic Theology (1:62), an individual's 'only possible approach to existence itself' is through 'his own existence', through his own interpretation of the world. The world as men experience it is thus no one

thing but something wholly dependent on perspective. That Conrad shares this belief (as C. B. Cox has claimed)⁸ is clear from his remark in Chance (289) that 'each of us arranges the world according to his own notion'. As Sartre asserts, 'There is no sense in life a priori . . . it is yours to make sense of, and the value of it is nothing else but the sense that you choose' (Humanism 54).

Conrad further suggests this perspectivism in his use of narrators who acknowledge the circumscribed nature of their interpretation of things. Our views of Jim and Kurtz, for example, are filtered through the human perspective of Marlow, which is perforce limited, since -- as Sartre puts it -- 'man cannot pass beyond human subjectivity' (Humanism 29). No omniscient perspective is possible. Not even the narrators who frame Marlow's accounts in Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim provide an omniscient interpretation; their voices enter only occasionally, and then mainly to set the scene. Marlow often mentions his uncertainty about the accuracy of his views and freely admits to his limitations, stressing that he was 'fated never to see [Jim] clearly' (23:184). He constantly hoped for glimpses from Jim's own point of view (5:43) -- as well from Jewel's -- and he recounts the later events as seen 'mostly through Tamb' Itam's eyes' (42:293). We also get divergent views of Jim from Brierly, the French officer, Egström, Chester, Cornelius and Brown. Besides which, as a Conrad letter remarks, language filters reality through a 'veil of inaccurate words' (Notes 83), rendering any narrative all the more suspect.

The version of events offered by a particular raconteur, Marlow tells his listeners in Lord Jim, is open to still further interpretations by the hearers. Marlow contends that his account contains 'no message, unless

such as each of us can interpret for himself from the language of facts, that are so often more enigmatic than the craftiest arrangement of words' (36:255-6). 'For facts . . .', comments the narrator of Victory, 'can be only tested by our own particular suspicions' (2:8:135). 'There is a quality in events which is apprehended differently by different minds or even by the same mind at different times' (3:8:205). Like the loathsome Martin Ricardo, every man sees things 'in the light of his own experience and prejudices' (2:8:135). What one man may find soothing, another may find terrifying, for the 'sentiment' of safety 'depends not on extraneous circumstances but on our inward conviction' (2:2:79). And "'What is a conviction?'" asks Martin Decoud in Nostromo. Merely "'a particular view of our personal advantage either practical or emotional'" (2:5:179).

The professor of languages who narrates Under Western Eyes also admits to his own 'limitations' (2:1:131) and 'the corrupt frivolity of a Western mind' (2:2:151). And much of his narrative is in turn based on Razumov's confessional journal. Again Conrad avoids an omniscient narration, implicitly supporting the existential position that no absolute perspective is possible.

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This perspectivism is further underlined in Conrad's descriptions of natural phenomena, presented as they so often are to reflect how a particular individual experiences them and endeavours to infuse them with meaning, as Hermann Stresan has observed.⁹ Thus, when Marlow speaks of the storm Jim encountered on his very first training voyage, he says that it 'seemed' to Jim as if 'the brutal tumult of earth and sky' were 'directed at him. . . . It seemed to him he was whirled around' (1:12), suggesting Jim's own sense of the storm as attacking him personally. 'Now and then', Marlow continues, 'there appears on the face of facts a sinister violence of intention -- that indefinable something which forces it upon the mind and the heart of a man, that this complication of accidents or these elemental furies are coming at him with a purpose of malice' (2:14), an appearance which has no objective basis. An altered frame of mind brings a commensurately different view of things. Accordingly, in their love for each other Jim and Jewel experienced nature as benign when they walked together in 'a lovely night that seemed to breathe on them a soft caress' (31:225). Likewise, on Marlow's last day with Jim 'the diffused light from an opal sky seemed to cast upon a world without shadows and without brilliance the illusion of a calm and pensive greatness' (32:230).

This view of nature as reflecting human moods in a manner akin to Ruskin's pathetic fallacy is also suggested on several occasions by the Marlow of Heart of Darkness. So too is the world's inscrutability. As Ruth M. Stauffer observed in her early assessment of Conrad, his dominant strain is an abiding sense of the mystery that shrouds life.¹⁰ The sea, comments Marlow, is 'as inscrutable as Destiny' and, like a Roman of old, the modern pioneer 'has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible' (1:48, 50). The jungle of the Congo was a 'colossal body of . . . fecund and

mysterious life' (3:136), and as he talked to the company's station manager Marlow wondered whether 'the stillness on the face of the immensity looking at us two were meant as an appeal or as a menace' (1:81). Amid the harlequinesque Russian's effusions about Kurtz, Marlow felt that 'never, never before, did this land, this river, this jungle, the very arch of this blazing sky, appear to me so hopeless and so dark, so impenetrable to human thought, so pitiless to human weakness' (3:127).

This hostile impenetrability of the world was felt too by Nostromo's Decoud. Alone in Sartre's 'monstrous silence' on the Great Isabel, 'he beheld the universe as a succession of incomprehensible images' (3:10:413-14), experiencing what we have seen Marcel call a 'confused' apprehension of the world. Earlier, while he was aboard the silver-laden lighter with Nostromo, the Placid Gulf's 'blackness seemed to weigh upon Decoud like a stone.

'"This is overpowering," he muttered' (2:7:231). Yet the Capataz de Cargadores considered this same darkness "'our friend'", a response Decoud later shared, finding it 'a shelter. He exulted in its impenetrable obscurity' (2:8:244, 247) -- pointing to a sea-change in his mood, which had wholly altered his interpretation of phenomena that had themselves remained unchanged.

Subject as they are to perspectives of the moment, individual experiences of the world can often be thoroughly unreliable. Captain Mitchell, 'during his long vigil on the wharf', had 'thought that there had been much more wind than usual that night in the gulf; whereas, as a matter of fact, the reverse was the case' (3:2:291). When in Under Western Eyes the professor saw Natalia Haldin several days after their

previous meeting, she remarked that it was "'a glorious day'". Yet, comments the professor, 'all the glory of the season must have been within herself', given what he regarded to be the 'cold cruel blue' of the sky and 'the ugly, dark wall of the Jura' (2:4:163). As Marlow says of Jim's later mood of self-fulfilment in Patusan, 'Felicity . . . is quaffed out of a golden cup in every latitude: the flavour is with you -- with you alone, and you can make it as intoxicating as you please' (16:135).

When Natalia subsequently announced that she would be leaving Geneva, the professor betrays his regret by presenting his surroundings in terms that mirror his own feelings: 'The emptiness of the quays, the desert aspect of the streets, had an air of hypocritical respectability and of inexpressible dreariness' (4:2:310-11). The Boulevard des Philosophes seemed 'the very desolation of slumbering respectability' (4:2:313). He later records that the soon-to-be-deserted Haldin appartement 'presented the dreary signs of impending abandonment. It looked desolate and as if already empty to my eyes' (4:5:342). But on the first occasion he had entered it, under circumstances happier for him, 'the motes danced in the sunshine' (2:1:139). In The Secret Agent, Adolf Verloc's anguished condition made him view 'this fair earth' as 'a vast and hopeless desert' (8:174); Sir Ethelred's vacuous secretary Toodles, on the other hand, 'believed [it] to be a nice place to live on' (10:201). As we recall Sartre insisting, 'There is no sense in life a priori . . . the value of it is nothing else but the sense that you choose' (Humanism 54). No two individuals evaluate the world alike, and a single individual may apprehend the same objects differently at different times. Thus, in her horror at her husband's having killed her brother Stevie in the Greenwich bombing, Winnie Verloc's thought was capable of 'altering even the aspect of

inanimate things' (11:225). 'I am condemned . . .', says Sartre, 'to see the world modified at the whim of the changes of my consciousness' (Nothingness 482-3). Accordingly, when Hervey's wife came back to him in 'The Return', 'it seemed to him that the walls were coming apart, that the furniture swayed at him; the ceiling slanted queerly for a moment, a tall wardrobe tried to topple over' (Unrest 128).

We find these varying interpretations of the world in Victory's Axel Heyst as well. The disillusioned early Heyst declared to Captain Davidson that "'this world is evil upon the whole"', a "'bad dog"' (1:6:57, 59). But in his contentment with Lena the later Heyst found even a volcano friendly: "'Our neighbour is generally well behaved -- just smokes quietly. . . . He's a good-natured, lazy fellow"' (3:3:164). Once the sinister Jones and Ricardo intruded on the scene, Heyst again saw the world as distasteful. He pronounced the forest "'gloomy"', and Lena 'perceived the shades of the forest surrounding [them] . . . with a sullen, dumb, menacing hostility' (4:8:284). Looking at the stormy sky, 'her eyes reflected the sombre and violent hues of the sunset.

"'That does not look much like a sign of mercy," she said slowly' (4:8:286).

Clearly, then, Conrad shares the existential view that any interpretation of the world simply reflects an individual's experience of it at a particular moment. For man, as Sartre says, there is only 'the universe of human subjectivity' (Humanism 55). In itself, the world has no intention, either malign or benign; it is wholly indifferent. Man, declares Sartre, feels himself 'abandoned in the midst of indifference' (Nothingness 508) -- in a world as indifferent as the cold stars in Chance

or the snowy dome of Higuerota in Nostramo, which Cox sees as the embodiment of nature's silent, unmoved response to the anguish of men.¹¹ 'The spirit of the land . . .', remarks the Marlow of Lord Jim, 'is careless of innumerable lives' (21:170). To Jewel, Marlow represented 'all the world that neither cared for Jim nor needed him . . . the indifference of the teeming earth' (33:233). When Natalia Haldin said her final goodbyes to the professor in Under Western Eyes, she lamented that '"the stifled cry of our great distress . . . may be nothing to the world"' (4:5:345). To Conrad, as Albert J. Guerard has commented, man alone brings any sense of caring or grace into an unfeeling world.¹²

This indifference of circumambient being produces in man a sense of cosmic alienation. In Tillich's words, 'Whenever man has looked at his world, he has found himself in it as a part of it. But he also has realized that he is a stranger in the world of objects, unable to penetrate it beyond a certain level' (Systematic Theology 1:62). In consequence, it is up to the individual alone to decide about his own response to his situation in the world. As Wilfred Desan remarks,¹³ to Sartre it is an individual's free choice that mostly decides about the coefficient of adversity or utility in the world. 'To be in a situation . . .', argues Sartre, 'is to choose oneself in a situation, and men differ from one another in their situations and also in the choices they themselves make of themselves' (Anti-Semite and Jew 60).

Yet such choices can be crushingly difficult in an individual's awareness of his own finitude and limitations amid constrictive external objects. Even Victory's treacherous Ricardo 'was human enough to suffer from the discovery of his limitations' (4:1:234). Existentialists convey this limiting aspect of existence by the coinage facticity (expressed as

Faktizität in German and facticité in French). As John Macquarrie points out,¹⁴ facticity does not mean the same thing as factuality, which designates the more objective state of affairs observable in the world. Instead, facticity is the inner side of factuality, one's inward, existential awareness of one's own being (with its limitations) as a fact to be accepted. None of us has chosen to be: we simply find ourselves in Heidegger's condition of 'thrownness' (Geworfenheit), like Jim and his fellow seamen who (as we have seen) were 'thrown' into the East 'by some accident' (2:16), or like Victory's Lena and Ricardo, "'chucked out into this rotten world of 'yporcrits'" (4:2:242). As Stein remarks to Marlow, "'A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea'" (20:163). 'I am plunged', comes the echo in Sartre, 'in a world like that of a dream' (Nothingness 482).

The sea in this case suggests the factual given and givenness of our existence. From an existential point of view, each of us is born by chance into a particular historical situation in a particular society, whose forces operate to shape our individual lives and affect our projects for realising our possibilities. Facticity is thus the opposite of possibility, its limiting situational element -- which includes the limits of subjectivity that render man's understanding incomplete and so make him a stranger to nature and social mechanisms, which frequently assault him. Any of man's possibilities is therefore always a factual possibility. In life, remarks the nameless 'Professor' of The Secret Agent, one is "'surrounded by all sorts of restraints and considerations'" (4:93). To most of us, as Marlow comments in Heart of Darkness, 'the earth . . . is a place . . . where we must put up with sights, with sounds, with

smells . . . -- breathe dead hippo, so to speak, and not be contaminated' (2:117). Charles Gould in Nostromo, however, found that 'it was impossible to disentangle one's activity from . . . debasing contacts' (3:3:308).

Indeed, the debasements of circumambient being often induce a sense of the world conspiring against one, as we saw in the case of Jim during his first storm at sea, which to him 'seemed directed at him' (1:12). Marlow describes the Jim of the Patna trial as appearing to be 'bound and gagged by all the invisible foes of man' (15:134). His existence was 'blurred by crowds of men as if by clouds of dust, silenced by the clashing claims of life and death in a material world' (20:165). All too frequently -- as when Marlow brought up the subject of Cornelius -- Jim felt himself 'a victim, crushed like a worm' (34:245-6), battered by what Marlow earlier terms 'unreasonable forces' like 'the unthinking might of nature, or the stupid brutality of crowds' (7:72). It comes as no surprise that critics such as Wilson Follet¹⁵ have long pointed to Conrad's pervasive stress on the conflict between man and his world with its Sartrean 'limits and restrictions'.

Marlow repeatedly suggests this conflict by pointing to the menacing aspects of nature. The Patna inched across a sea that was 'viscous, stagnant, dead', 'lonely under a wisp of smoke, held on her steadfast way black and smouldering in a luminous immensity, as if scorched by a flame flicked at her from a heaven without pity' (2:18, 19), by a sun of the sort that blazed down on Heyst's bungalow in Victory, 'hot and dry, with a devouring glare like the eye of an enemy' (3:3:158). As the Patna foundered, Jim saw a cloud of vapour produced by a 'silent black squall' of the kind that 'confounds sea and sky into one abyss of obscurity' (9:81), even though it was a pygmy compared to the elemental fury famously depicted

in Typhoon and The Nigger of the "Narcissus", a fury that -- as Cox has remarked¹⁶ -- was nevertheless capable of being transformed by the crew's heroism, which transcended the forces of a threatening universe. Terra firma is often no safer than the unpredictable sea: the jungle of the Congo with 'the profound darkness of its heart' contained 'lurking death' and 'hidden evil' (2:92). The Samburan jungle in Victory, 'more jealous of men's conquests than the ocean', constantly overwhelmed human endeavour and had '"choked the very sheds in Black Diamond Bay"' (1:4:38, 39).

Even when the universe appears benign it carries unsuspected catastrophe. Prior to its collision, the Patna had sailed under stars that 'seemed to shed upon the earth the assurance of everlasting security. . . . The propeller turned without a check, as though its beat had been part of the scheme of a safe universe. . . . Jim . . . was penetrated by the great certitude of unbounded safety and peace that could be read on the silent aspect of nature like the certitude of fostering love upon the placid tenderness of a mother's face' (3:19). This reading offered no hint of impending disaster. Yet when the ship struck its unseen foe, 'suddenly the calm sea, the sky without a cloud, appeared formidably insecure in their immobility, as it poised on the brow of yawning destruction' (3:26). Later, while Jim and Marlow were in conversation following the onset of the trial, Jim stood 'as if admiring the purity and the peace of the night' (12:104). But 'the night seemed to wait for him very still, as though he had been marked down for its prey', and when he departed 'the night swallowed his form' (13:120). Still later, on Patusan, we find night settling 'silently on all the visible forms . . . like a steady fall of impalpable black dust' (32:230). Even the tranquil sheen of the moon

'has all the dispassionateness of a disembodied soul' (24:187); sunshine is 'passionate' but 'unconsoling' (36:254).

In Heart of Darkness the quiet of the jungle 'did not in the least resemble a peace. It was the stillness of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention' (2:93). And when Nostromo's Decoud sank to his death in the Placid Gulf, the silent water's 'glittering surface remained untroubled by the fall of his body'; he was 'swallowed up in the immense indifference of things' (3:10:416). Like Jim, Decoud inhabited 'a world indifferent to his failing and his virtues' (43:296), epitomised in The Mirror of the Sea (141) by the ocean's 'cynical indifference'.

Conrad's Dickens-like¹⁷ urban constructs are no less indifferent. Beyond Verloc's house in The Secret Agent stretched an 'inhospitable accumulation of bricks, slates, and stones, things in themselves unlovely and unfriendly to man' (3:84). Avrom Fleishman has pointed out¹⁸ that the confused London streets and house numbers suggest the irrationality of the social order, whose larger absurdities Verloc lamely accepts. The confused city landscape also suggests the irrationality within man, since -- as J. Hillis Miller has remarked¹⁹ -- civilisation in Conrad's depiction of it is merely an arbitrary creation that rests on no source of value outside humanity. When the nihilistic Professor left Comrade Ossipon after they had dined together, the sale of newspapers to the scurrying foot traffic had an 'effect . . . of indifference, of a disregarded distribution' (4:101). As the Assistant Commissioner emerged from the Italian restaurant, he entered 'into an immensity of greasy slime and damp plaster . . . enveloped, oppressed, penetrated, choked, and suffocated by the blackness of a wet London night' (7:152). After murdering Verloc, Winnie considered 'the vast world created for the glory of man' to be 'only a vast

blank'; 'the whole town . . . rested at the bottom of a black abyss from which no unaided woman could hope to scramble out' (12:240). Soon after she had given Verloc's banknotes to Ossipon, he walked through 'the enormous town slumbering monstrously on a carpet of mud under a veil of raw mist . . . through monotonous streets with unknown names where the dust of humanity settles inert and hopeless' (12:261-2). The London evoked in Victory is equally desolate: to the young Heyst after his father's funeral, 'the London houses began to look like the tombs of an unvisited, unhonoured, cemetery of hopes' (3:1:150).

In Under Western Eyes Ziemianitch, the sledge-driver whom Razumov sought to aid Victor Haldin's escape after his assassination of de P----, lived in 'an enormous slum, a hive of human vermin, a monumental abode of misery towering on the verge of starvation and despair' (1:2:75). Even affluent Geneva, the very antithesis of a slum, was 'indifferent and hospitable in its cold, almost scornful, toleration' when Razumov and the professor of languages called on Natalia Haldin and her mother (4:3:316). It tendered 'the same indifferent hospitality to tourists of all nations and to international conspirators of every shade' (4:4:330). Razumov was just as alienated there as he had been in St Petersburg, where he had 'felt the hard ground of Russia, inanimate, cold, inert . . . his native soil . . . without a heart' (1:2:78).

Included of course in this indifferent universe are one's fellow men, whom Heidegger regards as the abstract public mass that 'dissolves one's own Dasein' (Time 164). We are all, as Sartre puts it in Being and Nothingness, 'existences-in-the-world-in-presence-of-others'. And these others, with the social mechanisms they devise, are frequently inimical to

one's attempts at gaining a sense of personal fulfilment. 'To battle against princes and popes . . .', says Kierkegaard in his Journals (502), 'is easy compared with struggling against the masses'. Marlow repeatedly points to exactly such struggles with 'others', with 'the world' (23:180), waged by Jim during and after the Patna incident. At the trial, for example, he was subjected to society's 'rules of the game' (7:66), surrounded by 'the pale blotches of faces' in the gallery (8:80) who formed part of 'international opinion' (14:123), that 'public opinion' which we find the Assistant Commissioner in The Secret Agent regarding as a 'strange emotional phenomenon' with an 'irrational nature' that 'weighed upon his spirits' (5:116). Mass opinion had also probably led to the separation of Jewel's mother and father, assailed as they were 'by the merciless pressure of conventions' (28:209).

Jewel herself was at the doubtful mercy of Cornelius, whom Jim viewed as 'the hateful embodiment of all the annoyances and difficulties he had found in his path' (30:221), and Marlow describes Brown as 'a blind accomplice of the Dark Powers' (38:266) -- much like Jones in Victory, who announced himself to Heyst as "'the world itself, come to pay you a visit'" (4:11:303). The kind of corrupt and threatening world 'Jones and Co.' represent has an even more destructive countenance in Nostromo, where the conduct of men is a 'story of oppression, inefficiency, fatuous methods, treachery, and savage brutality' (1:8:119). 'A close-meshed net of crime and corruption lay upon the whole country' (3:3:308). 'At no time of the world's history', comments the narrator, 'have men been at a loss how to inflict mental and bodily anguish upon their fellow-creatures' (3:4:317). Political systems, Marcel argues in Man against Mass Society (see 27-56), all too often entail 'techniques of degradation'. To Father Román, 'the

working of the usual public institutions presented itself . . . most distinctly as a series of calamities overtaking private individuals and flowing logically from each other through hate, revenge, folly, and rapacity' (3:6:337). Nostromo despises the hombres finos who 'invented laws and governments and barren tasks for the people' (3:10:411), and he considers their economic power as embodied in the San Tomé silver mine to be 'hateful and immense, lording it by its vast wealth over the valour, the toil, the fidelity of the poor' (3:10:417). In The Secret Agent the 'ticket-of-leave-apostle' Michaelis describes "'the nature of the present economic conditions'" as "'cannibalistic'" (3:80), the product of a social system that the cynical Professor finds personified in Inspector Heat: 'the force of law, property, oppression, and injustice' (5:104).

For an individual to oppose such social constructs is more perilous still in the world of Under Western Eyes: Russia is 'a country where an opinion may be a legal crime visited by death or sometimes by a fate worse than mere death' (1:prologue:1:57). The chains riveted on to Peter Ivanovitch's limbs by an 'Administrative' order were 'an appalling assertion of the divine right of autocracy' (2:2:147), and the professor of languages decries the 'ruthless working of political institutions' (4:3:328) amid his growing awareness of 'the horrors from which innocent people are made to suffer in this world, only in order that governments might exist' (2:4:169-70). The revolutionary Sophia Antonovna rails against the crushing inflexibility of the man-made institutions that destroyed her father: "'What had society to say to him? Be submissive and be honest. If you rebel I shall kill you'" (3:3:257). In an indifferent Sartrean universe

neither elemental nature nor societal constructs assure man any consolation.

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Even more terrifying than such universal indifference is man's experience of the world as absurd, a prime theme of existentialism. Camus, for example, begins The Myth of Sisyphus (2) by announcing, 'The pages that follow deal with an absurd sensitivity that can be found widespread in the age'. In The Rebel (10) he asserts, 'I proclaim that I believe in nothing and that everything is absurd'. To Camus the world is utterly without absolute meaning, and man is left to invent his own personal meaning for his existence, which he leads as an isolated stranger beset by conditions that restrict and thwart him. As we recall, Sartre shares Camus's sentiment: the obstinate world of sheer brute objects -- being-in-itself -- has no reason, no cause. It simply 'is'. The individual identity that man creates for himself -- his being-for-itself -- is constantly in a state of chance contingency with all that surrounds him, and both he and his circumambient world are wholly ungrounded, making for a condition of 'fundamental absurdity', as Roquentin puts it in Nausea (129). 'I hadn't the right to exist', he muses. 'I had appeared by chance' (84).

Furthermore, 'the total character of the world . . . is in all eternity chaos', declares Nietzsche in The Gay Science (109:168), a disorder that Conrad gives emblematic form to in The Secret Agent through Stevie's febrile drawing of 'a coruscating whirl of circles that by their tangled multitude of repeated curves . . . and confusion of intersecting lines suggested a rendering of cosmic chaos, the symbolism of a mad art attempting the inconceivable' (3:76). As D. A. C. MacLennan has said,²⁰ Conrad's major works show that there is only bland, neutral disorder at the centre of things. Chance is the most powerful force in an indifferent world where all value, imposed by man, is relativist. The human mind alone imposes a specious sense of order, or kosmos, on a world that the Nietzsche

of The Will to Power (1067:550) regards as an enigmatic 'monster of energy' incomprehensible to the rational mind. The narrator of The Secret Agent knows that 'true wisdom . . . is not certain of anything in this world of contradictions' (5:105). 'The world', says Nietzsche (521:283), 'seems logical to us because we have made it logical', whereas it is actually characterised by 'change, becoming, multiplicity, opposition, contradiction, war' (584:315). It is full of 'horror or absurdity' (Tragedy 7:60).

This absurdity is only too evident in the worlds of Conrad's fiction, whether as a pervasive sensation or a momentary one induced by personal crisis. When in 'The Return' Hervey read his wife's note announcing that she had left him, 'he was stunned by a noise meaningless and violent, like the clash of gongs or the beating of drums; a great aimless uproar. . . . This absurd and distracting tumult seemed to ooze out of the written words, to issue from between his very fingers that trembled, holding the paper' (Unrest 118). Marlow's narratives frequently go beyond such a purely subjective response and suggest a more outwardly observable absurdity in things. Though in Lord Jim Stein might marvel at "'the accuracy, the harmony'" of a butterfly as the product of "'the mighty Kosmos in perfect equilibrium'" (20:158), Marlow remorselessly shows that the world as most men experience it is 'a crazy maze of plans, hopes, dangers, enterprises' amid a 'fantastic existence' in which death is the only certainty (2:16). As he comments after seeing Jim off to Patusan aboard the brigantine with its mulatto master, 'the absurd chatter of the half-caste had given more reality to the miserable dangers of his path than Stein's careful statements' (23:183). Jim's world was not the one imagined

by his father, whom Marlow describes as 'equably trusting providence and the established order of the universe' in his 'undisturbed rectitude' (36:257).

Nor was the world of Jim's father the one Marlow encountered in Heart of Darkness, a jungle world he remembers as 'one immense jabber, silly, atrocious, sordid, savage, or simply mean, without any kind of sense' (2:115). Brussels was no better. Visiting Kurtz's Intended, Marlow felt he 'had blundered into a place of cruel and absurd mysteries not fit for a human being to behold' (3:157). Her 'sepulchral city' and its denizens who dreamed 'insignificant and silly dreams' (3:152) were as impervious to rational explanation as the jungle, 'that dumb thing, . . . that thing that couldn't talk, and perhaps was deaf as well', ready 'to sweep every little man of us out of his little existence' (1:81, 86). The station, always 'in a muddle, -- heads, things, buildings' (1:68) -- was more 'unreal' than anything else Marlow had ever seen, a 'cleared speck on the earth' surrounded by 'something great and invincible . . . waiting patiently for the passing away of this fantastic invasion' by European outsiders (1:76). The station manager was 'a chattering idiot' (1:75), and the arrival of various caravans produced 'a violent babble of uncouth sounds' (1:69) attended by an 'absurd air . . . an inextricable mess of things' (1:87). And the French naval gunship Marlow saw firing gratuitously on to the mainland seemed a particularly potent image of pervasive absurdity: 'in the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent' (1:61-2).

As Marlow inched up the river towards Kurtz, his 'little begrimed steamboat' crept along 'like a sluggish beetle crawling on the floor of a lofty portico' (2:95), toiling slowly 'on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy' of whirling bodies (2:96). During the assault by

the jungle populace as he approached Kurtz's outpost with the young Russian, whose 'very existence was improbable, inexplicable, and altogether bewildering' in 'the essential desolation of his futile wanderings' (3:126), Marlow 'resented bitterly the absurd danger of [their] situation' (3:133).

Similar resentment at being thrown into 'absurd danger' was experienced by Razumov in Under Western Eyes when he found himself a suspect in the assassination of de P---- : 'he stared in dreary astonishment at the absurdity of his position' (1:3:118). This sensation was felt by Decoud as well while aboard the lighter with Nostromo when he feared Hirsch might betray their presence to Sotillo's ship. 'What if Hirsch coughed or sneezed? To feel himself at the mercy of such an idiotic contingency was too exasperating to be looked upon with irony' (2:8:248). Gould too 'was not amused at the absurdities that prevail in this world. They hurt him in his innate gravity' (3:4:321) -- unlike the engineer in charge of constructing the railroad, who found that 'the humours of railway building in South America appealed to his keen appreciation of the absurd' (2:5:183).

The early Heyst of Victory also adopted the position that 'this world, for the wise, is nothing but an amusing spectacle' (3:1:153); "'it is by folly alone that the world moves'" (3:3:168). His bitterly ironic view of the world as "'the Great Joke'" (3:3:168) sprang from his sense that 'the general precariousness of human life' was 'not worth worrying about' (3:9:211). After his father's funeral he saw the mourners as 'fatuously jostling, nodding, spinning figures' swarming around him (3:1:151), and he observed that his father's death 'did not trouble the flow of life's

stream, where men and women go by thick as dust, revolving and jostling one another like figures cut out of cork and weighted with lead just sufficiently to keep them in their proudly upright posture' (3:1:150). Man has no absolute anchor in this Sartrean universe of sheer contingency. He "'drifts. The most successful men have drifted into their successes"' (3:3:167).

Heyst later remarked to Lena that he had "'determined to remain free from absurdities of existence"', wondering how he would withstand life's assaults: "'It's difficult to resist where nothing matters"' (3:4:171). He considered "'this earth"' to be the "'hatching planet of calumny enough to furnish the whole universe. I feel a disgust at my own person, as if I had tumbled into some filthy hole"' (3:4:180). On reading his father's Storm and Dust he marvelled 'with what strange serenity, mingled with terrors, had that man considered the universal nothingness! He had plunged into it headlong, perhaps to render death, the answer that faced one at every inquiry, more supportable' (3:5:184).

Death, Marlow tells his listeners in Heart of Darkness, is 'the last word of our common fate', the last of the 'ironic necessities that lurk in the facts of human existence' (3:155). And human existence, as suggested by his experience in the Congo, is ultimately impossible to describe. Trying to capture the sensation of what he experienced, says Marlow, is like trying to convey a dream -- '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' (1:82), a sensation Francis Ford Coppola skilfully evokes when the young conscripts get high on drugs in Apocalypse Now, which

substitutes Vietnam for Conrad's Congo.

The dying Decoud in Nostramo, too, ultimately experienced the world as a fantastic 'succession of incomprehensible images' (3:10:414). Like Ossipon in The Secret Agent he was 'incapable . . . of judging what could be true, possible, or even probable in this astounding universe' (12:253). To Ossipon the Greenwich Park explosion was a thing of 'utter inanity' (12:245), what Conrad's prefatory note speaks of as an 'absurd cruelty' (41) that the foreign embassy's Mr Vladimir intended to be "'an act of destructive ferocity so absurd as to be incomprehensible, inexplicable, almost unthinkable . . . [with] all the shocking senselessness of gratuitous blasphemy'" (2:67) in a Sartrean world where, in itself, all is 'superfluous' (Nausea 131).

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The bombing's main victim, Stevie, lived a life of constantly being 'afraid to look about him at the badness of the world' (8:165), experiencing 'horror at one sort of wretchedness having to feed upon the anguish of the other' (8:168). Yet, 'like the rest of mankind, perplexed by the mystery of the universe, he had his moments of consoling trust in the organized powers of the earth' (8:169). Indeed, Nietzsche sees a desire for consolation as being at the very root of all man's beliefs that the universe is harmoniously rational. 'The conceptual understandability of existence . . . ', he asserts in The Gay Science (370:328), 'calms and gives confidence -- in short, a certain warm narrowness that keeps away fear and envelopes one in optimistic horizons'.

It is an assertion shared by the Marlow of Lord Jim. Relating his apprehension of Nietzsche's Heraclitean view of universal chaos as he listened to Jewel's account of her mother's death, Marlow records that he was 'troubled . . . profoundly with the passive, irremediable horror of the scene. It had the power to drive me out of my conception of existence, out of that shelter each of us makes for himself to creep under in moments of danger, as a tortoise withdraws within its shell. For a moment I had a view of a world that seemed to wear a vast and dismal aspect of disorder, while, in truth, thanks to our unwearied efforts, it is as sunny an arrangement of small conveniences as the mind of man can conceive' (33:236). Marlow's contention here that man fashions a 'sunny' view of things parallels Nietzsche's contention in The Will to Power (521:283, 602:326) that 'the world seems logical to us because we have made it logical. . . . The more superficially and coarsely it is conceived, the more valuable, definite, beautiful, and significant the world appears'.

Accordingly, one of Conrad's major themes is what he terms in

Almayer's Folly (x) 'the curse of facts and the blessing of illusions, the bitterness of our wisdom and the deceptive consolation of our folly'.²¹ In a letter of 31 January 1898 to Cunninghame Graham he laments, 'If we could only get rid of consciousness. What makes mankind tragic is not that they are the victims of nature, it is that they are conscious of it' (Letters 2:30). As Watt observes,²² Conrad shares the existential view that individual consciousness is inevitably separate from its environment. In Jaspers's estimation, 'the more determined I am to comprehend the world, the more homeless it will make me feel' (Philosophy 2:4). Miguel de Unamuno, Conrad's contemporary, goes so far in The Tragic Sense of Life as to say that 'man, by the very fact of . . . possessing consciousness, is . . . a diseased animal. Consciousness is a disease'.²³ Yet individual human existence is inextricable from consciousness. 'The I', says Sartre in The Transcendence of the Ego (51, 44-5), 'manifests itself as the source of consciousness'; 'in so far as my reflecting consciousness is consciousness of itself, it is non-positional consciousness'. And as a consciousness, each man is aware of his 'otherness' in relation both to non-conscious entities and to his fellow consciousnesses.

Hence Winnie Verloc's 'tragic suspicion' in The Secret Agent 'that "life doesn't stand much looking into"' (author's note:41; cf. 8:172, 11:219), and Axel Heyst's contention in Victory that '"man on this earth . . . does not stand close investigation"' (3:3:167). As Jerome Thale has remarked,²⁴ Conrad suggests that illusion and ignorance in fact save us from knowledge that paralyzes. In Nietzsche's words, the 'lie -- and not the truth -- is divine' (Power 1011:523). Thus Marlow lets Kurtz's Intended remain ignorant of what he had found in the Congo; she lacked the strength

for such terrifying knowledge. The psychologically fragile, Nietzsche warns, dare not look too deeply into things, because 'the deeper one looks, the more our valuations disappear -- meaninglessness approaches' (Power 602:326). 'Woe to the fatal curiosity which should once be able to look through a crack out and down from the chamber of consciousness, and which should then divine that man rests, with the unconcern of his ignorance, on the pitiless, the ravenous, the insatiable, the murderous'.²⁵

Woe indeed, as we see in the case of Nostramo's Decoud, who became 'a victim of the disillusioned weariness which is the retribution meted out to intellectual audacity' (3:10:416). Heyst's father in Victory, that 'destroyer of systems, of hopes, of beliefs' (3:1:150), was similarly wearied by his piercing assessment of life -- yet he did ultimately manage (as existentialists claim we all can) to achieve "'mastery of despair'" (3:3:167). Heyst the younger had been used to 'seeing life outside the flattering optical delusion of everlasting hope, of conventional self-deceptions, of an ever-expected happiness' (2:2:80). But his life with Lena encouraged transcendence of his initially morbid nihilism,²⁶ a movement towards that pessimism of strength which Nietzsche counsels -- something very different from Decoud's 'affectation of careless pessimism' (2:8:247) or 'the air of moral nihilism' that the narrator of The Secret Agent regards as 'common to keepers of gambling hells and disorderly houses' (2:52).

Those of us who, like Winnie Verloc, lack the strength of pessimism would do well to follow Marlow's Nietzschean view of 'the wisdom of life' in Lord Jim, 'which consists in putting out of sight all the reminders of our folly, of our weakness, of our mortality' (15:134). Nietzsche argues that we ultimately do not wish to uncover the actual character of our cruel, contradictory, senseless world, so that we experience a conflict

between our surface curiosity and our submerged longing to avoid awesome knowledge -- what he epitomises in The Birth of Tragedy as the antagonism between science and art.

Not that we can trust reason as a guide to an accurate apprehension of the world. Like the Romantics, existentialists decry reliance on narrow rationalism that employs abstraction; emotions and intuitive thought, they contend, offer a more trustworthy disclosure of man and the world (as we shall see in just a moment). This is not to say that they utterly abjure reflective thought -- they simply insist that it should reflect on the intimations offered by emotions. Yet, as Marlow comments in Lord Jim, 'very few of us have the will or the capacity to look consciously under the surface of familiar emotions' (21:169). If we did, we would discover that emotions reveal much about us as beings-in-the-world. Much more than Hegelian Idealism for example can, since in Marcel's view it is a sort of 'sand castle' that alienates us from a sense of life as lived and so fails to bring us closer to a comprehensive understanding of our existence. Thus, Heidegger champions the pre-Socratics like Parmenides and Heraclitus with their insights into the connection between being and thinking, rather than subsequent Western philosophy with its 'forgetting of being' and its emphasis on calculative thought. As E. R. Dodds points out, 'The men who created the first European rationalism were never -- until the Hellenistic Age -- "mere" rationalists: that is to say, they were deeply and imaginatively aware of the power, the wonder, and the peril of the irrational'.²⁷

Hence Jaspers in The Origin and Goal of History (2) sees the roots of existential thought in the worldwide emergence in about 500 B.C. of the

kind of thought in which man first becomes 'conscious of Being as a whole, of himself and his limitations. He experiences the terror of the world and his own powerlessness. He asks radical questions. Face to face with the void he strives for liberation and redemption. By consciously recognizing his limits he sets himself the highest goals. He experiences absoluteness in the depths of selfhood and in the lucidity of transcendence'.

Rather than being primary, abstract reasoning is to the existentialist simply something that the self may use as one of its tools in its attempts to achieve its possibilities. As such, reason should focus on concrete experiences rather than devise abstract speculations and formulaic systems. As Marcel declares in Man against Mass Society (1), 'The dynamic element in my philosophy, taken as a whole, can be seen as an obstinate and untiring battle against the spirit of abstraction'. It is a battle even more virulently waged by Nietzsche, who asserts that in order to understand ourselves we must 'start from the body and employ it as guide. It is the much richer phenomenon, which allows of clearer observation' (Power 532:289). 'Our most sacred convictions, the unchanging elements in our supreme values, are judgments of our muscles' (314:173). 'Man', he says, 'like every living thing, thinks continually without knowing it; the thinking that rises to consciousness is only the smallest part of all this -- the most superficial and worst part -- for only this conscious thinking takes the form of words, which is to say signs of communication' (Science 354:299). As a result, we now 'cease to think when we refuse to do so under the constraint of language' (Power 522:283) -- hence our limited explanation of the world in terms of subject, predicate, object, and our attendant notions of cause and effect.

The brain, Nietzsche points out, is merely an organ of the body, and

the knowledge it produces is purely of the world 'appropriated and made manageable' (Power 423:227). 'What first created any basis for logic . . .', he argues in The Gay Science (111:171), was man's tendency 'to treat as equal what is merely similar -- an illogical tendency, for nothing is really equal. . . . It was . . . necessary that for a long time one did not see nor perceive the changes in things. The beings that did not see so precisely had an advantage over those that saw everything "in flux"'. Logic thus contains 'an imperative concerning that which should count as true', so as to help man endure existence (Power 516:279). Logic makes the world seem 'valuable, definite, beautiful, and significant' (602:326), rather than a chaos of what Marlow in Lord Jim terms 'unreasonable forces' (7:71-2). A surface view ultimately produces a vapid conception of things -- as even blithe Michaelis in The Secret Agent recognised: "'All idealization makes life poorer. To beautify it is to take away its character of complexity'" (3:73). And yet he himself adopted a facile optimism that smacked of just such idealisation, in that he claimed himself to be 'so far from pessimism that he saw already the end of all private property coming along logically. . . . Cold reason, he boasted, was the basis of his optimism' (3:74-5). Razumov in Under Western Eyes on the other hand, musing before the statue of Rousseau -- the great Romantic antithesis to Voltaire and his smile of reason -- pessimistically proclaimed that "'life is just . . . a dream and a fear'" (4:2:298). Yet (as Ted E. Boyle observes)²⁸ it was at this point that Razumov, like the Captain in The Shadow-Line, intuitively recognised his moral obligations and accepted his duties towards his fellow men.

The Romantic insistence on intuitive thought is echoed by Jaspers, who recommends that we should go beyond narrow logic and develop a definition

of reason that views everything in relation to a comprehensive whole, to all spheres of our experience. Thus Marlow repeatedly speaks of Jim as 'romantic' or 'imaginative', making him (as Peter Ure has claimed)²⁹ the touchstone of Conrad's attempts to endow his heroes with dreams and passions rather than intellect, and to have them transform such passions into achievement. Marlow mentions that his bachelor friend who had hosted Jim wrote approvingly that Jim 'was not clever by any means, thank goodness' (18:143). 'Ideas . . . ', Marlow tells his listeners, 'are tramps, vagabonds, knocking at the back-door of your mind, each taking a little of your substance' (5:38-9). The 'black fellows' who paddled the boats in Heart of Darkness were marvellously free of rationality's sapping influence: 'they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was as natural and true as the surf along their coast. They wanted no excuse for being there' (1:61) -- unlike the white 'pioneers' who, as Bruce Johnson observes,³⁰ vainly attempted to 'read' nature. In An Outcast of the Islands (4:2:226) Babalatchi remarks to Lingard: "'You white men . . . are stronger than the wild beasts, but not so wise. A black tiger knows when he is not hungry -- you do not"'.

In short, the less rational a man is, the more 'natural' his experience of life tends to be. And since we respond to our experiences with changing moods, feelings and affects, participating in the world through the senses of our bodies that stimulate our emotions, we can discover through emotions things about the world and ourselves that remain closed to so-called objective, 'scientific' beholding. Whereas rational philosophy views the emotions as suspect, existentialists regard them as valuable registers of our being-in-the-world. Therefore even 'negative' emotions such as anxiety, ennui and nausea are seen as a reliable means to

explaining the human condition. These emotions suggest that an individual who experiences them is not 'at home' in the world, elucidating him as existing in an alienating situation that he should attempt to change or from which he should extricate himself. Thus Verloc the secret agent, compelled to commit the Greenwich bombing in the face of his inner imperatives, 'felt the latent unfriendliness of all out of doors with a force approaching to positive bodily anguish' (3:84), which revealed the alienating nature of his undertaking and the threatening quality of the circumstances he was in. Yet he failed to heed the message his anxiety was sending to alter his circumstances -- unlike Jim, who ultimately transformed his tormented condition to fashion 'an Arcadian happiness' for himself in Patusan (16:135).

Emotions such as joy, confidence and hope are equally reliable indicators, revealing that the individual who experiences them has a sense of belonging, a favourable reaction to the situation he finds himself in or has created for himself. As Heidegger points out, we do not 'have' moods in the way we have objects. Moods penetrate an individual's being-in-the-world, defining his response to the world. Heidegger speaks of man's response to the world as Stimmung, the root sense of which suggests attunement, the way one is attuned to existence. If we reflect upon our feelings and inward experiences as part of the larger fabric of our existence, we gain deeper insights into man as a psychosomatic unity rather than a mere object open to observation and rational explanation.

Conrad suggests this most forcefully in Under Western Eyes, where Razumov's experiences clearly reveal rationality's precarious shortcomings. His very name (like Razumikhin's in Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment) has

as its root razun, Russian for reason. Razumov is thus intended as a representative of restraining, calculating rationalism, and his distintegration shows the limitations of sheer reason as a means to understanding and dealing with existence in a world where, as the professor of languages puts it, 'there is little logic to be expected' (2:4:189). Though Razumov initially regards society as rational, after his experience with General T---- he views it as an absurd comedy of errors. Conrad may sympathise with Razumov's desire "' to guide my conduct by reasonable convictions'" (1:3:113), but he plainly demonstrates that reason cannot master the complexities of a fundamentally non-rational world. "'The more intelligent one is,'" Razumov later concedes in Geneva, "'the less one suspects an absurdity'" (3:1:207), and Peter Ivanovitch was grateful to find while a fugitive prisoner that he had 'developed an unsuspected genius for the arts of a wild and hunted existence . . . he was glad to discover that there was so much of a brute in him' (2:2:148).

Razumov is associated from the very beginning of the novel with trust in the value of reason. He sets himself the task of achieving an intellectual reputation (1:1:63), and Haldin considers his "'judgement'" to be "'more philosophical'" than his own, praising his "'superior mind'" (1:1:64, 67). "'Men like me'", says Haldin, "'are necessary to make room for self-contained, thinking men like you'" -- though he does warn Razumov against his "'arrogant wisdom'" (1:1:68, 70).

Part of that 'wisdom' was to regard the 'present institutions' of Russia's autocratic political system as 'rational and indestructible.

. . . They had a force of harmony' (1:1:69). Their representative, Councillor Mikulin, had an 'accurate middle-parting of glossy hair above a rugged Socratic forehead' (1:3:123) -- and Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy

(12:82) disdains the 'altogether newborn demon . . . Socrates' for his condemnation of instinctual thought, the kind of intuitive thought that eventually led Razumov to uncover Nikita as a double agent "'by a sort of inspiration"' (4:5:348). Mikulin's mode of intellectual activity was not of the kind that yields the comprehensive wisdom Nietzsche finds in pre-Euripidean Greek tragedy. For Mikulin, "'the principal condition [was] to think correctly"' (1:3:123), which in his case meant to follow unquestioningly the established wisdom of the police state.

Razumov's violent emotional upheaval in the wake of the Haldin affair soon led him to reassess his original view of the world as rational -- a turmoil which incontrovertibly illustrates that emotions are far more powerful than reason and that they are ultimately the surer guide to discovering what one's true imperatives are, to discovering what one needs to alter in one's life to achieve a more authentic existence. His emotional distress brought him to a reevaluation of his values and finally made of him what we can regard as a 'saved' character. As Conrad wrote to Cunninghame Graham in a postscript to his letter of 14 and 15 January 1898, 'Salvation lies in being illogical' (Letters 2:17).

In his disturbance over Haldin's assassination of de P----, Razumov saw 'his mind become an abject thing' (1:1:69) unable to control his emotions, which produced 'a tumult of thoughts -- the faithful reflection of the state of his feelings' (1:2:71-2). These feelings impelled him, against his rational judgement, to aid Haldin by going in search of Ziemianitch. Trudging through the blizzard, he found himself unconsciously driven forward; 'no rational determination had any part in his exertions' (1:2:73). Yet still he clung to his 'arrogant wisdom'. Thinking of Haldin

he said to himself, "'What are the luridly smoky lucubrations of that fellow to the clear grasp of my intellect?'" (1:2:80). But although he asserted that Haldin had committed "'a crime my reason -- my cool superior reason -- rejects'" (1:2:80), his emotional turmoil pointed to his far more deeply seated sense that he supported Haldin's actions against the autocratic state. Had he heeded his feelings thoroughly, he would not have betrayed Haldin to men he loathed (1:2:87), in what he eventually realised was a betrayal of himself. His later experience of remorse at having beaten Ziemianitch underscores his emotional identification with the oppressed. Even in his 'remorseful tenderness' for the sledge-driver, however, he desperately tried to rationalise his beating of him in what amounted to no more than evasions of his own inner admonitions.

Razumov similarly tried to reason away his sleepless misgivings over Haldin's assured torment at the hands of the authorities to whom he had betrayed him. Despite his feeling that his fellow student was suffering, he reasoned that 'Haldin in the fortress was sleeping that night. It was a certitude which made him angry because he did not want to think of Haldin, but he justified it to himself by physiological and psychological reasons. The fellow had hardly slept for weeks on his own confession, and now every incertitude was at an end for him. No doubt he was looking forward to the consummation of his martyrdom' (1:3:107). Nostromo's Dr Monygham likewise 'consoled the misery of his soul with acute reasonings' (3:4:318); as the narrator of Victory asserts, 'The use of reason is to justify the obscure desires that move our conduct, impulses, passions, prejudices, and follies, and also our fears' (2:2:80).

It was not until Razumov reflected deeply on his own emotions that he discovered the fatuousness of his earlier reasonings -- and opened himself

to the healing quality of Natalia Haldin's love. He initially fought his affection for her, but the professor of languages early on recognised that Razumov was being false to himself by denigrating the value of emotions: "He puts on the . . . insensibility to common emotions of a man devoted to a destructive idea" (2:5:200).

Conrad time and again points to the destructiveness that attends such unswerving adherence to an idée fixe. Charles Gould in Nostromo, having succumbed to what Decoud terms "the seduction of an idea" (2:7:219), lost much of his humanity as a result. His 'fits of abstraction depicted the energetic concentration of a will haunted by a fixed idea. A man haunted by a fixed idea is insane. He is dangerous even if that idea is an idea of justice; for may he not bring the heaven down pitilessly upon a loved head?' (3:4:322). Dr Monygham too is described as 'terrible in the pursuit of his idea' of serving Emilia Gould (3:8:364), and he and the other "'fine men of intelligence'" are castigated for their callousness by the non-intellectual Nostromo (3:9:383), whose 'instinctive mood of fierce determination . . . had never failed him before the perils of this life' (3:12:441).

Decoud, on the other hand, whose 'complacent superiority analyzed fearlessly all motives and all passions' (2:8:241), found his cold rationality useless in the face of an irrational world -- symbolised by Nostromo's extinguishing the candle aboard the lighter, plunging them into darkness. Decoud 'had recognized no other virtue than intelligence' (3:10:413), a belief that proved worthless in his final isolation. His speculations were futile, since the actions of men (as in Pedrito Montero's behaviour) are 'usually determined by motives so improbable in themselves as

to escape the penetration of a rational person' (3:5:328). Accordingly, Conrad suggests, one is misguided in trusting systematised, abstracted views of the world. Thus, the intellectually backward Stevie of The Secret Agent, 'though apt to forget mere facts, . . . had a faithful memory of sensations' (8:165), which offered a far more accurate apprehension of the world than did the so-called rational arguments of Michaelis, whose lack of passion prevented him from turning his highflown words into deeds.

"Without emotion there is no action", remarked Ossipon to Verloc (3:80), a dictum that Conrad elaborates on in his prefatory note to Victory (12): 'Heyst in his fine detachment had lost the habit of asserting himself . . . the trick of the thing, the readiness of mind and the turn of the hand that come without reflection and lead the man to excellence in life, in art, in crime, in virtue, and, for the matter of that, even in love. Thinking is the great enemy of perfection. The habit of profound reflection, I am compelled to say, is the most pernicious of all the habits formed by the civilized man'. So is it that Conrad depicts Nostromo when he awoke after his removal of the silver as being 'as natural and free from evil in the moment of waking as a magnificent and unconscious wild beast' (3:7:347), and Razumov's fellow student 'Madcap Kostia' as filling 'the bare academy corridors with the joy of thoughtless animal life' through 'his elated voice and great gestures' (1:3:114).

Axel Heyst, by contrast, had under his father's guidance 'learned to reflect, which is a destructive process, a reckoning of the cost. It is not the clear-sighted who lead the world. Great achievements are accomplished in a blessed, warm mental fog, which the pitiless cold blasts of the father's analysis had blown away from the son' (2:3:87). As Granville Hicks has stressed,³¹ Conrad plainly shows that the intellect

interferes with heroic qualities, so that Heyst languished in the withering ennui produced by his rationality -- until his meeting of Alma/Magdalen (whom he was to rename Lena) stirred him 'deep down, where our unexpressed longings lie', her words thrilling him 'like a revelation' (2:1:74, 75). He experienced 'the awakening of a tenderness, indistinct and confused as yet, towards an unknown woman', and 'his sceptical mind was dominated by the fulness of his heart' (2:2:80, 81). Though Heyst may ultimately have been destroyed by an absurd universe, his emotional attachment and subsequent commitment³² to her provided him (as we shall see in chapter 4) with a sense of authentic being unknown to him while he saw life 'outside the flattering optical delusion of . . . an ever-expected happiness' (2:2:80).³³

Indeed, Heyst warned Lena that "'if you begin to think you will be unhappy'" (3:3:165). This echoes Conrad's retort to Cunninghame Graham when he suggested that Conrad make the simpleton of the Narcissus an educated man. 'Cultivate in that unconscious man the power to think? Then he would become conscious -- and much smaller -- and very unhappy' (Letters 1:422). As Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes have remarked in a general way,³⁴ for Conrad (as for Hardy) the supreme tragedy is that of consciousness. 'Reason is hateful . . . ', says Conrad, 'because it demonstrates (to those who have the courage) that we, living, are out of life -- utterly out of it. . . . Life knows us not and we do not know life' (Letters 1:222). Which is why (as H. Strawson has observed)³⁵ Conrad repeatedly stresses the value of instinctive feeling -- as when the narrator of Victory makes plain that it was Lena's unthinking actions which served her best. In choosing to go with Heyst she had placed her trust

'where her woman's instinct guided her ignorance' (2:3:89), and during Ricardo's attack on her she had 'defended herself . . . from the force of instinct which is the true source of every great display of energy' (4:2:239). It was thanks to her emotions, not her reason, that she was exalted 'with a sense of an inconceivable intensity of existence' (4:9:293).

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Such 'intensity of existence' is all too often the exception rather than the rule in a world whose encircling forces need not be overtly violent to be destructive. The weight of the merely mundane also tends to pull the individual down to the level of what Macquarrie calls 'subhuman, subexistent, unreflective, irresponsible being',³⁶ rather than permitting attainment of authentic existence (which we shall explore more fully in later chapters). The Heidegger of Being and Time (as at 164ff.) too stresses these deadening pressures of the everyday world, including the habitual activities that relate us to the world in countless ways beyond merely spatial relation, so that in Sartre's estimation 'it appears that the world has a kind of drain hole in the middle of its being and that it is perpetually flowing off through this hole', taking us with it (Nothingness 256). The world has a tendency, like Russia in Under Western Eyes, to be what Conrad calls 'a bottomless abyss that has swallowed up every hope of mercy, every aspiration towards personal dignity, towards freedom, towards knowledge' (Notes 100).

This is particularly true for what Marcel terms the 'functional' man, such as the mass-production worker. As he remarks in The Philosophy of Existence (2), 'The rather horrible expression "time table" perfectly describes his life. So many hours for each function'. 'Concentration on mere technical functioning', he says in Man against Mass Society (53), causes a 'flinching of the human spirit'. Such a rote life, rule by the masses, Jaspers complains in Man in the Modern Age (43), 'is life without existence, superstition without faith. It may stamp all flat; it is disinclined to tolerate independence and greatness, but prone to constrain people to become as automatic as ants'.

It is a condition that Conrad evinces in novel after novel. Michaelis's 'lady patroness' in The Secret Agent, for example, finds 'industrialism . . . singularly repulsive in its mechanical and unfeeling character' (6:124), oppressing the Londoners whom the surly Professor considers 'industrious like ants' (5:103). Even the Assistant Commissioner led a straitened life amid 'the futility of office work' (5:116), 'chained to a desk in the thick of four millions of men' (6:125). Like any man 'engaged in a work he does not like', he felt 'the distaste, the absence of glamour, extend from the occupation to the personality' (6:125). The mine workers in Nostramo occupied themselves with 'barren tasks' (3:10:411); the fishermen in Lord Jim led 'trifling, miserable, oppressed lives' (35:253); most of the 'countless millions' in Under Western Eyes (1:2:78) had rote lives as peasants, urban poor or manacled prisoners. The labourers in Heart of Darkness 'moved about like ants' (1:63), some forced to dig 'a vast artificial hole' just so as to be given 'something to do' (1:65), while others shuffled along as bearers in a monotonous routine of 'camp, cook, sleep, strike camp, march' (1:71).

The Congolese were the victims of the supposed material progress professed by the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, which had less to do with exploration than with plundering -- plundering that had 'no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe' (1:87). The main object of plunder was of course the acquisition of ivory, evidencing that obsession for 'having' which Marcel rails against in Being and Having (as at 164-5). An overweening desire for possession, Marcel contends, dehumanises the possessor, since in a 'having' mode of existence an individual becomes anxious about the object he has and it in

a sense begins to have him. Fear of losing the possession leads it to tyrannise over the possessor, making him its slave. Kurtz is a particularly graphic instance of the lengths to which men will go when in the grip of such an obsession for having: "'My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my ---- "' he intoned to Marlow. 'Everything belonged to him -- but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own' (2:116).

Such preoccupation with having is even more central in Nostramo, which remorselessly depicts the ravages of 'material interest' through the baleful effects of the San Tomé mine and its silver. Critics have long pointed to this as a crucial theme in the novel, which, remarks Martin Seymour-Smith, 'is about nothing if it is not about "material interests"', revealing a hatred of technology and commerce that is 'very close to the heart of literary modernism'.³⁷ To the Europeans of Costaguana it was as if the mine were 'the symbol of the supreme importance of material interests' and of the wider belief in material progress (2:7:230), a belief Conrad repudiates, as Nino Erné and later critics have stressed.³⁸

The mine had completely obsessed Charles Gould's father, whose letters to his son away in England for his schooling 'came at last to talk of practically nothing but the mine. He groaned over the injustice, the persecution, the outrage of that mine. . . . He implored his son never to . . . claim any part of his inheritance . . . tainted by the infamous Concession' (1:6:79). Yet even though Charles was convinced that San Tomé had killed his father, he resolved to "'pin my faith to material interests"' (1:6:100) -- despite Emilia Gould's scepticism at "'the religion of silver and iron"' (1:6:90). Gould himself momentarily sensed that 'the silver mine, which had killed his father, had decoyed him further

than he meant to go' (1:6:101), and Emilia later decried her husband's "'most awful materialism"' (1:6:99).

As the novel proceeds, Gould's surrender to his possession becomes more and more pronounced, causing Decoud to remark to Antonia Avellanos: "'[He] thinks of nothing apart from his mine"' (2:5:179), so that Decoud considers it Emilia's "'mission . . . to save him from the effects of that cold and overmastering passion"' (2:7:219). Emilia 'had watched it with misgivings turning into a fetish, and now the fetish had grown into a monstrous and crushing weight' that formed 'a wall of silver-bricks . . . between her and her husband' (2:6:204-5). 'Was it for this that her life had been robbed of all the intimate felicities of daily affection . . . ?' (3:11:423-4). She thought Charles 'incorrigible in his hard, determined service of the material interests to which he had pinned his faith' (3:11:431). Even though, unlike the purely 'avaricious, greedy, and unscrupulous' Madame de S---- in Under Western Eyes (2:4:179), he had sought to use San Tomé for higher purposes, 'the mine had got hold of Charles Gould with a grip as deadly as ever it had laid upon his father' (3:6:338). As Marcel would clearly recognise, Gould (along with Holroyd, Montero, Sotillo and Hirsch) had become enslaved -- and dehumanised -- by a 'having' disposition, by his 'hard, determined service' to a 'crushing' 'fetish' that held him in a 'deadly' 'grip'.

This was true also of Nostromo, whom the narrator in fact calls 'the slave of the San Tomé silver [who] felt the weight as of chains upon his limbs' (3:12:445); the silver had in the Capataz de Cargadores 'a faithful and lifelong slave' (3:10:416). It had caused him to desert both old Teresa Viola on her sickbed and suicidal Decoud on the Great Isabel:

'first a woman, then a man, abandoned each in their last extremity, for the sake of this accursed treasure' (3:10:416). Yet even when his stolen silver threatened to jeopardise Giselle Viola's love for him, 'the shining spectre of the treasure rose before him, claiming his allegiance in a silence that could not be gainsaid' (3:12:438). It was enslavement even unto death: '"The silver has killed me. It has held me. It holds me yet"', he whispered in his final moments (3:13:460).

Not surprisingly, the oppressive effects of material objects give man much occasion for pessimism and despair, which arise, says Kierkegaard in The Sickness unto Death (see 147ff.), from the disruptive polarity between necessity (embodied in the obdurate world) and possibility (embodied in human potential). Man's despair is a 'disproportion in his inmost being'. It is a difficult task to achieve one's possibilities in a 'concrete world' that Karl Barth characterises as 'ambiguous and under crisis' amid 'the insecurity of our whole existence, the vanity and utter questionableness of all that is and of what we are'.³⁹ As Pascal phrases it in his Pensées (61:22), 'Man's condition' is one of 'inconstancy, boredom, anxiety' -- which Marlow witnessed only too graphically in the Congo, where 'black shapes crouched, lay, sat . . . in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair' (1:66). The very mangroves 'seemed to writhe at us in the extremity of an impotent despair' (1:62). Even the face of the omnipotent Kurtz betrayed 'an intense and hopeless despair' (3:149). The mysterious sound of the whistle on Marlow's boat elicited from his jungle attackers 'such a tremulous and prolonged wail of mournful fear and utter despair as may be imagined to follow the flight of the last hope from the earth' (2:112).

There is little wonder that in this Nietzschean world of

'multiplicity, opposition, contradiction, war' (Power 584:315) man does not feel 'at home', as R. D. Laing in The Divided Self⁴⁰ describes man's presiding sense of alienation in knowing that he is 'left alone', as Sartre says, to create his own values without 'any means of justification or excuse' (Humanism 34). Critics like Alan Reynolds Thompson⁴¹ have long noted in broad terms that Conrad views man as feeling himself separate from the world he is physically part of, and we find the Marlow of Heart of Darkness characterising his party -- consisting of men with whom he 'had no point of contact' (1:61) -- as being alienated 'wanderers . . . on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet', 'cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings' (2:95, 96). The rampant African jungle 'made you feel very small, very lost' in its dwarfing power (2:95), just as did the Indonesian jungles of Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands.

In Lord Jim Stein remarks that "'man is come where he is not wanted, where there is no place for him'" (20:159). Thus it is, comments Marlow, that 'we wander in our thousands over the face of the earth' (21:169), 'amongst graves and pitfalls' (20:164), each of us in a condition of 'exile', as old Giorgio Viola says of himself in Nostromo (1:4:60). Conrad himself was of course an exile, a Pole wandering in foreign lands -- though by choice, rather than subjected to forced exile as his imprisoned father had been. Zdzislaw Najder records a poem that Apollo Korzeniowski wrote on the occasion of Joseph's birth, 'To My Son Born in the 85th Year of Muscovite Oppression':

Baby son, tell yourself
 You are without land, without love,
 Without country, without people.⁴²

Giorgio Viola, as a transplanted Italian, was doubly aware of his isolation, and his friend the Capataz -- who regularly experienced feelings of 'profound isolation' (3:8:355) -- came to find even his own most familiar surroundings to be alienating: 'his home appeared to repel him with an air of hopeless and inimical mystery' (3:9:388). Dr Monygham too felt alienated. Socially, he had no fellowship with the other émigrés and adopted a 'manner of cold detachment from the rest of the Europeans' (3:3:294), the sort of detachment that led to Victory's Axel Heyst being 'generally considered a "queer chap"' (2:3:86). Heyst thought himself "'uprooted"' (3:5:182); like Captain Morrison during his trip to London, he was "'as lonely as a crow in a strange country"' (1:3:33). Jones also deemed himself "'an outcast"', "'hounded out from society"' (4:11:303, 305) -- a condition of alienation shared by Razumov in Under Western Eyes, who was 'at home' neither in St Petersburg nor in Geneva. Razumov had no kinship with anyone until his love for Natalia, and even then he initially felt that 'the beauty of women and the friendship of men were not for him' (2:4:183). 'The frankness of intercourse with his kind' was 'forbidden to him' (4:1:288). In general, Conrad's characters are alienated circles of insularity, which Robert Wooster Stallman⁴³ sees symbolised by Stevie's circular drawings in The Secret Agent. Like Sartre's Mathieu, they find themselves 'alone' in a 'monstrous silence' (Reason 320).

This lonely sense of alienation from all that surrounds one is exacerbated by an awareness of one's precariousness in an indifferent universe. One is assaulted by a general apprehension of threat that promotes anxiety, or angst, understood by existentialists not as something that derives from any particular quotidian care but as a pervasive uneasiness or malaise of indeterminate origin. It is the 'vague terror of the world' experienced by Alma/Magdalen in Victory (2:2:78), the 'unnamed and despairing dread' felt by Razumov in Under Western Eyes (4:1:287). In Heidegger's words from Being and Time (231, 230), the source of anxiety 'is completely indefinite'; it is simply an intrinsic part of the basic condition one finds oneself in -- one's Grundbefindlichkeit. 'That in the face of which one has anxiety is Being-in-the-world as such'. Angst is thus not fear (Furcht) or dread of a specific, identifiable entity but a condition of general perturbation somewhat like the mood Coleridge evinces in 'Dejection: An Ode'. It is not the fear which arises 'in the face of this or that particular being that threatens us in this or that particular respect', as Heidegger puts it in 'What Is Metaphysics?' (Basic Writings 102). 'What is dread?' asks Kierkegaard in his Christian Discourses (80). 'It is the next day', the unknown and thus uncertain future lurking in an 'ambiguous' Barthian world of 'utter questionableness'.

The professor of languages in Under Western Eyes articulates this in speaking of our 'secret fears' amid 'the dread of uncertain days', the 'general dread' that filled the entire Russian populace (1:2:79, 72). Razumov's journal records 'a remarkably dream-like experience of anguish' following the Haldin episode (1:3:121), which filled him 'with a strange dread of the unexpected' (1:3:109), 'a suspicious uneasiness' allied to an 'absurd dread of the unseen' (1:2:80). 'Every alarming uncertainty

beset Razumov' (1:3:121). His general anxiety persisted in Geneva: 'in his incertitude of the ground on which he stood Razumov felt perturbed' (3:4:259). Natalia too was constantly '"anxious"', confiding to the professor that '"what I am afraid of is incertitude . . . of anything"' (2:1:137, 138). Tekla, Madame de S----'s dame de compagnie, was also always 'anxious, tremulous' (3:2:223), displaying that same 'perpetual residue of anxiety' which Stevie suffered from in The Secret Agent (2:71). Even reckless Comrade Ossipon was prey to an 'abiding dread' (12:260), which was true as well of Brown's 'knot of bearded, anxious, sleepless desperadoes' in Lord Jim (39:275); the outwardly robust are by no means strangers to anxiety.

Jim himself may initially have struck Marlow as 'unconcerned', exhibiting a 'blessed stiffness before the outward and inward terrors' of the Patna affair (5:36, 38). Yet Jim soon confided that his state was '"hell"', and Marlow detected that his eyes were 'full of pain, with a bewildered, startled, suffering face' (7:64, 68); later, 'convulsive shudders ran down his back' (15:132). In Jewel, 'every pretty smile was succeeded swiftly by a look of silent, repressed anxiety, as if put to flight by the recollection of some abiding danger' (29:213). 'She feared the unknown as we all do', comments Marlow, who himself 'felt . . . the dread of the unknown depths' even as he urged her not to indulge her 'craving for incertitude, this clinging to fear' (33:233, 235, 236). 'Why should she fear? She knew [Jim] to be strong, true, wise, brave' (33:240). There was no 'determinate' reason for her anxiety. It sprang simply, as Heidegger would contend, from her condition of being-in-the-world.

The same was true of Giselle Viola in her love for Nostromo. 'She was

full of inexplicable fear . . . -- fear of everything and everybody except of her Giovanni and his treasure' (3:12:447), that treasure which 'confused his thoughts with a peculiar sort of anxiety' (3:8:356). Captain Mitchell too experienced 'uneasiness . . . about things in general' (3:3:299), despite the promise of liberation made by Sotillo, who himself later felt an 'unfathomable dread that crept on all sides upon him' (3:9:373). His equally reckless counterpart Pedrito Montero suffered from a similar 'feeling of insecurity and impermanence' as he roamed the sacked Intendencia of Sulaco (3:7:341). Even the stalwart Charles Gould 'fell a prey to distress, incertitude, and fear' when courting the young Emilia (1:6:84), whose unhappy marriage left her face 'blanched with anxiety and fatigue' (2:8:243). Mrs Schomberg's marriage in Victory generated in her too an abiding 'motiveless fear' (2:5:98) -- that pervasive angst which the French lieutenant in Lord Jim describes as a fear that "'is always there"' (13:113).

As we noted earlier, existentialists view anxiety as a valuable indicator of an individual's need to modify the circumstances he finds himself in. It is also especially revealing about the human condition in general, a manifestation of man's sense of radical insecurity over his precarious and contingent existence. To Heidegger, anxiety offers 'one of the most far-reaching and most primordial possibilities of disclosure' about man and his position in the world (Time 226). As Desan indicates,⁴⁴ Sartre sees the origin of anguish in the feeling of a being which is not responsible for its origin or the origin of the world but which, because of its dreadful freedom to choose one form of action over another, is responsible for what it makes of its existence and for the structuring of what Heidegger terms its 'field of concern'.

Since anxiety signals to the individual that he needs to change his mode of existence, it is a valuable stimulant to actualising his potential for a fuller life. 'Anxiety', says Heidegger, 'brings Dasein face to face with its being-free for (propensio in . . .) the authenticity of its Being' (Time 232). Anxiety 'makes manifest in Dasein its Being towards its ownmost potentiality-for-being -- that is, its Being-free for the freedom of choosing itself'. And, as Macquarrie points out,⁴⁵ this involves the forward thrust of the existent into his possibilities in tension with the factual conditions and limitations that he already brings with him -- to which is added what Heidegger terms his 'falling', the existent's 'fleeing' from himself by losing himself in inauthentic being-with-others through preoccupied busyness with the world of things in his obsession with 'having' (Time 229).

Although the tension between what one is at any single moment and one's sense of what one might be in the future produces anxiety, it is an anxiety that is capable of jolting us out of our illusions and pseudo-securities, summoning us to grasp our responsibility for achieving our own authentic selfhood. In consequence, Heidegger insists that we should have 'courage for anxiety', or Mut zur Angst (Time 298). Anxiety prepares the individual for authentic action since, as Kierkegaard writes in The Concept of Dread (142), 'it enters into his soul and searches it thoroughly, constraining out of him all the finite and the petty, and leading him hence whither he would go' in the 'dizziness' or 'vertigo' of his freedom. 'Dread becomes a serviceable spirit'. Such anxiety is 'the more exalted dread' that Jaspers speaks of in Man in the Modern Age (63), which controls the kind of dread in which 'the sufferer may feel himself to be nothing more than a lost point in

empty space'.

It was this inferior, destructive form of dread that undid Nostromo's Decoud in his solitude on the Great Isabel, what Dr Monygham describes as the 'crushing, paralyzing sense of human littleness, which is what really defeats a man struggling with natural forces' (3:8:363). Jim on the other hand ultimately transcended the vapid malaise of his early merchant marine days that he had found 'strangely barren', full of 'prosaic severity' (2:14). Like Sartre's Roquentin in Nausea, Jim as a trainee seaman experienced what Heidegger in 'What Is Metaphysics?' considers to be 'genuine boredom', a pervasive condition 'in the abysses of our existence' which is more than simply being bored with 'this book or that play, that business or this idleness' (Basic Writings 101). Such boredom is a disclosure of the self's nothingness before the individual strives to realise his own image of what he wishes to become (as we shall see more fully in chapter 2). Sartre identifies it as 'nausea', that 'insipid taste which I cannot place. . . . A dull and inescapable nausea perpetually reveals my body to my consciousness' (Nothingness 338). And 'how terrible tedium is -- ', remarks Kierkegaard in Either/Or (1:29-30), 'terribly tedious. . . . I lie stretched out, inactive; the only thing I see is emptiness'. Thus Jim, 'disabled by a falling spar', lay 'stretched on his back, . . . hopeless, and tormented as if at the bottom of an abyss of unrest. He did not care what the end would be' (2:14, 15).

But this malaise and the deeper anxiety that later accompanied the Patna episode eventually stirred in him an 'impalpable striving' to achieve a more authentic mode of existence (17:140). As Kierkegaard mentions in his Concluding Unscientific Postscript (85), our 'existence' is 'a constant striving' against the forces that would subject us to inauthentic

lives. So it was that Marlow's final glimpse of Jim was one of him at last in complete accord with his surroundings -- with the life of the forests and with the life of men' (16:135).

Jim is thus testimony to Conrad's existential belief that, prompted by anxiety, man is capable of transcending what is inherently a tragic world of crushing external constraints -- a world he famously describes in a letter of 20 December 1897 to Cunninghame Graham as a huge knitting machine that 'has evolved itself . . . out of a chaos of scraps of iron. . . . You cannot by any special lubrication make embroidery with a knitting machine. And the most withering thought is that the infamous thing has made itself: made itself without thought, without conscience, without foresight, without eyes, without heart. It is a tragic accident . . . and it is indestructible!

'It knits us in and it knits us out. It has knitted time, space, pain, death, corruption, despair, and all the illusions, -- and nothing matters' (Letters 1:425). This is an excessively dark view that suggests less possibility of transcendence than Conrad's major novels cumulatively imply. But private voicings in letters tend to be more susceptible to moods of the moment, or to the personality of the person one is writing to, than are the considered views intended for public consumption. As we have seen in the case of Jim, and as we shall see further in just a moment, the predominantly bleak world of Conrad's fiction, like that in the works of the major existentialists, does not preclude a sense (however impermanent it may be) of individual self-fulfilment in the face of awesome odds. An individual can experience private value in a world where from an absolute point of view 'nothing matters', as Conrad's knitting-machine letter puts it -- a world that the Nietzsche of The Will to Power (12:12) also says

'aims at nothing'. The only way to overcome despair, Nietzsche asserts, is through an all-embracing Dionysian yea to existence, 'an ecstatic affirmation of the total character of life . . . that sanctifies . . . even the most terrible and questionable qualities of life' (1050:539). As Stein phrases it in Lord Jim, "'To the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up'" (20:163).

But if the sea represents what an early critic like Thomas Moulton called 'the given set of circumstances' in which man exists,⁴⁶ it is often a stormy sea, so that in Macquarrie's estimation 'the tragic side of existentialism is already implied in its starting-point where human existence is set over against the being of the inanimate world. . . . Man is never just part of the cosmos but always stands to it in a relationship of tension with possibilities for tragic conflict'.⁴⁷ John Wild points out⁴⁸ that Jaspers emphasises how suffering (Leiden) dominates many situations and threatens others, taking many forms that can never be altogether ignored: pain, illness, mental disease, old age and its weariness, torture, enslavement, hunger, starvation. There is ever the possibility for a shrinking of life; no one is wholly spared suffering, behind which lies death. As Heidegger observes in Being and Time (277, 180), 'being-there' entails 'being towards death', and fear 'discloses' Dasein as 'endangered and abandoned'.

The harsh worlds of Conrad's major novels bear remorseless testimony to this. The narrator of Nostramo describes the people of Costaguana's interior as 'suffering and mute, waiting for the future in a pathetic immobility of patience' (1:7:102). Like the fishermen Marlow remarks on in Lord Jim (35:253), they led 'trifling, miserable, oppressed lives'. To

Emilia Gould the 'flat, joyless faces' of the miners 'looked all alike, as if run into the same ancestral mould of suffering and patience' (1:8:112). As her husband looked at a group of wounded men on the patio of the Casa Gould, 'the cruel futility of things stood unveiled in the levity and sufferings of that incorrigible people; the cruel futility of lives and of deaths thrown away' (3:4:310). His mine was tied to the 'misery of mankind' (3:4:111). 'Worked in the early days mostly by means of lashes on the backs of slaves, its yield had been paid for in its own weight of human bones' (1:6:75). It contributed to what Monygham calls 'the general atrocity of things' (3:8:368).

The narrator of The Secret Agent too speaks of 'poor humanity rich in suffering' and describes even Ossipon as having 'the face of a man who had drunk at the very Fountain of Sorrow' while he waited for Winnie outside a bar (12:260, 258). Conrad's prefatory note to the novel comments that his 'tale' points to the 'criminal futility' of anarchistic activities which exploit 'the poignant miseries and passionate credulities of a mankind always so tragically eager for self-destruction' (note:39). The cabman who drove Winnie, Stevie and their mother to the Charity spoke to Stevie of 'the affairs of men whose sufferings are great', and his horse seemed the 'steed of apocalyptic misery' (8:165). When they later saw his cab again, 'its aspect was so profoundly lamentable, with such a perfection of grotesque misery and weirdness of macabre detail, as if it were the Cab of Death itself' (8:167). And death, as Sartre says, is but one more absurdity in a world without any absolute meaning. 'It is absurd that we are born; it is absurd that we die' (Nothingness 547).

Although death may be absurd from an absolute point of view, no man ever experiences anything in an absolute sense. His experience of the world, as we have seen, is always coloured by his subjectivity. In consequence, Heidegger feels that it is possible for an individual to adopt a personal attitude towards death which casts it in a positive light. This is not to deny, as he points out in Being and Time (cf. 279-311), the appalling fact that death may at any time cut short one's individual being and convert it into nothing. Death is always present as an absolutely certain possibility, 'the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all' (307). As Marlow comments of the buccaneer types Jim used to encounter, 'their death was the only event of their fantastic existence that seemed to have a reasonable certitude of achievement' (2:16). The constant certitude of inevitable death naturally heightens man's sense of his own precariousness. 'A being is fragile', says Sartre, 'if it carries in its being a definite possibility of non-being' (Nothingness 8). But Heidegger counsels that we ought not to brood morbidly on death. Instead, we should include it realistically among our life's projects and the way we evaluate them. We should embrace 'an impassioned freedom towards death -- a freedom which has been released from the Illusions of the "they", and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious' (Time 311).

There is something of this sentiment in Conrad too. We find Jim swearing to Marlow 'in a voice very fierce and low' that during the Patna incident 'he was not afraid of death' (7:70, 71). 'A certain readiness to perish is not so very rare', comments Marlow, 'but it is seldom that you meet men whose souls, steeled in the impenetrable armour of resolution, are ready to fight a losing battle to the last' (7:71). The novel ends with Marlow relating that Stein 'says often that he is "preparing to leave

all this; preparing to leave . . . " while he waves his hand sadly at his butterflies' (45:312). Nostromo's Dr Monygham 'had no sort of heroic idea of seeking death', but 'the risk, deadly enough, to which he exposed himself, had a sustaining and comforting effect' (3:8:368). And the Capataz seemed unperturbed by his realisation that Hirsch's execution in all likelihood foreshadowed his own: "'You seem much concerned at a very natural thing . . . '", he remarked to Monygham. "'It is very likely that before long we shall all get shot one after another"' (3:9:378).

To Heidegger, as Macquarrie observes,⁴⁹ such acceptance of death as part of a factual condition in the world enables us to think of our existence as a finite whole. 'Anticipation' of 'the fact that death is not to be outstripped . . . includes the possibility of taking the whole of Dasein in advance in an existentiell manner; that is to say, it includes the possibility of existing as a whole potentiality-for-Being' (Time 309). Acceptance of death makes possible a unity of existence, setting one free from the 'they', whose 'everyday falling evasion in the face of death is inauthentic Being-towards-death' (Time 303). The 'moment before death' allows a kind of eternity within time, when one's past, present and future are gathered into the unity of the resolute self. By accepting death we gain 'freedom towards death' (Time 311) -- as Nietzsche's Zarathustra concurs: 'My death, praise I unto you, the voluntary death, which cometh unto me because I want it' (21:75). In Twilight of the Idols (144) Nietzsche advocates that 'out of love for life we should want death . . . free, conscious, without hazard, without sudden attack'.

In Conrad this affirmative attitude towards death finds its most sustained evocation in Victory's Lena, for whom death is something freely

chosen and thereby 'vanquished' (4:13:323). With her life ebbing away, she 'clung to her triumph convinced of the reality of her victory over death' (4:13:324). Although her conviction may ultimately have been just another illusion, it did free her from an oppressive view of death and provided her with a sense of exaltation. In such cases, as Leonard Unger has remarked,⁵⁰ the essential quality of the moment of death is also the essential quality of the individual in all his living. It often takes the moment of self-destruction for one to realise one's own worth -- as happens with Camus's Meursault in The Outsider when facing his own execution.⁵¹

There is a far less positive dimension to the kind of freedom for death adopted by the nihilistic Professor in The Secret Agent, ready as he was to obliterate himself at any moment with his india-rubber explosive device. In his case death, though self-inflicted, would ultimately be dictated by external compulsion, with an absurd universe having the final say -- as in Winnie Verloc's suicide and Decoud's suicide in Nostramo. Death, comments Marlow in Heart of Darkness, is 'the last word of our common fate' (3:155), and it seldom carries Lena's extreme sense of exaltation. 'I have wrestled with death', says Marlow. 'It is the most unexciting contest you can imagine. It takes place in an impalpable grayness, . . . in a sickly atmosphere of tepid scepticism, without much belief in your own right' (3:150). It is this flavour of death that is most evident in Conrad, who on balance shares Sartre's view that death has no truly positive role in establishing an authentic existence. 'We must conclude in opposition to Heidegger', writes Sartre, 'that death, far from being my peculiar possibility, is a contingent fact which, as such on principle escapes me and originally belongs to my facticity. . . . Death is a pure fact as is birth; it comes to us from outside and it transforms us

into the outside' (Nothingness 545).

In Conrad, death seldom offers anything more positive than the prospect of what Marlow in Lord Jim calls the 'relief' (10:90) of 'blessed finality' that 'makes the idea of death supportable': 'End! Finis! the potent word that exorcises from the house of life the haunting shadow of fate' (16:136). Given Jim's torment over the Patna affair, 'to bury him would have been such an easy kindness' (15:134). Although Brown was 'not afraid of death', this was merely because 'he was tired of his life' (38:267) -- like Kurtz, "'lying here in the dark waiting for death'" (3:149), or Decoud contemplating his death 'with pleasure, because he dreaded the sleepless nights' (3:10:414). Razumov, tormented by his Genevan existence, felt that 'luckily life does not last for ever' (3:4:262); torture, remarks the professor of languages, can be worse than 'mere death' (1:prologue:57).

Even if death may have the virtue of ending pain, Conrad's view of it is ultimately at one with Sartre's assessment of it as absurd, as meaningless nullity. Marlow relates how Jim experienced the stormy sea as arbitrarily threatening him with non-being, poised 'to sweep the whole precious world utterly away from his sight by the simple and appalling act of taking his life' (2:14). And in Heart of Darkness Marlow stresses that such potential nullification is ever present; he looks on the Congo's rivers as 'streams of death in life' (1:62) and imagines that a Roman in ancient England would also have found 'death skulking in the air, in the water, in the bush' (1:49). Even Lena felt in the forest surrounding her 'the nearness of death breathing on her and on the man with her' (4:8:284). Decoud experienced the darkness enveloping the lighter as 'part of a living world since, pervading it, failure and death could be

felt at your elbow' (2:8:247). "'Death'", Monygham observed to Nostromo, "'stands near behind us all'" (3:8:361) -- our fear of which is graphically embodied by Wait in The Nigger of the "Narcissus". Like Ransome in The Shadow-Line, who is constantly aware of his impending extinction, the narrator of The Secret Agent recognises that death is 'the companion of life' (12:255). But though death may be 'commonplace' (12:258), its 'catastrophic character cannot be argued away by sophisticated reasoning or persuasive eloquence' (11:210), as Verloc discovered when trying to mollify Winnie after Stevie had perished in the Greenwich explosion, the victim of what the narrator in Victory calls the 'savage, sudden, irresponsible' aspect of death (4:12:315).

This chance suddenness of death is especially absurd when visited upon the young, as Conrad reveals in Mrs Haldin's incomprehension at her son's execution in Under Western Eyes. 'The inconceivable that staggered her mind was nothing but the cruel audacity of Death passing over her head to strike at that young and precious heart' (2:1:143). 'Death is a remorseless spoliator', comments the professor of languages (2:1:140), and there is no reversing the sheer finality of the destruction it wreaks. Winnie Verloc fully perceived this finality and its utter nullity: the dead 'are as nothing' (12:237). She found no solace in the thought of extinction; rather, 'the fear of death paralyzed her efforts to escape the gallows' (12:239).

Yet we do see in Winnie what Camus in The Rebel (100) regards as man's 'prolonged protest against death', his 'metaphysical rebellion' at the world's absurdity. Winnie was 'full of revolt against death'; 'all her strong vitality recoiled from the idea of death' (12:243, 241). In her case rebellion of course came to nought, ending in suicide amid 'madness and

despair' (13:266). But Conrad at least testifies to the vigour of her protest, and elsewhere upholds the existentialist conviction that man is not utterly hopeless in the face of the world's assaults. Even though he may share Heidegger's and Sartre's belief that, as Marcel disapprovingly puts it in Philosophy of Existence (76), man is the 'victim of some cosmic catastrophe, flung into an alien universe to which he is bound by nothing', Sartre nevertheless insists that man has the potential to surmount the obstacles that assail him. This potential springs not from circumambient being but from within the individual himself: man 'is himself the heart and centre of his transcendence' (Humanism 55). As Emilia Gould remarks to Charles of Don José in Nostromo, "'He has suffered -- and yet he hopes'", even though Charles's father had felt that God did not let a single 'ray of hope fall through a rift in the appalling darkness of intrigue, bloodshed, and crime that hung over the Queen of Continents' (1:6:99-100).

Embracing hope is naturally not easy in a Jaspersian world where men struggle and are in conflict, where there is always some forceful domination among them that denies complete agreement. Even that rare phenomenon, existential communication (which chapter 4 will consider further) in a sense takes the form of what Jaspers calls 'loving struggle' (Philosophy 2:59-60). Indeed, Nietzsche considers conflict to be at the root of all existence: 'all events, all motion, all becoming' are 'a determination of degrees and relations of force . . . a struggle' (Power 522:299).

Life in Costaguana, comments the narrator of Nostromo, was a 'struggle of lust between bands of absurd devils' (1:7:103), resulting in a picture of what Jocelyn Baines famously termed a 'monument to futility',⁵² what Conrad himself speaks of in a 1908 letter to John Galsworthy as 'the utter

futility of existence' (Jean-Aubry Letters 2:78). The world of The Secret Agent too is one of 'vain effort', in which the 'pieces of silver' paid to the cabman who drove Winnie, Stevie and their mother, 'appearing very minute in his big, grimy palm, symbolized the insignificant results which reward the ambitious courage and toil of a mankind whose day is short on this earth of evil' (8:156, 164). When in Under Western Eyes Razumov awoke after Haldin's confession, the burnt-out lamp on his desk stood as an 'extinguished beacon of his labours . . . amongst the scattered pages of his notes and small piles of books -- a mere litter of blackened paper -- dead matter -- without significance or interest' (1:3:106).

Yet despite such futility there is something tragically heroic in man's labours, which the Marlow of Lord Jim sees epitomised by the ocean. Recounting his arrival in Patusan, he remarks on 'the sea with its labouring waves for ever rising, sinking, and vanishing to rise again -- the very image of struggling mankind' (24:185). Though he may 'sink', man has the potential to 'rise again'. And since he himself is the source of his transcendence, it is incumbent on him to develop a frame of mind that passes beyond nihilism. As John Cowper Powys has remarked,⁵³ even if Conrad finds only meaningless, purposeless chance at the heart of things, he does glory (with Camus) in man's courageous resistance. As we recall Dr Monygham thinking in Nostramo, 'the most dangerous element' men have in common is 'the crushing, paralysing sense of human littleness, which is what really defeats a man struggling with natural forces' (3:8:363) -- like Jim's 'overwhelming sense of his helplessness' during the Patna mêlée (7:69). Man may indeed be, like Jim to the departing Marlow in Patusan, 'a tiny white speck' (35:253) upon a beach in a world that is itself just 'a restless mote of dust' against the sun's 'concentrated glare' (32:230).

But man does have within himself the potential to invent a sense of his own self as valuable to himself. As W. Y. Tindall has mentioned,⁵⁴ Marlow implicitly suggests that however meaningless and hopeless things may be, we must fashion our own saving values to temper defeat. Nostromo avoided being defeated as Decoud was because of his sheer vitality; he 'was possessed too strongly by the sense of his own existence' (3:12:434).

Mankind's struggles are regarded as 'noble' by Marlow, who in Lord Jim asserts that amid 'tragic or grotesque miseries . . . the human heart is vast enough to contain all the world. It is valiant enough to bear the burden' (34:243). The 'terrors' of 'the Dark Powers', though 'always on the verge of triumph, are perpetually foiled by the steadfastness of men' (10:96). Jim, just short of so-called heroic height -- 'an inch, perhaps two, under six feet' (1:9) -- ultimately achieved 'an extraordinary success' in the face of the odds against him, and his dying glance was 'proud and unflinching' (45:313). Even in an early storm at sea he had felt that 'he could affront greater perils' (1:13). Indeed, Raoul Cadot (rather too moralistically) sees Conrad employing the sea as a means to strengthening man's mettle.⁵⁵ Jim, comments Marlow, had the assertion of youth, 'and all assertion in this world of doubts is a defiance' (23:180). Thus, as J. Hillis Miller has observed,⁵⁶ although Conrad evokes a nihilistic world, he offers a way beyond it. Even Kurtz's final whispered cry was 'an affirmation', with 'a vibrating note of revolt' amid perception of nothingness (3:151), and behind Winnie Verloc's 'white mask of despair 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' (13:267).

As C. N. Stavrou has remarked,⁵⁷ Conrad shares Camus's assessment of man's capacity for triumph (however short-lived) over an absurd universe through his qualities of compassion, fidelity and courage -- attributes we shall explore further in the chapters ahead. Both Conrad and Camus may often begin with the isolation of the individual in a pessimistic and nihilistic world, but they advance to a position that expresses their faith in man as the successful arbiter of his destiny. Man's battle with indifferent forces leads, as Maurice David suggests,⁵⁸ to the positive creation of man's individual morality in an amoral world. Though from an absolute perspective life may indeed be a tale signifying nothing, each individual has the potential to infuse his singular existence with his own private justifications for personal being.

Hence Camus argues that we should search for ways that lead us beyond absurdity, just as Nietzsche looks beyond nihilism to put something new and purposeful in the place of mass conventions and standards by a transvaluation of all values. One is stronger, he says, for having looked into the abyss of nihilism through radical questioning that leads to transcendence. This provides a vibrancy that overcomes the dulness of nausea and despair, the vanquishing of which permits authenticity. As Sartre's Orestes says in The Flies, human life in a full sense begins once we pass beyond despair. And the potential for such transcendence is always present, since (as we remember Sartre insisting) man himself is the source of transcendence. Although H. L. Mencken⁵⁹ took the view that Conrad's heroes do not conquer fate, the Marlow of Lord Jim would disagree: Jim and Jewel may have led 'benighted lives', but 'they had mastered their fates. They were tragic' (33:238).

2 The Quest for Selfhood

Man, says Kierkegaard in his Concluding Unscientific Postscript (84), is constantly 'in process of becoming', a notion Conrad gives a local habitation and a name to in a remarkable number of his fictional personages. The tormented Razumov in Under Western Eyes, for example, is clearly aware of such flux: "'A man goes out of a room for a walk. Nothing more trivial in appearance. And yet it may be momentous. He comes back -- he has seen perhaps a drunken brute, taken particular notice of the snow on the ground -- and behold he is no longer the same man"' (1 2:99). To Kierkegaard and Conrad, no man is a fixed entity with an immutable nature -- as one sees not only in Razumov but also in Jim and his attempts through the torments of conscience to gain what existentialists would term authentic existence. One sees it in the inauthentic being of the major figures in Nostromo, enslaved to 'material interest', and of those in The Secret Agent, alienated by the functionalism of an urban desert; in the self-assertion of Victory's Heyst and Lena through their battle with external forces; and in Kurtz's radical self-discovery that leads to his perception of his own nothingness.

In sweeping terms, an individual's existential 'process of becoming' should entail a passage towards authentic personal being, a quest for true selfhood, through his freedom for responsible choice (however oppressive the forces against him) and through his decisions and actions, hedged about by the dictates of conscience -- all of which occur within the wider world informed by being, which we recall Heidegger characterising as something indefinable that we can have no mental picture of, a pervasive presence that man as an existent is open to. We recall as well that Sartre divides being

into two fundamental forms: being-in-itself (en-soi) and being-for-itself (pour-soi). Being-in-itself is non-conscious, material being, whereas being-for-itself, applicable to man, emerges subsequently by separating itself from sheer being-in-itself through its freedom to choose itself.¹

So it is that Sartre in Existentialism and Humanism (28) views existence as preceding essence. 'What do we mean by saying that existence precedes essence? We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world -- and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. . . . Man simply is'. In this instance the word existence is understood as a form of being that pertains solely to man. Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism' asserts that 'only man is admitted to the destiny of ek-sistence' (Basic Writings 204). A stone or plant or animal is, but it does not exist. Though to say that man alone exists does not of course mean that only man really is and that all other things are unreal or simply ideas of man.

Pursuing the relationship of essence and existence for a moment longer before turning to Conrad, we find that in an even more rarefied sense existence applies to man only once he consciously attempts to distinguish himself from the masses and strives to realise his essence, or selfhood. Only then can he truly be said to exist. As Heidegger remarks in his 'Letter on Humanism', 'Ek-sistence means standing out into the truth of Being. Existencia means in contrast actualitas, actuality as opposed to mere possibility as Idea' (Basic Writings 206-7). Tillich emphasises how the Latin root exsistere contains the notion of such standing out, or emerging,² so that in Sartrean terms man's for-itself emerges from brute

in-itself, achieving ecstasis.

In consequence, as Heidegger puts it in Being and Time (42, 32-3), 'the essence of Dasein lies in its existence' ('das "Wesen" des Daseins liegt in seiner Existenz'). Existenz is 'that kind of Being towards which Dasein can comport itself . . . in terms of a possibility of itself'. And essence is not open to discovery by 'objective' means; scientific understanding of the body will not yield knowledge of an individual's essence. As Jaspers phrases it in Philosophy (2:32, 3), 'I am . . . what I find in myself', passing beyond a view of myself as just a mass of particular facts and deciding subjectively who I am. 'The possibility of Existenz is what I live by; it is only in its realization that I am myself'.

For Sartre, man as sheer being-in-itself pre-exists any awareness he has of his possibilities. Only subsequently does he choose his essence, create his own desired image of himself. He has no permanent nature -- he is a becoming. Which brings us back to Kierkegaard, who states in The Sickness unto Death (163) that 'a self, every instant it exists, is in process of becoming, for the self . . . is only that which it is to become'. Conrad agrees, but laments privately in a letter of 23 and 24 March 1896 to his editor Edward Garnett, 'If we are "ever becoming -- never being" then I would be a fool if I tried to become this thing rather than that; for I know well that I never will be anything' (Letters 1:268). As Sartre concurs in the final sentence of Being and Nothingness (615), 'Man is a useless passion'.

Yet both Conrad and Sartre suggest that even if man fails in his attempts at authentic being, the very struggle to attain it lends intensity to an otherwise bland and inauthentic existence. We recall that for Kierkegaard existence is a 'constant striving' to realise one's essence

(Postscript 85), which, say Marcel and Sartre, means transcending the self one is at any particular point. This notion is also much stressed in On the Genealogy of Morals (3:27:161) by Nietzsche, who sees 'the necessity of "self-overcoming [Selbstüberwindung]" in the nature of life' as we strive to attain a 'higher self'. In George Allen Morgan's elaboration, we live through 'a series of temporary "selves". . . . Finding oneself means attaining one's own standard of good and evil, a personal "legislator" derived from the ideal self'.³ Hence Marcel's description of man as homo viator, perpetually travelling on the road to new selves. The narrator of An Outcast of the Islands (3:4:196) has this to say of 'the man of purpose': 'Travelling on, he achieves great length without any breadth, and battered, besmirched, and weary, he touches the goal at last; he grasps the reward of his perseverance, of his virtue, of his healthy optimism'. The striving is all.

Self-transcendence usually involves both inner strife and conflict with the world, and Sartre feels that one is never able fully to become oneself because one's being, stretching out beyond itself at any given moment, exceeds itself. One can never possess one's being in the way one possesses a thing, as William Barrett comments.⁴ And the realisation that one's present self is never complete produces a sense of unease and anxiety, which should be used as a spur to the attainment of fuller selfhood.

Conrad's earliest sustained depiction of this struggle for authentic selfhood is Lord Jim, which serves well as an expository model of how existential perspectives emerge in his work as a whole. With it, as Piero Rébora has commented, Conrad anticipated a century of literature that emphasises the interior man.⁵ Until Jim embraced the cause of Patusan as

his own, he was a frightened slave to what Kierkegaard in The Point of View (see 112ff.) calls the 'untruth' of 'the crowd', his life a surrender to his delusive daydreams in what Sartre would term a flight in bad faith from his past and himself.

To the existentialist, of course, no man's self can ever be wholly apparent to an outsider, and Conrad accordingly filters our view of Jim through the limited individual perspective of Marlow, who like any man (as Sartre says) 'cannot pass beyond human subjectivity' (Humanism 29). Although Marlow acknowledges that he was 'fated never to see [Jim] clearly' (23:184), Conrad never casts serious doubt on Marlow's presentation of Jim as a 'real life' figure within the fictional world of the novel. Whenever Marlow is uncertain about the accuracy of his view, this is clearly indicated. But whatever the limitations of this view, Jim as Marlow constructs him is delineated in a thoroughly existential way.

In Marlow's depiction of him, there was little in Jim's appearance to suggest his capacity for the struggle that repeated self-transcendence entails. 'He was outwardly so typical of that good, stupid kind . . . that is not disturbed by the vagaries of intelligence and the perversions of -- of nerves, let us say' (5:39). Jim after all hailed 'from a parsonage . . . of piety and peace', raised by a father who 'possessed such certain knowledge of the Unknowable as made for the righteousness of people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerring Providence enables to live in mansions' (1:10). Not for Jim's paternal household the Kurtzian glimpses into the heart of darkness.

But though Jim did not get as profound a glimpse of things as Kurtz did, he none the less came to a penetrating recognition of his own deepest imperatives, which were so at variance with the outside world's. Yet he

might easily have remained in his parsonage milieu, with what Nietzsche's Zarathustra (73:3:321) would call its 'herd ideals' and 'petty virtues', had he not had four brothers also contending for 'the living [that] had belonged to the family for generations' (1:10-11), thus prompting his decision to train for the mercantile marine -- which brought him boredom rather than any sense of a full existence. 'He went to sea, and entering the regions so well known to his imagination, found them strangely barren. . . . He knew the magic monotony of existence between sky and water . . . , the prosaic severity of the daily task' (2:14). In finding his life to be one of sheer automatism, Jim as he is shown to us clearly illustrates Jaspers's claim in Man in the Modern Age (50) that 'in becoming a mere function, life forfeits its historical particularity, to the extreme of a levelling of the various ages of life'.

Jim was trapped in what existentialists would quickly recognise as inauthentic being. To exist as a self, they argue, is either to stand in the possibility of becoming at one with oneself, of fulfilling oneself (even by giving up oneself), or to be divided in oneself. These two possibilities are to exist 'authentically' or 'inauthentically', the former marked by the self-perpetrating quality inherent in the Greek roots αὐθεντης (authentēs), the actual perpetrator of a deed, and αὐτός (autos), one who does things for himself. Achieving authentic being, or selfhood, is a difficult -- even tragic -- process, since one must constantly fight both against one's own inner resistances and against the masses, whose levelling influence destroys the singularity and qualitative difference of the self. 'To battle against princes and popes . . .', we recall Kierkegaard saying, 'is easy compared with struggling against the masses, the tyranny of

equality' (Journals 502).

To exist is to be faced with the choice of gaining existence in the fuller sense or letting true selfhood slip away. Allowing oneself to be dominated unduly by external forces rather than fostering what one considers best for one's own individual self leads to what we might call a 'false' existence. As Macquarrie puts it, 'Existence is authentic to the extent that the existent has taken possession of himself and, shall we say, has moulded himself in his own image. Inauthentic existence, on the other hand, is moulded by external influences, whether these be circumstances, moral codes, political or ecclesiastical authorities, or whatever'.⁶

Such external forces pressure man into social conformity (what Nietzsche calls the majorisieren of the individual), and exactly how one avoids being dominated by such external influences is not clear. But it does involve eschewing the human tendency to become absorbed in the multiplicity of everyday affairs, which distracts the individual from the project of becoming himself and abets his evasion of ascertaining what he truly desires for himself. Authentic being on the other hand permits understanding of the self -- which may produce anxiety when the individual perceives himself as failing to achieve his goals.

Without the disturbing awareness of the responsibility entailed in choosing the self he wishes to be, man is simply a machine. Authentic being, says Jaspers in his Way to Wisdom (38), offers quotidian man a philosophical rebirth in that 'the fall from absolutes [or established positions, Festigkeiten] which were after all illusory becomes an ability to soar; what seemed an abyss becomes space for freedom; apparent Nothingness is transformed into that from which authentic being speaks to us'. The ennui of the inauthentic gives way to an apprehension of one's own

possibilities, which in turn offers the opportunity of choosing one's own sense of personal purpose.

We have seen how Jim's life at sea carried no such sense of purpose; instead, it was marked by the vapid malaise of inauthentic being. We remember that, 'disabled by a falling spar', he 'spent many days stretched on his back, dazed, battered, hopeless, and tormented as if at the bottom of an abyss of unrest. He did not care what the end would be' (2:14, 15). In Heidegger's terms, his life had fallen into the bottomless abyss of the inauthentic and the commonplace.

Jim looked on 'the majority' of his fellow sailors as men who sought 'the soft spot, the place of decay, the determination to lounge safely through existence' (2:16). Not for them Nietzsche's injunction to 'live dangerously! . . . Send your ships into uncharted seas!' (Science, 283:228). The demands of men (along with other obstacles to selfhood) produce a sense of alienation in the individual, whose only remedy is to be true to his own self and what Sartre terms his 'project' of what he ultimately wishes to be. In a state of inauthentic being, comments Heidegger, 'everyone is the other, and no one is himself. The "they", which supplies the answer to the question of the "who" of everyday Dasein, is the "nobody" to whom every Dasein has already surrendered itself in Being-among-one-another' (Time 165-5). Kierkegaard takes the view in his Journals (179) that 'no one whatsoever is prevented from being an individual unless he prevents himself -- by becoming one of the masses'. Jim would therefore have to create his own being-for-itself in the face of the majority and what Nietzsche calls their 'levelling of humanity'.⁷

As Patricia F. Sanborn remarks,⁸ in everyday life man tends to

abdicate his struggle against the techniques of degradation that foster dehumanising functionalism and prefers instead to enjoy the comforts of technology and the benefits of a depersonalised world -- a world in which the masses, though very real, are an impersonal abstraction. Kierkegaard stresses that, while the 'universal' was once regarded as the highest goal, modern man should uphold the 'individual', since only as a unique individual can he formulate the personal truths that are most fundamental to his existence. 'The self', says Sartre, 'is individual; it is the individual completion of the self which haunts the for-itself' (Nothingness 91).

Living in Kierkegaard's 'untruth' of 'the crowd', Jim needed to forge a truer self by overcoming 'the masses, the tyranny of equality, . . . the grin of shallowness' (Journals 502) of men 'who, like himself, [were] thrown there by some accident' (2:16), in the way that Heidegger and Sartre assert we are all 'thrown' into the world.⁹ We remember Roquentin contending in Nausea (131) that 'to exist is simply to be there'. We recall too that in Heidegger's formulation, our condition of being-there (Dasein) does not point to essence but to a mode of being (sein) that emanates from a certain position (Da) into which the existent has been 'thrown'. Man is a being-in-the-world, spread over the field of his care and concern. In Barrett's paraphrase,¹⁰ Heidegger considers each individual as initially simply one among many -- 'the One [das man]', the impersonal and public creature each of us is before he is a real 'I'. Thus, like Jim in his boredom as a merchant seaman, we exist in a state of 'fallenness [Verfallenheit]' when we languish below the level of existence to which it is possible to rise. It is easier to be 'the One' than a true self, and (like the early Jim) we multiply the devices whereby we seek to evade the rigours of the internal and external conflict involved in wresting Sartrean for-itself from

in-itself. Dasein is in the world in the sense of being preoccupied, producing, ordering, fostering, applying, sacrificing, undertaking, following through, inquiring, questioning, observing, talking over, or agreeing (see Time 83). Assertion of oneself amid all this requires a 'project towards' essence, and Marlow presents Jim as questing to espouse Kierkegaard's desire 'to understand myself, . . . to find the idea for which I can live and die' (Journals 15).

But that was long in the finding. Existentialists contend that recognition of the self's own possibilities occurs only in resolute moments when the call of personal conscience is heard, moments when the future self clarifies the past self to the present self by ignoring everyday distractions. 'Resoluteness', says Heidegger, 'constitutes the loyalty of existence to its own Self' (Time 443) -- which is what Conrad explicitly requires of the artist, who must have 'absolute loyalty towards his feelings and sensations' (Notes 9). 'If', Heidegger continues, 'Dasein discovers the world in its own way [eigens] and brings it close, if it discloses to itself its own authentic Being, then this discovery of the "world" and this disclosure of Dasein are always accompanied as a clearing-away of concealments and obscurities, as a breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way' (Time 167). The inauthentic man, in Heidegger's view, fails (like the younger Jim) to see himself and his world clearly, and his inauthenticity is manifested in misuse of language, in bad faith, in the appropriation of others as objects. It is a form of deracination, of feeling that one is not 'at home' in the world, as Laing puts it in The Divided Self.¹¹ It is a 'falling' out of being, 'with temptation, tranquillizing, alienation, and entanglement as its essential

characteristics' (Time 224).

Amid such snares, Jim failed to sunder himself from the 'gossiping crowd' who seemed 'more unsubstantial than so many shadows' and instead 'took a berth as chief mate of the Patna' (2:16) -- another decision that was to thwart him, concluding as it did in the ignominious jump whose consequences were to lead him into an anguished flight from himself. His jump, as existentialists would readily point out, amounted to an evasion of responsibility or of facing reality -- much like Martin Decoud's jump in Nostromo (3:10:413) when, unable 'to grapple with himself single-handed', he cast himself into the Sartrean in-itself of the Placid Gulf, or Winnie Verloc's leap into the Channel in The Secret Agent when she imagined her future life too hard to bear. In this ambiguous world, however, leaps are double-edged. They need not betoken only inauthentic evasion but can -- like Kierkegaard's Christian 'leap of faith' -- lead to the embracing of a valuable new direction, as with Jim's leap on Patusan or the 'plunge' taken by Heyst in eloping with Alma/Magdalen in Victory (2:2:76). Leaps point to the jagged quality of life, its sudden twists that give the lie to the smoothness offered by the 'unerring Providence' of Jim's boyhood home (1:10). Their very nature suggests disruption and anxiety, whether associated with painful indecision or the agonised adoption of resolution in the face of 'the Unknowable' (1:10). Even Kierkegaard's espousal of Christianity entailed a leap suffused with a sense of abandoning oneself to what is beyond one's control even as one frees oneself from known shackles -- the embracing of a profound and terrifying freedom of the kind Kurtz experienced once he had 'kicked himself loose of the earth' (3:144).

Jim's leap from the Patna revealed him for what he was at the time, bringing him face to face with the terrible truth that the self he was at

that moment was not the self he had ultimately wanted to be; as a 1921 review points out, Conrad's personages are 'intensely . . . themselves in a crisis'.¹² And, as we have seen, these selves change, preferably in accordance with one's chosen project of selfhood. To Sartre, 'it is necessary that we make ourselves what we are' (Nothingness 59). Only to others (or to oneself in inauthentic being) does one appear as an object; as a being-for-itself, one is one's own free project. For-itself entails a continually reformulated 'project of self toward its possibilities', ever in the making (Nothingness 85).

This in a sense means adopting a kind of mask, in the higher Nietzschean understanding of the word -- the mask fashioned by men who 'invent themselves' (Zarathustra 43:157). To Yeats, who is among the most thoroughly Nietzschean of modern poets, man 'follows an Image, created or chosen by the Creative Mind from what Fate offers'; 'personality is a constantly renewed choice' (A Vision 128-9, 84).¹³ 'The great secret' that comes to Septimus in The Player Queen (Collected Plays 267/420) is that 'man is nothing till he is united to an image' -- a view similar to Sartre's contention that 'man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself' (Humanism 28). Jim's daydreams of heroic action carried no firm image of selfhood, no determined resolve. Yet they did have great value for him at the time as an intimation of the self he truly aspired to be. 'His thoughts would be full of valorous deeds: he loved these dreams and the success of his imaginary achievements. They were the best parts of life, its secret truth, its hidden reality' (3:21).

But not until he actualised their truth did he achieve fuller selfhood. As idle daydreams, his imaginings were a form of unconscious lying to

himself, an irresolute evasion of the reality of his inauthentic existence. In this he perfectly displays what Sartre terms bad faith (mauvaise foi). 'In bad faith there is no cynical lie nor knowing preparation for deceitful concepts. But the first act of bad faith is to flee what it can not flee, to flee what it is. The very project of flight reveals to bad faith an inner disintegration in the heart of being. . . . But it denies this very disintegration as it denies that it is itself bad faith' (Nothingness 70). 'The concept of bad faith . . . should replace those of the censor, repression, and the unconscious which Adler uses'; 'existential psychoanalysis rejects the postulate of the unconscious'; 'we do not establish . . . the difference between the unconscious and the conscious, but rather that which separates the fundamental unreflective consciousness and its tributary, the consciousness reflected-on' (473).

There was no 'cynical lie' in Jim: he truly imagined himself capable of 'valorous deeds' (3:21). But his dreams were none the less an attempt to flee what he in fact was at the time, one of Heidegger's 'they' -- as his jump testified. It revealed to the man who believed himself to be heroic that he had been cowardly, much as in the case of Camus's Jean-Baptiste in The Fall. As Carole Slade points out,¹⁴ Camus himself made the connection in a talk with Dominique Aury when discussing 'the flaw in man':

Aury: That's a theme of Conrad -- the brave man who suddenly becomes a coward.

Camus: Exactly; a less brilliant Lord Jim.¹⁵

Jim was not in bad faith to the extent that he denied the pressures on what Kierkegaard would call his 'heart of being' or sought to evade a fuller

existence. But his desired self was merely the product of nebulous daydreams, not a purposefully chosen project. Only later, by embracing Patusan, did he both recognise his inner dissolution and actively proceed in the direction of the self he had imagined himself to be and was not.

The Patna jump and the ensuing trial thus brought Jim harsh recognition of what he really was at the time -- and such anagnorisis is open to the existent himself alone, who is left as the sole arbiter of what his self is at any given moment. We recall Jaspers maintaining that only the individual himself, in relation to himself, can decide who he is (cf. Philosophy 2:32ff.); he cannot rely on society's judgement. Jaspers unequivocally condemns the inauthentic existence one lives when one is a member of mass society as not being true to one's individual self. One should move from a state of being-there to being-oneself, to an existence that becomes real only as freedom, which alone remains as a source of value. But though Sartrean man is basically and completely free (however strong the forces massed against him), he all too often fails to use his freedom purposefully. Jaspers feels that in an act undertaken with a sense of its being one's own free choice, one recognises oneself as a true self, upholding Heidegger's exhortation that man heed his own inner call, his conscience, which is the true voice of God in him -- in Jim's case, his 'romantic conscience' (14:121).

Regrettably, the existentialists are rather vague on the precise nature of conscience. As Macquarrie speculates,¹⁶ it may imply that existence carries with it a given basic awareness of the direction of human fulfilment. Although conscience may popularly be associated with the moral codes accepted in society, existentialists see it as an individual's own

moral conviction, which often leads to the rejection of society's mores in response to what the individual believes to be a more deeply founded imperative. Such rejection is both arduous and elating. As Dostoevsky phrases it in the The Brothers Karamazov, 'There is nothing more alluring to man than his freedom of conscience, but there is nothing more tormenting either'.

Exactly how internalisation of the social may be mitigated or counteracted remains unresolved in the post-modernist debate. But to an existentialist like Kierkegaard (and, in our case, Conrad), overcoming social morality is possible, however difficult it may be. Discussing individual morality in Fear and Trembling (70), Kierkegaard presents the case of Abraham and Isaac as entailing a 'teleological suspension of ethics' when Abraham goes against the generally accepted moral idea of what is right by being prepared to slay his son at the directive uniquely given him as an individual by God. Abraham is ready to sacrifice Isaac 'for God's sake, and (in complete identity with this) for his own sake'. In Kierkegaard's estimation, the individual should surpass the 'universal' ethic through his personal conscience that is both God's command and the individual's own deepest awareness. George Price comments that 'what is at stake in the book is Abraham's self, his struggle to be, to exist as the individual he knows he ought to be. He must forge his own categories. His is therefore the paradigm for any and every individual who finds himself at the frontier of ethics.'¹⁷

Heidegger, speaking of 'public conscience', asks: 'What else is it than the voice of the "they"?' (Time 323). True conscience, by contrast, rooted in the being of Dasein, at a deeper level delivers the individual from the 'they': 'conscience summons Dasein's Self from its lostness in the

"they"' (319), as Jim discovered when he finally surmounted universal opinion. This 'call' comes from the depths of the authentic self that is in ceaseless conflict with the masses, and 'when the call is rightly understood, it gives us that which is the "most positive" of all -- namely, the ownmost possibility which Dasein can present to itself, as a calling-back which calls it forth into its factual potentiality-for-being-its-Self at the time' (341). The self thus becomes aware through its private conscience of its possible concrete ways of existing, which must then be effected -- as Jim eventually managed to do in Patusan.

As Calvin O. Schrag remarks,¹⁸ conscience is not an abstracted faculty of the human psyche (just as reason, will and emotion are not) but reveals itself in the immediate concerns of the individual's lived experience, acting as a judge of his choices and actions. The summons of conscience, Heidegger continues, 'discourses in the uncanny mode of keeping silent. And it does this only because, in calling the one to whom the appeal is made, it does not call him into the public idle talk of the "they", but calls him back from this into the reticence of his existent potentiality-for-Being' (Time 322).

So it is that the existentialist demands that each man quest -- like Jim -- after his own potentiality for being by heeding his inner voice of conscience (which is assumed to exist) in the face of conventional morality. Macquarrie¹⁹ is quick to point out the perils of this, since no individual conscience ever speaks with complete purity. It is easy to manipulate conscience, and the appeal to 'God's will' has been the excuse for the most outrageous conduct. Yet all human existence is perilous and potentially frightful; risks are sometimes necessary to avoid the danger of moral

nihilism and to permit the possibility of advance. One may of course genuinely approve of conventional standards (as had the young Jim under his father's influence), and to obey them is then not a case of being in bad faith. But unquestioning acceptance of them bespeaks a shallow life and carries the danger of stagnation (as Jim began to discover in life aboard ship). Nietzsche insists that it is only through inner and outer conflict that growth occurs, and his Zarathustra urges those who have the spark of the superman in them to surpass the 'petty people' who 'preach submission and humility and policy and diligence and consideration and the long et cetera of petty virtues' (73:3:321). Real virtue lies in the courage to follow the call of the inner self.

Sartre too champions fealty to one's inner dictates and laments the oppression of the individual by societal morality. 'The moral attitude appears when technical and social conditions render positive forms of conduct impossible. Ethics is a collection of idealistic tricks intended to enable us to live the life imposed on us by the poverty of our resources and the insufficiency of our techniques'.²⁰ 'We have neither behind us, nor before us in a luminous realm of values, any means of justification or excuse. We are left alone' (Humanism 34) to create our own values under the guidance of conscience (vaguely defined though it may be, and its origins obscure). 'Man is a useless passion' except in so far as he ascribes a meaning of his own choosing to himself (Nothingness 615) in a Zarathustrian world in which God is dead. We exist authentically to the extent that we endeavour to forge and implement those values that are truly our own. As Conrad comments in a letter to Edward Noble, 'Everyone must walk in the light of his own heart's gospel. No man's light is good to any of his fellows. . . . That's my view of life -- a view that rejects all formulas,

dogmas and principles of other people's making. These are only a web of illusions. We are too varied. Another man's truth is only a dismal lie to me' (Letters 1:253).²¹

For Kierkegaard, 'it is really the conscience which constitutes a personality. . . . For the conscience may slumber, but the constitutive factor is its possibility' (Journals 151). Conscience provides us with the truth of what we are and what we might be. Kant, he says, 'held that man was his own law (autonomy), i.e. bound himself under the law which he gave himself. In a deeper sense that means to say: lawlessness or experimentation' (364-5). So it is that conscience (whether its premise be metaphysical or materialist) is vital to my being able, in Jaspers's words, to 'soar and seize my being and feel it is true' (Philosophy 2:324). No one else can make that decision for me, since no one wholly knows another's inner self. As we remember Heidegger insisting, no scientific consideration of man as an 'organismic' being can yield up his essence -- which is echoed in Marlow's contention in Lord Jim that the trial would never reveal to an outsider the inner workings of the officers aboard the Patna: 'You can't expect the constituted authorities to inquire into the state of a man's soul -- or is it only of his liver?' (6:48).

So Jim alone could make the discovery of what his self was at the time of the Patna incident -- as he indeed began to during his ten days aboard the rescuing Avondale. What he saw shocked him: 'he was partly stunned by the discovery he had made -- the discovery about himself' (7:67). Talking to Marlow, he asserted that he had looked the whole event "'in the face. I wasn't going to run away. . . . I knew the truth, and I would live it down -- alone, with myself.'" (11:103). In this recognition, incomplete

though it may have been, lay the means to achieving personality, as Morton Dauwel Zabel comments in general terms of the major figures in Under Western Eyes.²²

Jim's self-recognition brought Captain Brierly, one of the assessors at the trial and in a sense Jim's Doppelgänger, face to face with his own self, and their contrasting responses heavily underscore Jim's moral courage in heeding his individual conscience. Brierly's self-discovery did not lead him to set his sights in the direction of the for-itself. Instead, he chose suicide, an extreme flight from the demands of selfhood. Marlow realises that 'the inquiry was a severe punishment to that Jim, and that his facing it -- practically of his own free will -- was a redeeming feature in his abominable case' (6:57). Brierly had initially thought Jim foolish not to flee the rigours of standing trial, to which Marlow had commented: "'There is a kind of courage in facing it out as he does, knowing very well that if he went away nobody would trouble to run after him.'" "Courage be hanged!" growled Brierly. "That sort of courage is of no use to keep a man straight, and I don't care a snap for such courage"' (6:55-6). To Nietzsche, of course, grappling with one's deepest self is testimony to the highest courage: 'he who with eagle's talons graspeth the abyss: he hath courage' (Zarathustra 73:4:322). And Brierly's suicide suggests that he had in fact come to agree with the German philosopher -- but had failed of the requisite strength to build on his discovery.

Jim was ultimately hardier, but full acceptance of his self-recognition was a slow process; the insight that his jump offered him was simply one step on his difficult journey towards selfhood as a Marcellian homo viator. Yet his plunge did lead him -- as Gerald Morgan points out²³ -- to a fresh engagement of himself and his fidelity to himself and others, even if it was

beset with an intricate play of facing and evading the truths he glimpsed about himself. When early on Marlow 'taxed him with running away, he said, "Never! . . . From no man -- from not a single man on earth"' (6:62). But a few moments later he conceded, "'I can't put up with this kind of thing . . . and I don't mean to. In court it's different; I've got to stand that -- and I can do it too"' (6:62). And so it continued, with evasion becoming the dominant mode, turning Jim into a 'vagabond' (16:137) in an anxious flight from the deed that had exposed him. A flight, in short, from his Patna self.

Jim did not of course perceive it as flight: he felt that he was squarely facing his self. And in a sense he was, since his life between his Patna jump and his Patusan leap became the record -- too detailed to rehearse fully here -- of a man's vacillating struggle with himself at the promptings of conscience. As Marlow comments, 'I could never make up my mind . . . whether his line of conduct amounted to shirking his ghost or to facing him out' (19:150); 'for it is my belief no man ever understands quite his own artful dodges to escape from the grim shadow of self-knowledge' (7:65).

Jim's acknowledgment of the awful fact that he "'had jumped"' did, however, leave him -- 'dumbfounded and hurt' -- with 'a sad sense of resigned wisdom' about himself (9:88). "'There was no going back"', he declared (9:89). There was indeed no going back to his former self. As Sartre would insist, Jim needed to frame a project for a self that would be ready for conduct different to that of his Patna self. "'It is all in being ready. I wasn't; not -- not then"' (7:66).

Marlow points to the inner strife entailed in the deliberate

formulation of that new self, 'those struggles of an individual trying to save from the fire his idea of what his moral identity should be' -- though, as Marlow indicates, Jim's conception of his desired self was still strongly influenced by societal opinions, enslaved as he was to the 'precious notion of a convention, only one of the rules of the game, nothing more, but all the same so terribly effective by its assumption of unlimited power over natural instincts, by the awful penalties of its failure' (7:66). Jim was not yet able to perceive that Kierkegaard's despised 'universal' ethic did not necessarily apply to him as an individual.

As a result, he remained listless, still incapable of that resoluteness which to Heidegger 'constitutes the loyalty of existence to its own Self. As resoluteness which is ready for anxiety, this loyalty is at the same time a possible way of revering the sole authority which a free existing can have -- of revering the repeatable possibilities of existence' (Time 443). The self, demands Sartre, 'must assume [its] situation with the proud consciousness of being the author of it' (Nothingness 554).

Hence one should concentrate on the limited, incomplete self hic et nunc with a view to enhancing it through aspiring to make a personal destiny. One is inclined to look on oneself as a mere object in a world of objects, but one's essential self is subjective and unfinished, which is why Kierkegaard counsels the engagement of what he calls one's 'passionate inwardness', the opening of oneself to conversion, to a radical change in one's entire being that will make the self fully present to itself. The 'extraordinary and marvelous instants', says Sartre, 'when the prior project collapses into the past in the light of a new project which rises on its ruins and which as yet exists only in outline, in which humiliation, anguish, joy, hope are delicately blended, in which we let go in order to

grasp and grasp in order to let go -- these have often appeared to furnish the clearest and most moving image of our freedom' (Nothingness 476). So long as man blinds himself to the nature and meaning of his behaviour (and his freedom to change it), conversion is impossible, comments Sanborn.²⁴ But if he can uncover the manner in which he lives out his goals, can isolate forms of inauthentic behaviour and substitute new ways of realising his fundamental project, then conversion can occur and the potential for selfhood be engaged.

Lacking determined goals, Jim 'wandered on the quays all by himself, detached from his surroundings, irresolute and silent' (7:67). At dinner with Marlow, his projections of what he might one day be seemed to his host to be ironically tinged with dreamy romanticism -- though gradually firming into resolve: 'I could see in his glance darted into the night all his inner being carried on, projected headlong into the fanciful realm of recklessly heroic aspirations. . . . With every instant he was penetrating deeper into the impossible world of romantic achievements. He got to the heart of it at last! A strange look of beatitude overspread his features; he positively smiled! He had penetrated to the heart -- to the very heart' (7:68), in one of Sartre's 'marvelous instants' in which one glimpses a new direction towards self-fulfilment.

So Jim at least had an intimation of the image of himself that would bring him a feeling of being at one with himself, Zarathustra's desired condition in which 'one may endure to be with oneself, and not to go roving about' (55:2:214). In Nietzsche's estimation, true selfhood promotes a sense of wholeness (Ganzheit) that reconciles the individual to himself and to the world in which he all too often does not feel 'at home'. Twilight

of the Idols (102) lauds this quality of wholeness in Goethe: 'What he aspired to was totality; . . . he disciplined himself to a whole, he created himself'. Such wholeness, what Yeats calls 'unity of being', is often best approached in solitude (Nietzsche's 'terrible mistress'), when the daily concerns of the world and others are less oppressive. Removed from the universal, man is not so subject to its norms and can learn to know himself better. The Nietzschean hero has 'a solitude within him that is inaccessible to praise or blame' (Power 962:505), and solitude becomes a key word for Zarathustra in his ' stillest hour'. Such 'distance' from the crowd is not easy. The individualist, says Kierkegaard in Fear and Trembling (86), 'knows that it is terrible to be born outside the universal, to walk without meeting a single traveller. He knows very well where he is and how he is related to men. Humanly speaking, he is crazy and cannot make himself intelligible to anyone'.

Wholeness (never absolutely achieved) is not easily approximated. Simple retreat from the madding crowd is no guarantee of finding it, since even in one's own secret inwardness one discovers much that is alien. 'We are necessarily strangers to ourselves . . . ', Nietzsche contends in On the Genealogy of Morals (preface:1:15); 'for us the law "each is furthest from himself" applies to all eternity'. The prime means to virtual wholeness lies in being able to 'learn to love oneself . . . with a wholesome and healthy love', loving all one's contrasting elements, from basest to loftiest (Zarathustra 55:2:214).

For Jim the beatitude of wholeness still lay only in dreamy glimpses of that state. In actuality, he remained in one of Zarathustra's fragmented situations in which 'I and me are always too earnestly in conversation' (14:57). 'He was not speaking to me,' Marlow recounts, 'he was only

speaking before me, in dispute with an invisible personality, an antagonistic and inseparable partner of his existence -- another possessor of his soul. These were issues beyond the competency of a court of inquiry: it was a subtle and momentous quarrel as to the true essence of life, and did not want a judge' (7:75). At least, not an external judge; in an existential world, we remember, the individual is the sole arbiter of value, arrived at through anguished deliberation prompted by the inner judge of conscience.

Jim's fancifulness was deepened more and more by sobering visions of what lay in store for him -- a life of conflict, to be followed by death, which (as Heidegger reminds us) is 'Dasein's Being-towards-the-end' (Time 293). Ahead of Jim there now stretched, as Marlow recounts in language redolent with existential imagery, 'the grasp of the abyss, the struggle without hope, the starlight closing over his head for ever like the vault of a tomb -- the revolt of his young life -- the black end . . . there was a hot dance of thoughts in his head. . . . He burrowed deep, deep, in the hope of my absolution, which would have been of no good to him. This was one of those cases which no solemn deception can palliate, which no man can help; where his very Maker seems to abandon a sinner to his own devices' (8:77-8).

The very mode of Marlow's narration here (not merely what is being told) constitutes Jim's dilemma as thoroughly existential. In addition to the habitual rhythms, syntactic repetitions and parenthetical suspensions of Marlow's language that convey his lack of omniscience, there is the disturbing quality of its thought and imagery -- the Nietzschean 'grasp of the abyss', 'struggle', 'hot dance of thoughts', 'depths', and the

potential despair from looking too deeply into things; the Kierkegaardian anxiety that betokens man's 'sickness unto death'; the Camusian demand for 'revolt'; the Sartrean picture of man abandoned to 'carry the weight of the world . . . alone without anything or any person being able to lighten it' (Nothingness 555). In a Sartrean world where 'no signs are vouchsafed' (Humanism 38), only Jim himself could assess the moral quality of his action -- and he felt "'there was not the thickness of a sheet of paper between the right and wrong of this affair'" (11:102).

If he was to have any hope of authentic selfhood, he dared not shirk this responsibility for determining his own 'moral identity' (7:66). As Lois A. Michel has remarked in a general way of 'the thoughtful character in Conrad', 'the worst evil that can happen to a man is not one of the absurd irrational calamities, but the loss of personal moral integrity'.²⁵ And Jim was clearly set on pursuing such integrity in order to maintain himself in the indifferent universe in which he was adrift.

Already in the midst of the Patna episode he had felt himself rootless in his imagined sinking of the vessel: "'Everything was gone and -- all was over . . . " he fetched a deep sigh . . . "with me"' (10:91). In Marlow's view, this constituted admirable subjective truth on Jim's part: 'Wasn't he true to himself, wasn't he? His saved life was over for want of ground under his feet. . . . Annihilation . . . ' (10:91). In a sense this apprehension of nothingness was accurate, in that Jim's Patna self was over; the quest for a new self had begun. What Jim now needed was Camusian revolt against nihilism, a call from authentic being whereby, in Jaspers's estimation, 'apparent Nothingness is transformed' (Way to Wisdom 38). And this requires resolve.

Heidegger's call for 'resoluteness which is ready for anxiety' (Time

443) emerges in the view of the commander of the French gunboat that had encountered the captainless Patna. "'There is somewhere a point when you let go everything (vous lâchez tout). And have got to live with that truth -- do you see? Given a certain combination of circumstances, fear is sure to come. . . . And even for those who do not believe this truth there is fear all the same -- the fear of themselves. . . . Man is born a coward (L'homme est né poltron). It is a difficulty -- parbleu! It would be too easy otherwise"' (13:114). Which puts us in mind of Sartre, to whom 'the coward makes himself cowardly, and the hero makes himself heroic; . . . there is always a possibility for the coward to give up cowardice' (Humanism 43), a possibility he explores in works like The Wall and No Exit.

It was therefore incumbent on Jim to slough off his cowardice and turn his dreams of heroic action into a conscious project of selfhood. 'Brierly's plan of evasion' (13:118) was a shallow way out, and Jim's assertion "'I don't run away"' (13:119) was a valuable first step in the direction of fuller selfhood, the product of his 'imaginative conscience' (14:121). A first step it might have been, but in this assertion he was in fact still in bad faith, unconsciously lying to himself -- for, as Marlow tells us, Jim was indeed 'running. Absolutely running, with nowhere to go to' (13:120), 'no place where he could . . . withdraw . . . be alone in his loneliness' (15:131). Jim's desire for relief from the world was in accord with Jaspers's contention that 'Existenz warns me to detach myself from the world lest I become its prey' (Philosophy 2:5) -- world understood here as quotidian functionalism with its distractions that deny one the leisure for considered reflection. Jim needed a place 'where he could have it out with

himself without being bothered by the rest of the universe' (15:132). It would be a long time before Marlow, in his final view of him, saw Jim 'at home' in the world, 'in complete accord with his surroundings -- with the life of the forests and with the life of men' (16:135).

This was a condition of wholeness that Jim alone was able to create for himself. 'Felicity . . . ', we recall Marlow saying, 'is quaffed out of a golden cup in every latitude: the flavour is with you -- with you alone, and you can make it as intoxicating as you please' (16:135). This puts us in mind again of Sartre's assertion that 'there is no sense in life a priori . . . it is yours to make sense of' (Humanism 54). Tot homines, quot sententiae; hence the different views of various characters on Jim's conduct -- of Brierly, the French officer, Egström, Chester, Jewel, Tamb' Itam, Cornelius and Brown -- as well as the persistent note of uncertainty in Marlow's narration with its self-conscious awareness of the limitations of his speculations, its constant inclusion of ironies, and its pervasive sense of the mystery of things -- all of which roundly confute the rigidity of dogma. What eventually enabled Jim to be at one with himself and the world was his achievement of a self that recognised itself as the sole judge of worth in an otherwise meaningless universe. 'Valuation itself', insists Zarathustra (^{15:61}¼), 'is the treasure and jewel of valuated things'.

But (as Marlow so intricately recounts) Jim's hesitant journey towards selfhood was a long and anxious one, thanks to his 'fine sensibilities, his fine feelings, his fine longings. . . . A little coarser nature would not have borne the strain; it would have had to come to terms with itself -- with a sigh, a grunt, or even a guffaw; a still coarser one would have remained invulnerably ignorant and completely uninteresting' (16:136). A coarser Jim would have settled for a self indistinguishable from Heidegger's

'they'. 'No better than a vagabond' after the trial, he sought 'some sort of chance' for redemption (16:137-8), confident that there would be 'time to climb out' of his inauthentic state (16:138). Marlow clearly recognises that Jim was about to 'begin the journey towards the bottomless pit' (16:138), Nietzsche's 'abyss' of the self. In their ensuing conversation, Marlow relates, he found Jim filled with 'some mysterious, inexplicable, impalpable striving of his wounded spirit' (17:140), Kierkegaard's contention that existence is 'a constant striving' for transcendence (Postscript 85). Vague though his yearnings were, Jim was at last on the way to a fuller self -- even if he was to be thwarted for so long by elements of bad-faith flight.

Jim's main obstacle was his Patna self, resurrected each time he encountered someone with knowledge of the affair. Yet in shaping himself man has to take cognisance of and deal with his Sartrean 'contingency' with others. Individual existence, after all, occurs within the wider context of circumambient being. As we have seen, man is a 'being-in-the-world', and 'contingency is not a delusion, a probability which can be dissipated; it is the absolute' (Nausea 131). Which is why Marlow existentially considers Jim's evasion of those with knowledge of his past a 'retreat' (19:153). In engaging oneself one must also engage the world; Jim initially evaded it. 'It was pitiful', Marlow comments, 'to see how he shrank within himself. A seaman, even if a mere passenger, takes an interest in a ship, and looks at sea-life around him with the critical enjoyment of a painter, for instance, looking at another man's work. In every sense of the expression he is "on deck"; but my Jim, for the most part, skulked down below as though he had been a stowaway' (19:153) -- which underscores his sense of alienation from the world he was in; though on the ship, he did not feel himself fully part

of it.²⁶

At this stage, then, Jim lacked sovereignty over his existence, much like the early Stein, who did not carry 'his life in his hand' but 'played ball with it' (19:155). The credo of the mature Stein, however, was that one should learn "'how to live. . . . How to be!'" (20:162). To any man his own mode of being is crucial. As Kierkegaard phrases it, 'For an individual . . . existence (to be -- or not to be) is of quite decisive importance' (Journals 358). And in deciding what one wishes to be one is assailed by a welter of conflicting urges. "'We want'", says Stein, "'in so many different ways to be . . . man . . . wants to be a saint and he wants to be a devil'" (20:162).

Most men merely "'dream'" of what they desire to be: "'a man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea'" (20:163) in his Heideggerian or Sartrean condition of 'thrownness'. But the existentialist demands that dreams be turned into commitments, into conscious projects that should be actively undertaken by engaging the world, not evading it. We recall that this is very much Stein's position as well: "'to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up'" (20:163).

Stein's exhortation puts us in mind again of Nietzsche's enthusiasm for the Dionysian, which entails 'an ecstatic affirmation of the total character of life . . . the great pantheistic sharing of joy and sorrow that sanctifies and calls good even the most terrible and questionable qualities of life' (Power, 1050:539). Stein, Marlow tells us, 'had travelled very far, on various ways, on strange paths, and whatever he followed it had been without faltering, and therefore without shame and regret' (20:164). He had embraced life in all its Nietzschean complexity

and had in a practical way realised his own dictum, "'To follow the dream, and again to follow the dream -- and so -- ewig -- usque ad finem' (20:164).²⁷

Stein, thus, shared Jim's 'romantic' vein but had actualised his dreams (or a good number of them). For him, the readiness was all. "'Among other things"', Marlow reminded him, "'you dreamed foolishly of a certain butterfly; but when one fine morning your dream came in your way you did not let the splendid opportunity escape. . . . Whereas he did . . ."' Stein lifted his hand. "And do you know how many opportunities I let escape; how many dreams I had lost that had come in my way"' (20:166). Jim too lived in the possibility of one day realising his dreams. He too would eventually be able to say with Stein, "'I exist"' (20:165), in a full and authentic manner that embraces what Tillich calls 'the courage to be'.

It was Jim's very 'romanticism' that in Marlow's view endowed him with the potential for a fuller life. 'Your imaginative people swing farther in any direction, as if given a longer scope of cable in the uneasy anchorage of life' (21:171). But in Stein's view Jim would have to establish a definite commitment and then carry it out -- Camus's demand almost exactly, as C. N. Stavrou has pointed out.²⁸ "'We shall do something practical"', Stein promised Marlow: the sending of Jim to Patusan as a means of promoting that which "'by inward pain makes him know himself"' (20:165). In going to Patusan, Jim '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. . . . And he got hold of them in a remarkable way' (21:167). Like Leggatt at the end of The Secret Sharer, he was 'a free man, a proud swimmer striking out for a new destiny'.

Visiting Jim later in Patusan, Marlow found him in control of his environment at last, the creator of his condition in the world (as Sartre insists every man must be) -- even though he had never entirely shaken off the memory of the Patna: "'There is something he can never forget'", Jewel told Marlow (33:237). Yet Jim's going to Patusan in the first place had been prompted partially by the desire to escape his old self rather than face it. Marlow comments that Jim's arrival in 'a crazy dug-out' along the Patusan River 'cast the complexion of a flight upon all his acts, of impulsive unreflecting desertion -- of a jump into the unknown'; Jim still hungered for 'a refuge' (22:175). But soon his whole bearing changed, as he vowed to be "'ready for any confounded thing'" (23:179).

Marlow initially considered even such asserted resolution to be mere 'vapourings. . . . Where was the sense of such exaltation in a man appointed to be a trading-clerk. . . . Why hurl defiance at the universe?' (23:179). Yet Jim would eventually invalidate Marlow's scepticism. In his Camusian protest he would remake himself. By going to Patusan he was 'approaching greatness as genuine as any man ever achieved' (24:186).

That achievement was not, of course, easily won. No sooner had Jim reached Patusan than he was incarcerated by Rajah Tunku Allang, leading to a leap very different to that from the Patna -- over 'the north front of the stockade' which held him prisoner. "'Good leap, eh?'" he later exulted to Marlow (25:191). And then a 'second leap', over a creek to a new uncertainty, again feeling himself, like Sartre's Orestes in The Flies, 'alone, with no help, no sympathy, no pity to expect from anyone' (25:193).

'Received, in a manner of speaking, into the heart of the community' by Doramin, 'chief of the Bugis' (25:196), Jim now found something he could commit himself to, a course of action, a definite project, that would enable

him to realise his dreamed-of vision of himself as capable of 'valorous deeds'. Through the war against Sherif Ali he would finally give body to that Yeatsian 'Image, created or chosen by the Creative Mind from what Fate offers' (A Vision 128-9). His decision to embrace battle left him poised to attain a fuller existence, 'to stand out into the truth of Being', as Heidegger's 'Letter on Humanism' puts it (Basic Writings 206), poised to seize the Sartrean 'possibility for the coward to give up cowardice' and 'make himself heroic' (Humanism 43). He had discovered Kierkegaard's desired 'idea for which I can live and die' (Journals 15). "'All at once I saw what I had to do'", he told Marlow (26:198), recounting one of Sartre's 'extraordinary and marvelous instants when the prior project collapses into the past in the light of a new project which then rises on its ruins' (Nothingness 476). In Marlow's words, Jim had 'a new direction to his life' (26:201) -- a Sartrean movement towards being-for-itself.

'Thus', comments Marlow, 'he illustrated the moral effect of his victory in war. It was in truth immense. It had led him from strife to peace' (27:204), a triumph not only over Doramin's enemy but also over his Patna self. 'It was immense . . . the conquered ground for the soles of his feet, . . . the belief in himself snatched from the fire' (27:206). 'He seemed to have come very near at last to mastering his fate' (28:207) and was now 'capable of anything. He was equal to his fortune, as he -- after all -- must have been equal to his misfortune' (28:210). So Jim ended up by fashioning his own self and his own world, fighting successfully -- like MacWhirr in Typhoon -- against what seemed inexorable fate,²⁹ controverting Neville H. Newhouse's general view that in Conrad a man is what life makes him rather than the captain of his fate and master of his

soul.³⁰

In Patusan Jim was finally at peace with the self he had created, 'at home' in the world he had made for himself through his 'marital, homelike, peaceful' life with Jewel (28:210). In his subjectivism, he assigned his own value to existence; 'he had the gift of finding a special meaning in everything that happened to him' (32:229).³¹ Into this intruded the dreaded Sartrean 'others': Sherif Ali, Cornelius and Brown. Yet in spite of them Jim felt himself sovereign of his destiny in his newfound plenitude: "'Nothing can touch me!'" (30:221). He was like Nietzsche's 'great man', who -- 'in his works, in his deeds -- is necessarily a prodigal: his greatness lies in the fact that he expends himself. . . . One calls this "sacrifice"; one praises his "heroism" therein, his indifference to his own interests, his devotion to an idea, a great cause, a fatherland: all misunderstandings. . . . He flows out, he overflows, he uses himself up, he does not spare himself' (Idols 98). No longer would Jim resort to evasion: Jewel's urging him to "'Fly! . . . Fly!'" met with a brisk dismissal (31:225).

Not that Jim had found a self and situation that would have left him fulfilled once and for ever; man, after all, is constantly in a Kierkegaardian 'process of becoming'. But he had created a world in which he was 'satisfied . . . nearly' (34:244), in which he would stay until he was 'quite satisfied'^(34:245) -- until the inner call to forge yet another self. For the present his life was one of authentic being, since, if we turn again to Macquarrie's estimation, 'existence is authentic to the extent that the existent has taken possession of himself and, shall we say, has moulded himself in his own image.'³² Jim was able to assert with equanimity, "'I have lots of confidence in myself'" (34:245). Like Willems (with all his

shortcomings) in An Outcast of the Islands (1:1:3, 5), he now had an 'inward assertion of unflinching resolve', with 'an exalted sense of his duty to himself and the world at large'. In Nietzschean terms, he had become one of those men who 'invent themselves' (Zarathustra 43:157), who are true to themselves. As Marlow testifies, 'the sheer truthfulness of his last three years of life' (43:296) enabled Jim to proclaim 'daily the truth that surely lived in his heart' (45:307). Even in his dying moment he was able to cast 'a proud and unflinching glance' (45:312) at those around him as his self-made for-itself was finally claimed by the in-itself of non-conscious matter.

In Bruce Johnson's view,³³ Jim had in fact sought to be God in terms of Sartre's definition of man as 'a being which tries to become God' through the desire of the conscious for-itself simultaneously to be non-conscious in-itself. The ideal of for-itself is to be for-itself-in-itself, or what Sartre calls God, and thus 'the best way to conceive of the fundamental project of human reality [or man] is to say that man is the being whose project is to be God', or is fundamentally 'the desire to be God' (Nothingness 566). With its sense of itself as a separate individual entity, for-itself is the nihilation of being-in-itself. Consciousness introduces the notion of nothingness into the fulness of being, establishing differentiation by a feeling that everything beyond the in-itself is nothingness. Man is constantly aware of the threat of annihilation, of the fact that his consciousness might at any moment cease to exist. And 'a being is fragile,' we remember, 'if it carries in its being a definite possibility of non-being' (8).

Unlike Heidegger, then, Sartre transfers nothingness from the objective

to the subjective, to consciousness: it is ontological, present to every conscious individual in all his emotions and actions. The threat of non-being experienced by the for-itself lies not just in personal death but in the plenitude of circumambient being that threatens to overwhelm it -- and with which it therefore longs to be united, to become for-itself-in-itself.

Nietzsche too speaks of man's desire for such unity, but as an escape from 'the conception of individuation as the primal cause of evil', embodied in the ancient myth of the dismemberment of Dionysus by the Titans (Tragedy 10:74). Man's 'vast Dionysian impulse' transports him to 'the bosom of the primordially One' (22:132), to that sense of 'complete self-forgetfulness' he seeks in music, dancing and intoxication, as seen in 'the Bacchic choruses of the Greeks' (1:36) and the drunken dancing crowds of St Vitus and St John.

In Sartre's conception, however, the for-itself desires to become in-itself without surrendering its sense of self: it 'would be the foundation of its own being-in-itself by the pure consciousness which it would have of itself. It is this ideal which can be called God' (Nothingness 566). As Johnson comments, Jim wanted his divinity in a manner easily comprehended in these terms. He wanted to be part of the plenitude of being that surrounded him, just as Lingard did in The Rescue when succumbing to Mrs Travers, 'seduced away by the tense feeling of existence far superior to the mere consciousness of life', wishing to relinquish his freedom and responsibility so as to become for-itself-in-itself.³⁴

Only when Jim guaranteed beetle Brown's exit with his own life and then gave that life to Doramin did he, as Johnson remarks, take the direct path to a condition of non-conscious being-in-itself, suffering to the end the

inherent contradiction in his desire to be at once cause and caused. His own action led to his death, as is true also of Nostromo and of Lena in Victory: to Conrad, 'character is fate' -- as it was to Novalis before him and to his contemporaries Eliot and Hardy.³⁵ Yet Jim in all probability met his fate quite unaware that it flowed as a direct outcome of his being what he was . . .

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Jim's existential struggle for selfhood finds many parallels throughout Conrad's work -- most notably Razumov's equally intricate quest in Under Western Eyes. Indeed, Boris Ford considers Razumov's 'tormenting journey towards self-knowledge' to be 'the central theme of the novel'. 'Rootless and without identity, he is intent on creating a meaning for his existence, . . . confronted by individuals and forces which undermine his precarious self-sufficiency and deepen his isolation'.³⁶ Under Western Eyes, like Nostromo and The Secret Agent, is concerned foremost with individuals rather than politics or anarchism -- and all three novels provide confirmation and consolidation of the existential elements we have so far explored in Lord Jim.

As a young student Razumov aspired to nothing more than a conventional life approved of by Heidegger's 'they'. But this was not to be: Victor Haldin's confession that he had assassinated de P---- threw Razumov back on his own inner conscience, forcing him in full existential anguish to determine his own values and forge a self with which he could be 'at home' in the world. His initial step towards achieving his envisioned career of public approbation was his desire to win the university's silver medal, which he felt would gain him 'distinction' in the eyes of the world. The professor of languages who narrates the novel very much as a conventional Westerner of his time sees 'nothing wrong' in Razumov's desire, since 'a man's real life is that accorded to him in the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love' (1:1:63). We recall, though, that the professor does admit to his own 'limitations' (2:1:131) and 'the corrupt frivolity of a Western mind' (2:2:151). And much of his narrative is in turn based on Razumov's confessional journal. Again Conrad avoids an omniscient narration, implicitly supporting the existential position that no

absolute perspective is possible. Yet it is Conrad's hope in his note to the novel that the professor's vantage point will 'be useful to the reader' (note:50); Conrad stresses his value as an eye-witness and does not bring his testimony into serious question -- but the limitations of his subjectivity are none the less pointedly mentioned.

The Razumov who is shown to us thought himself set on a life that would demand little of the courage needed for the sort of authentic existence that does not permit itself to be dominated by, as Macquarrie puts it, 'external forces, . . . moral codes, political or ecclesiastical authorities, or whatever'.³⁷ But Haldin early on told him that 'there is a solidity about your character which cannot exist without courage' (1:1:64). Whether Haldin's perception was valid or not becomes a crucial concern: whether Razumov would, like Jim, pursue Tillich's 'courage to be' or slip into Kierkegaard's despised 'untruth' of 'the crowd' by seeking to escape the anxieties of a full existence through obedience to convention or through drink -- like the coachman Ziemianitch, 'a proper Russian man' unable 'to bear life . . . without the bottle' (1:2:75).

In the wake of Haldin's confession, Razumov had only his own Kierkegaardian 'inwardness' to guide him. "'I can't even run away'", he lamented; 'he had nothing', neither 'material refuge' nor 'moral refuge' (1:2:78). Even late in the novel Razumov looked upon this abandonment as 'desolation' (4:3:327) rather than as the Sartrean potential for the freedom to create oneself in one's own postulated image. Still too much the conventional public man, he 'turned to autocracy for the peace of [his] patriotic conscience. . . . Like other Russians before him, Razumov, in conflict with himself, felt the touch of peace upon his forehead' (1:2:79).

Once he had experienced the call of personal conscience, however, the values of the established order would no longer offer such peace. Already his 'conflict with himself' revealed that he had the innate potential for the terrible, but ultimately fulfilling, road to selfhood that would make him more than a mere Heideggerian 'One', an impersonal public creature existing in a state of 'fallenness'. Looking at 'the frivolous crowd' around him, he mused: "'Not one of them is capable of feeling and thinking as deeply as I can. How many of them could accomplish an act of conscience?'" (1:2:82).

Razumov's sense of self-superiority, though, was swiftly overturned when he betrayed Haldin to Prince K-- and General T--. By upholding that 'public conscience' which to Heidegger is 'the voice of the "they"' (Time 323), he had in his anguish failed to enact what Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford) considered to be the central moral in Conrad, that 'when our private and intimate honour is in conflict with the law, we must break the law', which is merely a 'conventional arrangement between man and man'.³⁸ Sartre would demand that Razumov override 'social morality' born of 'technical and social conditions' which 'render positive forms of conduct impossible'.³⁹ He would have to heed his inner imperatives, since, as we remember Kierkegaard asserting, 'it is really the conscience which constitutes a personality' (Journals 151).

That all men are volatile 'becomings' without any fixed, given essence was clear to Razumov, as we saw in the opening paragraph of this chapter: "'A man goes out of a room for a walk. . . . He comes back . . . and behold he is no longer the same man'" (1:2:99). The man in question is of course himself. Like Kierkegaard, he now realised that "'I've got to find my own ideas of the true way'" (1:2:100). And this dependence on his personal conscience placed him "'on the rack'" (1:2:103), pointedly

illustrating James Huneker's broad contention that Conrad's characters are never at rest but transform themselves as they grow in evil or wisdom.⁴⁰

The workings of Razumov's troubled mind in his dreams of abandoned aloneness reveal him as being in bad faith with himself -- which to Sartre, we recall, is what the word unconscious actually means: 'the concept of bad faith . . . should replace those of the censor, repression, and the unconscious' (Nothingness 473). Razumov's sense of his life as inauthentic consigned him to a rote, empty existence, to that alienating, 'self-entangling' quality which Heidegger perceives in such a condition (Time 223). He acted 'mechanically. An incredible dullness, a ditch-water stagnation was sensible to his perceptions as though life had withdrawn itself from all things and even from his own thoughts' (1:3:106).

The ransacking of his room by the police left him with 'a distinct sensation of his very existence being undermined in some mysterious manner, of his moral supports falling away from him one by one' (1:3:112). Tony Tanner has likened Razumov's state at this point to the kind Sartre presents in Nausea of meaningless matter appearing monstrous: 'the usual significances have drained out of the objects of the phenomenological world'.⁴¹ Viewing himself as a mere 'body', an 'unrelated organism . . . walking, breathing, wearing these clothes, . . . of no importance to anyone' (1:3:113), Razumov saw himself in Kierkegaardian terms as simply an object in a world of objects, lacking a sense of his self as fully present to itself. Were he honest with himself, Sartre would argue, he would employ this apprehension of 'himself as a thing . . . to escape the condition of a thing' (Nothingness 65), acknowledge his unworthy aspects in order to alter them. To lift himself from his fall into the mere existence of a

thing-in-itself, he would have to seek 'the true Razumov . . . in the willed, determined future' (1:3:113).

Such amomie amid preception of inauthentic existence appears again and again in Conrad. For example, the eponymous hero of Nostromo, 'awakening in solitude amongst the ruins of the fort' after his theft of Gould's silver, had a 'confused feeling . . . which made everything that had gone before for years appear vain and foolish, like a flattering dream come suddenly to an end' (3:8:348, 349). All at once he saw that his life hitherto had simply been that of a useful object in the service of exploiters. He felt utterly 'destitute', filled with 'loneliness, abandonment, and failure' (3:8:350).

His earlier anticipation of public praise, 'his own peculiar view' of the silver escapade's merit (2:7:233), had dwindled to nought. Now 'the Capataz de Cargadores, on a revulsion of subjectiveness, . . . beheld his world without faith and courage' (3:8:351), with 'the dazed feeling of enlightenment as to being done for, of having inadvertently gone out of his existence on an issue in which his personality had not been taken into account' (3:8:353). Through an action undertaken in Sartrean bad faith, he had fallen into inauthentic being.

This sense of malaise persisted during his meeting with Dr Monygham in the Custom House, produced by what Nostromo perceived as his betrayal, which 'floated upon his sombre indifference as upon a sluggish sea of pitch' (3:8:358). With full existential anguish, he looked on himself as "'nothing!'" (3:9:380). 'His courage, his magnificence, his leisure, his work, everything was as before, only everything was a sham' (3:12:432). Alienated from all that had once sustained him, he now experienced the world through an altered consciousness. Familiar objects appeared different:

'silent in inhospitable darkness, the Casa Viola seemed to have changed its nature; his home appeared to repel him. . . . His head swam with the illusion that the obscurity of the kitchen was as vast as the Placid Gulf, and that the floor dipped forward like a sinking lighter' (3:9:388, 389).

Martin Decoud too felt his world to be alien and meaningless when he 'found himself solitary on the beach' of the Great Isabel (2:8:262), in a solitude that led to an untenable perception of his own self and the oppressiveness of Heidegger's non-human existentia -- a feeling that resulted, as Martin Seymour-Smith comments, in Decoud's failure to achieve his fully individual, unique existence.⁴² Kierkegaard's imperative 'to understand myself' (Journals 15) and Heidegger's 'clearing-away of concealments and obscurities, [the] breaking up of the disguises with which Dasein bars its own way' (Time 167), can spell devastation for the individual who is unable to surmount such disclosures through Camusian revolt against them. 'The brilliant "son Decoud" . . . was not fit to grapple with himself single-handed' (3:10:413).

Winnie Verloc in The Secret Agent also chose suicide in the face of solitude and penetrating insight. Prior to her galvanising discovery that her husband had caused Stevie's death, she had 'wasted no portion of this transient life in seeking for fundamental information' (8:167). Instead, she 'trusted in 'that distant and uninquiring acceptance of facts which was her force and her safeguard in life' (8:155). 'She felt profoundly that things do not stand much looking into' (8:172).

Though such superficiality condemned her to a rote existence and was an obstacle to the attainment of full selfhood, the narrator agrees with Nietzsche in commenting that 'it may be good for one not to know too much'

(8:167), since only a strong soul can overcome a penetrating knowledge of the self and the world. Yet a shallow vision relegates one to inauthenticity, according 'very well with constitutional indolence' (8:167) of the kind that her husband was also prone to. Stevie, however, for all his limitations, was not satisfied with surface explanations. 'Unlike his sister, who put her trust in face values, he wished to go to the bottom of the matter' as to why there was pretence in the world (8:169). He revealed to Winnie 'what there was of the salt of passion in her tasteless life -- the passion of indignation, of courage, of pity, and even of self-sacrifice' (8:170).

With Stevie's death and Winnie's murder of Verloc, her self that had 'always refrained from looking deep into things' disappeared, and she now stared 'into the very bottom' of her deed (12:237) -- only to see the gallows, the terrible price of her independent individualism. She was, in the Sartrean sense, 'alone, without excuse' (Humanism 34), 'the most lonely of murderers that ever struck a mortal blow' (12:240). Unable to engage the terrible freedom of her new self and the responsibility it carried, she surrendered it to Ossipon in a fresh flight from self to the Continent -- a flight that ended with her jump into the Channel, the final sign of her failure to overcome her 'terror and despair' (13:267).

Decoud, similarly removed from the 'they' who had supported his inauthentic existence even as they heightened his alienation, 'died from solitude and want of faith in himself and others' (3:10:412), unable to bear the weight of finding himself alone in an indifferent universe. 'After three days of waiting for the sight of some human face, he caught himself entertaining a doubt of his own individuality' (3:10:413). That consciousness which constitutes the very basis of individuality and without

which, in Camus's view, 'nothing is worth anything' (Sisyphus 19), was assaulted by the brute non-conscious world that enveloped him.

Aboard the lighter, with the Heideggerian sense of being 'thrown . . . into a dark gulf', he had longed to merge with the in-itself of the sea, imagining the boat 'sinking to the bottom with an extraordinary shudder of delight' (2:7:234). Again we see a Conradian figure in what approximates to a Sartrean desire to be God, to be sheer in-itself while retaining the conscious experience of for-itself. Now, unable to overcome the despair of abandonment, he simply surrendered himself to annihilation by oppressive being-in-itself. Mortally shot by his own hand and weighed down by the four silver ingots in his pockets, he rolled out of the dinghy into 'the Placid Gulf, whose glittering surface remained untroubled by the fall of his body' (3:10:416). 'A victim of . . . disillusioned weariness', his individuality 'merged into the world of cloud and water, of natural forces and forms of nature' (3:10:413).

At face value, Conrad seems at this point to be bleaker even than Sartre and Camus, who overtly counsel revolt amid the full realisation that all existence is absurd. Implicitly, though, and by his accumulated depictions of the value of 'activity' (Sartre's notion that we are the sum of our actions), Conrad shows the need to transcend the disturbing apprehensions that attend a profound Nietzschean stare into the heart of things. Decoud, however, bereft of his sense of individual selfhood, sank passively into the in-itself, with just 'the vague consciousness of a misdirected life given up to impulses whose memory left a bitter taste in his mouth . . . the first moral sentiment of his manhood' (3:10:413).

Similar 'detachment' (2:70) and 'lassitude' (3:83) associated with

inauthentic being attended Adolf Verloc in The Secret Agent, prompted in his case by Vladimir's demand for 'activity' (2:59), which 'menaced' what was 'dearest to him -- his repose and his security'^(3:81). As a result, 'Mr Verloc descended into the abyss of moral reflections' (3:81), his existential angst unsettling the even tenor of his vapid life as he wrestled to establish what his true imperatives were. 'The instinct of conventional respectability was strong within him' (3:81-2), and Vladimir's demand for 'bomb throwing' (3:81) bore down on him as an external force.

Indeed, the pressure of all circumambient being bore down on him, much as in the case of Sartre's Roquentin in Nausea (131), who feels that 'no necessary being can explain existence. . . . All is free [gratuitous], this park, this city and myself. When you realize that, it turns your heart upside down and everything beings to float . . .: here is Nausea'. Roquentin experiences this disgust as a force from outside himself: 'the Nausea is not inside me: I feel it out there in the wall' (19). The plenitude conveyed by encircling being is something felt: 'existence is not something which lets itself be thought of from a distance: it must invade you suddenly, master you, weigh heavily on your heart like a great motionless beast' (132).

Verloc, looking outside at 'the enormity of cold, black, wet, muddy, inhospitable accumulation of bricks, slates, and stones, things in themselves unlovely and unfriendly to man . . . felt the latent unfriendliness of all out of doors with a force approaching to positive bodily anguish' (3:84). It was a 'luminous and mutilated vision' of the 'gratuity' of the world, 'ghastly physically' (3:84). Everything suddenly seemed strange and absurd to him, a Sartrean world that had no reason behind it. In fact, as Paul Goetsch points out, the basic experience of all the

main characters in The Secret Agent is of a world become absurd.⁴³

The nihilistic Professor too experienced the alienating force of a once familiar world weighing down on him. 'All around him, on and on, even to the limits of the horizon hidden by the enormous piles of bricks, he felt the mass of mankind mighty in its numbers. They swarmed numerous like locusts, industrious like ants, thoughtless like a natural force' (5:103). Like Verloc and Sartre's Roquentin, he physically felt the oppressive plenitude of encircling being. 'Lost in the crowd', his only sense of his individual power lay in his ability to cause his own death through the india-rubber detonator that was 'the supreme guarantee of his sinister freedom' from the 'they' (5:102). Encountering Chief Inspector Heat (with 'his blameless bosom of an average married citizen' [6:132]), and learning of the observatory bombing, the Professor again considered himself merely 'a miserable object' in the world; 'life had such a strong hold upon him that a fresh wave of nausea broke out in slight perspiration upon his brow' (5:112). 'The resisting power of numbers, the unattackable solidity of a great multitude, was the haunting fear of his sinister loneliness' (5:113).

Such an apprehension descended also on the Assistant Commissioner, the dehumanising quality of whose inauthentic life is suggested by the fact that he is always referred to by his title, never by name. 'No man engaged in work he does not like can preserve many saving illusions about himself. The distaste, the absence of glamour, extend from the occupation to the personality' (6:125). 'A square peg forced into a round hole, he had felt like a daily outrage that long-established smooth roundness into which a man of less sharply angular shape would have fitted himself', and he compelled himself to adopt a Sartrean bad-faith manner of 'forced calmness' to conceal

his constant 'irritation' (6:126). He too experienced the outside world as the 'great motionless beast' of Sartre's Nausea (132): 'the van and horses, merged into one mass, seemed something alive -- a square-backed black monster'; the 'barrier of blazing lights, opposing the shadows gathered about the humble abode of Mr Verloc's domestic happiness, seemed to drive the obscenity of the street back upon itself, make it more sullen, brooding, and sinister' (7:153).

Razumov, afflicted by similar revulsion at meaningless existentia in Under Western Eyes, none the less resolved, in 'a mood of grim determination and as if with a new knowledge of his own nature' (1:3:114), to forge a new self to replace the existence Haldin had destroyed, 'the only thing he could call his own on this earth' (1:3:117). Again we are reminded of the existential 'mineness' of personal being, what Conrad's older contemporary Hopkins called 'that inmost self of mine', his own individual 'thisness' (or 'haecceity', derived from John Duns Scotus's use of haecceitas to indicate an individuality finer than specific quidditas, or 'whatness', an individuality Hopkins connotes in his term inscape). As we recall Jaspers contending, one's identity rests only on oneself (cf. Philosophy 2:3ff.). And, says Kierkegaard, 'no one whatsoever is prevented from being an individual unless he prevents himself -- by becoming one of the masses' (Journals 179).

This resonates in the comment of Haldin's sister, Natalia, that "'it is a very miserable and a very false thing to belong to the majority'" (2:1:136) -- Kierkegaard's contention that 'the crowd is untruth', which puts one in mind also of Heidegger's view that surrender to the impersonal 'they' brings a falling into the empty abyss of the inauthentic and the commonplace (Time 166). Victor Haldin, heeding his own conscience, had

defied the establishment and 'done what he was compelled to do' (2:1:143), fashioning for himself one of those 'unstained, lofty, and solitary existences' (2:1:158) he had considered Razumov to have. Natalia too had been 'suspected of holding independent views on matters settled by official teaching' (2:3:161), thereby standing out from the crowd in existential existence and earning 'a reputation of liberalism'.

Natalia was not one to be cowed by the world: even though she found the Château Borel and its revolutionaries 'intimidating', she 'did not run away' (2:4:166) -- and so encountered Tekla, the reified dame de compagnie and secretary to Madame Eleanor de S----- and Peter Ivanovitch, who had 'destroyed' her 'illusions' and reduced her to believing herself a mere object, 'the blind instrument of higher ends'^(2:4:169). Tekla is always referred to in terms of her function, as if she had no personal name, a cruel situation for someone who had rejected her previous self in search of fuller selfhood by leaving her parents "'directly I began to think by myself'" (2:4:169). This upholds Heidegger's demand that each man learn to think independently and live accordingly; or, as Sartre says, the self 'must assume [a] situation with the proud consciousness of being the author of it' (Nothingness 554). This is exactly what Tekla later did when resolving to follow Razumov, in an attempt to overcome an existence that had put her on a par with "'tables and chairs'" in a household where "'no one is told my name. . . . I have no use for a name, and I have almost forgotten it myself'" (3:2:236).

Her condition was much like that of Mrs Schomberg in Victory, who was also reduced by others to the status of an object: 'one was inclined to think of her as an It -- an automaton' (1:5:46), the dreaded condition of

'functional man' that Marcel attacks in Man against Mass Society. Unlike Tekla, however, Mrs Schomberg failed to rebel against her condition. Instead, she resigned herself to 'concealing her tortures of abject humiliation and terror under her stupid, set, everlasting grin, . . . an excellent mask' (2:3:90), submitting to the brutal tyranny of her husband, Wilhelm, with his 'moral weakness' (2:3:91) and his 'want of courage' (2:5:97) to take action that would have overcome his attitude of caring for 'nothing', of seeing life as 'a hollow sham' (2:5:99).

Tekla, on the other hand, at last 'found work to do after her own heart' (4:4:341) by making the crippled Razumov the focus of her care. Though Razumov was left a deaf invalid, he did finally achieve a self that brought him a sense of personal worth by openly proclaiming his true colours -- but not before an agonised period of 'weary indifference' (2:5:202). His 'secret dialogue' with himself persisted (3:1:207), plunging him 'into the depth' that in Nietzsche's view comes when the 'I and me' of Laing's divided self 'are always too earnestly in conversation' (Zarathustra 14:57). The thought of meeting Natalia 'tempted' Razumov 'to flight', but he knew that 'he had no place to fly to'; leaving Geneva 'would have been a fatal admission, an act of moral suicide' (3:1:212). 'One could not renounce truth altogether, he thought, with despair' (3:1:215).

The self-analysis contained in Razumov's 'memorandum' testifies to this search for personal truth through his heightened consciousness, which, says Sartre, is the hallmark of a being that questions its own being. With Nietzschean self-division Razumov 'felt . . . as though another self, an independent sharer of his mind, had been able to view his whole person very distinctly indeed' (3:2:232). And he resolved to fight the 'disgust' this self-division engendered, seeing in 'moral resistance' -- obedience to

personal conscience -- his sole hope of overcoming the forces that beset him (3:2:232). Later, in conversation with the revolutionary Sophia Antonovna through the bars of the château gate, he reminded himself that 'the only condition of success and safety was indomitable will-power' (3:3:247); once more we recall Sartre's insistence that the self has to will its own chosen condition in the world.

The Sartrean 'weight of the world' (Nothingness 555), however, left Razumov 'inexpressibly weary' (3:3:246), bereft as he was of any long-term commitment. 'He longed to be on the other side of the bars, as though he were a prisoner within the grounds of this . . . house of folly' (3:3:247) and thus free from the responsibility of acting on the call of his conscience. But though he longed for escape from the inauthenticity of 'playing a part' (3:3:249), escape from his present self, he feared that he would 'never be found prepared' (3:3:250).

Whatever Razumov's inner sensations, Sophia Antonovna considered him 'a man of character' (3:3:246), whose supposed actions lifted him above the "'shameful'" life, "'the subservient, submissive life. . . . Life, Razumov, not to be vile must be a revolt -- a pitiless protest -- all the time"' (3:3:256). Antonovna's shortcomings aside, her sentiment here accords well with Camus's assertion in The Rebel (100) that the individual's 'protest' at the meaninglessness of the world will carry him beyond absurdity and the spectre of annihilation. 'Human insurrection' is 'a prolonged protest against death'. Camus of course speaks of revolt as applied in a personal sense; he advocates not licentious revolution but 'a rebellion moderated by equilibrium and guaranteed in its moderation by the supreme relativiser, death'.⁴⁴ Rebellion, he argues, entails man's 'refusal to be treated as an

object' (250), his assertion of personal being that saves him from being what Antonovna termed "'vegetation on the filthy heap of iniquity which the world is"' (3:3:256). And in Razumov she perceived "'an immense force of revolt"' (3:3:256) -- an intimation of his potential for eventual self-overcoming.

Needless to say, Razumov did not share her view that impersonal revolutionary action can change 'this world of men' (3:3:256). To him, 'she was the true spirit of destructive revolution' (3:3:257), that 'species anarchistica within the educated proletariat' which Nietzsche condemns (Morals 3:26:157). Yet Conrad, faithful to his depiction of the world as informed with ironies and ambiguities, has the professor of languages present Antonovna as an arresting figure with her 'white hair . . . a testimony to the invincible vigour of revolt . . . , the unwrinkled face, the brilliant black glance, the upright compact figure, the simple, brisk self-possession of the mature personality' (3:3:258) -- personal attributes that Nietzsche would not find morally unattractive.

Conrad depicts similar ambiguities in the Professor of The Secret Agent, who is presented as being wholly at one with his nihilistic attitude. During his meeting with Ossipon in the basement of the Silenus Restaurant, he drank his beer with 'firmness, an assured precision . . . calm . . . self-confident' (4:89, 90, 91). Those around him he condemned as "'inferior. . . . Their character is built upon conventional morality. It leans on the social order. Mine stands free from everything artificial"' (4:93). "'I've the grit to work alone, quite alone, absolutely alone"' (4:94). 'Individualist by temperament', he had had the Sartrean strength to find his own truths that opposed those of his Christian father with his confidence 'in the privilege of his righteousness' (4:102). The Professor

had come to look on 'the true nature of the world' as entailing a morality that was 'artificial, corrupt and blasphemous' (5:102) and had accordingly resolved with fanaticism to destroy the 'established social order' -- but, crucially, without any responsible concern for establishing new values in place of those he wished to overthrow. In this he and the band of anarchists are given a negative cast by Conrad, who displays similar antipathy to Mr X in 'The Informer'. As Jocelyn Baines has observed,⁴⁵ X is thoroughly cynical and callous, traitrously content to continue his luxurious living and cling to his bronzes and china. He is utterly lacking in genuine commitment.

Antonovna in Under Western Eyes is presented in less damning hues. Looking at her, Razumov 'reflected that a revolutionist is seldom true to the settled type. All revolt is the expression of strong individualism' (3:3:258). In her brand of rebellion Antonovna had found what was true for her. She knew that 'no one is born an active revolutionist. The change comes disturbingly, with the force of a sudden vocation, bringing in its train agonizing doubts, assertive violences, an unstable state of the soul, till the final appeasement of the convert in the perfect fierceness of conviction' (3:4:262-3). Though Razumov's perceptions point ultimately to the perils of fanaticism, there is much here that the existentialist would endorse. We recall Sartre's assertion that 'existence precedes essence', that 'man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world -- and defines himself afterwards' (Humanism 28). He wrestles with the Kierkegaardian problem of what he is to do, of finding a truth that is true for him (Journals 15), and in one of Sartre's 'extraordinary and marvelous instants' embraces 'a new project . . . in which humiliation, anguish,

joy hope are delicately blended' (Nothingness 476), entailing Heideggerian 'resoluteness which is ready for anxiety' (Time 443).

The existential concern with the quest for selfhood is raised again overtly by the professor of languages towards the end of his narration when he returns to Councillor Mikulin's 'simple question "Where to?" on which we left Mr Razumov in St Petersburg. . . . "Where to?" was the answer in the form of a gentle question to what we may call Mr Razumov's declaration of independence' (4:1:281). Razumov's new situation, as we have seen, plunged him into the anxiety of the Kierkegaardian problem of deciding what action to take, of finding his own truths, and 'the consciousness of his position presented itself to him as something so ugly, dangerous, and absurd' (4:1:284). In moments of Sartrean bad faith he dreamily sought escape from the problem of defining himself, imagining 'himself to be existing languidly somewhere very far away from everything that had ever happened to him' (4:1:286).

But the demands of conscience -- the call of one's deepest imperatives that bespeak authenticity -- dogged him remorselessly, and 'whenever he went abroad he felt himself at once closely involved in the moral consequences of his act' (4:1:286). Oppressed by Kierkegaard's 'crowd', by 'the conversational, commonplace, unavoidable intercourse with the other kind of students' (4:1:286), he found no 'retreat' from facing the self that he felt 'no longer belonged to himself' (4:1:287); 'his existence was a great cold blank' (4:1:289).

Associated with the call of conscience was Haldin's haunting presence, which Razumov constantly strove to shake off, rather like Dr Monygham in Nostramo, who -- 'the slave of a ghost' (3:4:318) -- sought to evade the spectre of his dead inquisitor, Father Berón. Indeed, the professor

describes Razumov's overwhelming desire to cut short his visit to Haldin's mother as 'frankly a flight' (4:3:318). Such bad-faith evasion, however, can never bring inner peace: even if one flees the external source of anxiety one is thrown back on one's secret 'inwardness'. And so Razumov found his 'retreat cut off' by Natalia (4:3:318), whose self-deceiving picture of him fuelled afresh his self-disgust. But in one of Sartre's 'marvelous instants' he suddenly fell silent before her, as if providing 'a sign of momentous resolution' (4:3:325), the by now familiar Heideggerian 'resoluteness' that betokens 'the loyalty of existence to its own Self' (Time 443). Razumov was clearly about to embark on authentic existence by confessing to Natalia the truth about himself, thereby overcoming himself and opening himself to the creation of a self with which he could be at one.

His admitting to his role in her brother's death may have devastated Natalia, but it left Razumov 'washed clean' (4:4:330), a spiritual cleansing symbolised by the 'heavy shower' that drenched him on his walk home (4:4:329). His words addressed to her in his confessional journal reveal his realisation that endless evasion would never have brought him inner peace: "'While shunning the sight of you, I could never succeed in driving away your image. . . . You were appointed to undo the evil by making me betray myself back into truth and peace"' (4:4:331). His words acknowledge that he had "'embraced the might of falsehood"' (4:4:332), both towards others and himself, until "'the truth shining in you drew the truth out of me. . . . In giving Victor Haldin up, it was myself, after all, whom I have betrayed most basely"' (4:4:333).

Not that Razumov's new self would make him one of the revolutionary 'crowd'. "'Have I then the soul of a slave? No! I am independent"'

(4:4:333). With this newly won self-sufficiency he felt himself able publicly to reveal his part in the Haldin affair and to declare: "'Today I made myself free from falsehood, from remorse -- independent of every single human being on this earth"' (4:4:338). The professor was ironically correct when he had 'felt a strange certitude that Mr Razumov was going home' as he saw him leaving the chateau (4:2:305); Razumov, again like Jim, was indeed finally to be 'at home' in the world.

His long quest for sovereign individuality had taken him on a terrible journey, which ended with Nikita's enraged blows that left him deaf and unable to hear the tramcar which crippled him. But he had won inner peace for himself, and had also provided a means for Tekla's self-fulfilment. And not only hers: Natalia too was transformed by his revelations. She 'looked matured by her open and secret experiences . . . ', the professor records, 'talking slowly, smooth-browed, with a resolute profile. She gave me a new view of herself. . . . It was the perfection of collected independence. The strength of her nature had come to surface because the obscure depths had been stirred' (4:5:342).

This was also the case with Winnie Verloc in The Secret Agent when she discovered that Verloc had caused the death of her brother, had reduced him to 'raw material for a cannibal feast' (4:106). It released her inner energies, as if she were 'ready to tear off violently' the 'mask' she had been wearing (9:198) -- much like the 'mask' Mrs Schomberg in Victory (2:3:90) never managed to discard. Winnie's changed consciousness (and the mind, says the narrator, is capable of 'altering even the aspect of inanimate things' [11:225]), perceived her husband in a new light, and she finally acknowledged to herself that her bargain with him was over. She was suddenly 'clear sighted', in 'almost preternaturally perfect control of

every fibre of her body. It was all her own', no longer Verloc's sexual object (11:233). Amid her self-assertion she struck the death blow of the man who had reduced her to inauthentic being -- only to lapse into Sartrean evasion both of the new self she had become and of the trickle of blood, the emblem of her deed, that seemed 'the first sign of a destroying flood' (11:236). Yet she had for a brief spell broken the grip of bland inauthenticity to experience the disturbing, invigorating fulness of authentic selfhood.

Such self-sufficiency -- almost just as short lived -- was also the ultimate hallmark of Lena and Heyst in Victory. But, as with Jim and Razumov, it was won only after a long struggle against the forces of inauthentic being. The initial picture we get of Heyst is of his 'inertia', at which the narrator and his colleagues who were flung 'out there' used to laugh, though 'not inimically. An inert body can do no harm to anyone, provokes no hostility, is scarcely worth derision' (1:1:19). In short, Axel Heyst had become little better than the inanimate world of in-itself around him.

In this he was somewhat like Adolf Verloc, who is described as 'constitutionally averse from every superfluous exertion . . . lazy, undemonstrative and burly in a fat-pig style' (2:52), his 'mission in life' being 'the protection of the social mechanism' (2:53-4). He was simply a Heideggerian 'One', the nondescript creature is of us is before he is a true 'I', the mere existent who has been 'surrendered' to the 'inauthenticity' of the 'they' (Time 166).

Not surprisingly, then, Vladimir's demand for action required of him as an agent provocateur filled Verloc with the Kierkegaardian 'fear and

trembling' that accompanies the threshold of any important undertaking. He felt 'startled and alarmed', agitated even 'by the faint buzzing of a fly': 'the useless fussing of that tiny, energetic organism affected unpleasantly this big man threatened in his indolence' (2:62). Rather than protest against Vladimir's command in obedience to his own inner preferences, Verloc embarked on action that constituted bad faith to himself, just as he lived his domestic life in bad faith with Winnie and Stevie. He was constrained to action by external forces, like the title character of 'The Anarchist' who, as Edward W. Said comments,⁴⁶ acted simply as the person he had been told to become, without examining the real basis of his existence.

In Victory, however, Heyst eventually embarked on action of his own choosing, overcoming the pose of detachment he had foisted on himself in bad faith at his father's injunction when the younger man had made the misguided decision to 'drift altogether and literally, body and soul', as his 'defence against life' (2:3:87). He 'was not a hermit by temperament', and some inner call finally drew him out of his 'retreat' (1:1:40). Given various identities by others -- 'Enchanted Heyst', 'Hard Facts' (1:1:22), 'Hermit' (1:4:39) -- he would existentially have to propose and realise his own identity, his own image of self.

Heyst's first step in his Sartrean 'project' towards his possibilities was his taking Lena away with him, that 'plunge' (2:2:76) which landed them without any support from conventional morality in their dependence on themselves alone for guidance, 'face to face in a moral desert as arid as the sands of Sahara' (2:2:78). But even in his new life with her 'there still lingered in him a sense of incompleteness not altogether overcome -- which, it seemed, nothing ever would overcome' (3:4:179). Man, after all, is ever 'in process of becoming'. To Heyst, his sense of being 'uprooted'

seemed 'an unnatural state of existence' (3:5:182); to Sartre, it is in fact the very condition of man, who is nothing till he fashions a meaning for himself. Heyst struggled still to flee the ghost of his father, who had disparaged love and had counselled detachment as a mode of escape from his existential vision of 'universal nothingness' (3:5:184), the opposite of Stein's urging Jim to engage the 'destructive element' (20:163).

That element is of course given its vilest embodiment in Jones, Ricardo and Pedro, who produced in Heyst the disturbing awareness that his present self would not suffice to deal with them. 'The outer world had broken upon him' (3:9:212), and he would have to grapple with it. But "'how is one to . . . resist, assert oneself . . . ?'" (4:8:282). The answer, it appears, is to follow one's own inner imperatives, even if they lead ultimately to self-destruction in physical terms: Lena's death was a victory because it came in the fulness of authentic being. Her existence prior to her meeting Heyst had plainly been inauthentic, subject to 'the sordid conditions and brutal incidents' that came with touring as a member of the Zangiacomos' ladies' orchestra, among women who were often 'anything but musicians by profession' (1:5:45). Reduced to an object (whom Mrs Zangiacomo had no compunction about pinching), she had not taken charge of her life until her deliberate decision to elope with Heyst, choosing to let him give her a new name, the identity of a new self that would no longer pass as Magdalen (with its connotations of prostitution) or Alma (with its associations -- like Nostromo -- of 'ours', our possession, or of an Egyptian dancing girl viewed as a sexual object).

Her love for Heyst provided her with a greater sense of personal authenticity, just as Dr Monygham's love for Emilia Gould in Nostromo

heightened his existence. Hitherto the doctor had led a life that had left him with a 'withered soul' after 'many arid years' until he found himself 'refreshed' by his love for Emilia (3:4:315) -- a love that spurred him to redeem his past life, as Antonia Avellanos's love might have redeemed Martin Decoud's life had his decision to take part in the removal of the silver not landed him in untenable isolation on the Great Isabel. Monygham felt himself an 'outcast spirit' estranged from the 'respectable people' around around him (3:4:316) and had once longed for death at the hands of the captors who had crippled his ankles but had released him, maimed and bedraggled, 'to take possession of his liberty' (3:4:319). He purposefully used this liberty to make for himself 'an ideal conception of his disgrace' (3:4:319), settling the 'great fund of loyalty' in his nature on Emilia (3:4:320). She, of course, did not reciprocate his affection but, chaining herself to her husband and the San Tomé mine, succumbed to 'an immense desolation, the dread of her own continued life' (3:11:431). Rather than act to alter her inauthentic condition she merely 'sighed without opening her eyes -- without moving at all' (3:11:430). Thus, in spite of her potential to do so, she failed to achieve an authentic existence -- even though Lois A. Michel would claim the contrary.⁴⁷

Through devotion to what mattered most to him Monygham eventually gained a sense of 'self-respect' that 'was marked inwardly by the almost complete disappearance from his dreams of Father Berón' (3:11:420). Free at last of the ghost that was so looming a part of the self he had desperately sought to overcome, he achieved a fuller sense of selfhood that gave authenticity to his existence through fidelity to the devotion that sprang from 'the truth of his nature'^(3:11:430).

Lena's similar loyalty to Heyst in Victory brought her, too, a new

sense of self, so that she at last felt free of the 'they' who had been 'too many' for her (2:2:75), transported to a realm where there was no one to 'think anything' of her and Heyst, 'good or bad' (3:3:160), where their own existentially formulated values could prevail. Having chosen to base her new identity so firmly on Heyst's love, she was deeply troubled 'with the sensation of having been abandoned to her own devices' when she woke from her 'painful dream of separation' from him (3:9:206). Ricardo became the unwitting instrument that helped her overcome this disturbing apprehension of Sartrean abandonment by prompting her to affirm Heyst as her *raison d'être*, her means to finding value in her own existence as an individual who mattered -- even though Ricardo and Jones seemed to her 'a sort of retribution from an angry Heaven' for her having transgressed the conventional morality of the masses by choosing to live with Heyst 'of her own free will, with her whole soul yearning unlawfully' (4:8:285).

Despite these assaults of public conscience on her private conscience, however, Lena had through her own sovereign self freed herself from her former life, and she now determined to surmount even Heaven's ^{supposed} instrument, drawing sustenance from her love for Heyst. And so the former 'fiddle-scraping girl picked up on the very threshold of infamy' now resolved to 'try to rise above herself, triumphant and humble; and then her happiness would burst on her like a torrent, flinging at her feet the man whom she loved' (4:8:284) in the joy that comes with Nietzschean self-fulfilment, when one treats oneself with 'a wholesome and healthy love' and stops 'roving about' (Zarathustra 55:2:214). Whether or not she agreed with Ricardo's Heideggerian sentiment that they had both "'been chucked out into this rotten world of 'ypocrits'" (4:2:242), she was determined to use

her abandonment in a Jaspersian way that would bring self-fulfilment, even if it involved apparent self-sacrifice.

She was fully resolved to use Ricardo's own knife on him -- and would have, had Jones's bullet intended for Ricardo not struck her. Her death might have been unintentional, but it was a wholly plausible outcome of her decision to resist the intruders from the outside world. Her dying moments filled her with a 'triumphant expression' and 'wild joy' (4:13:322), the exultation of being herself -- like those whom Yeats lauds for having 'become the joy that is themselves' ('Discoveries', Essays and Introductions, 217). Her glory, Heyst told her, lay 'in your resourcefulness and your profound knowledge of yourself' (4:13:322).

The melodramatic Martin Ricardo and 'plain Mr Jones' achieved no such glorious authenticity. Though they may have boasted of their evilness as proof of their independence from conventional morality, Sartre would deem this mere bad faith, a flight from reality. 'The sincere man constitutes himself as a thing in order to escape the condition of a thing. . . . The man who confesses that he is evil has exchanged his disturbing "freedom-for-evil" for an inanimate character of evil; he is evil, he clings to himself, he is what he is' (Nothingness 65).

Ricardo's and Jones's treatment of Pedro their factotum (who is always depicted in animal imagery)⁴⁸ as a base object immediately classifies them by Heidegger's standards as inauthentic, much in the way this attitude condemns so many characters in The Secret Agent. Verloc was regarded by Vladimir as merely a 'useful' instrument, which is exactly how he was seen by Chief Inspector Heat and the Assistant Commissioner, to whom he was simply a 'tool' (7:145). The main characteristic of Verloc's being was clearly that of Marcellian 'functionalism'. He in turn treated Winnie 'with

the regard one has for one's chief possession' (8:174), and dealt with Stevie too as a thing, calling him to his fatal expedition as if he were inviting 'the attendance of the household dog' (9:179).

There was not, however, any deliberate malice in Verloc's reification of others, whereas Jones and Ricardo actively considered people as simply 'samples of intensely artless, helpless humanity' (2:6:106), and Jones's misogyny very likely derived in part from his consideration of women as mere objects for whom he had no sexual use.⁴⁹ Ricardo similarly reduced Lena to the condition of a thing, lustfully regarding her as 'no meat for the likes of that tame, respectable gin-slinger' Heyst (4:3:244). Though Ricardo and Jones may not have been 'tame', in Schomberg's plausible estimation they were none the less simply common thieves (3:7:118).

Viewing the world as they did, they eagerly embraced the tale of Heyst's 'plunder' (2:8:135) offered by Schomberg, who 'believed . . . firmly in the reality of Heyst as created by his own power of false inferences' (2:8:139). Ricardo pursued the 'truth' of this tale 'in the manner of men of sounder morality and purer intentions than his own; that is, he pursued it in the light of his own experiences and prejudices', as existentialists contend all men do. 'For facts . . . can be only tested by our own particular suspicions' (2:8:135). Even Lena had at first believed Schomberg's 'outside' version (3:4:175) of Heyst's dealings with Morrison, until Heyst reminded her of the dubious 'value of human judgement' (3:4:176). As we have seen the narrator remark, 'There is a quality in events which is apprehended differently by different minds or even by the same mind at different times' (3:8:205). Though Jones later came to doubt 'the Schombergian theory of Heyst' (3:10:216), to Ricardo it had become 'a

profound conviction. . . . His patron's doubts were a wanton denying of what was self-evident' (3:10:217). In truth, of course, it was self-evident only from Ricardo's perspective.

Conrad's works constantly point to such subjectivity. We remember that in The Secret Agent Verloc felt he inhabited the 'solitude of a vast and hopeless desert', which was how his 'mental vision' perceived 'this fair earth, our common inheritance' (8:174). Not for him the benign view of things enjoyed by the Dickensian Sir Ethelred's secretary, Toodles, who blandly considered 'this earth . . . to be a nice place to live on' (10:201). In Nostromo, from Teresa Viola's perspective her request for a priest was a crucial matter; to Nostromo, it was an old woman's idiosyncrasy. "'Women'", her husband Giorgio had commented, "'have their own ways of tormenting themselves'" (2:7:223). Likewise, Nostromo too brooded on things from his own subjective point of view. 'With admirable and human consistency he referred everything to himself', interpreting the owl's cry he heard on waking after his long swim as a portent of Teresa's death and 'a fitting welcome for his betrayed individuality' (3:8:352), betrayed not by others as he surmised but -- as with Razumov -- by himself.

Ricardo similarly deceived himself in his belief that he was not merely Jones's lackey. "'I follow a gentleman. That ain't the same thing as to serve an employer. They give you wages as they'd fling a bone to a dog'" (3:7:127), he declared in an echo of old Giorgio, in whose estimation 'the rich in general' reduced the poor to an inauthentic existence, keeping them 'as they kept dogs, to fight and hunt for their service' (3:8:349). Jones's final treatment of his 'secretary' (tinged no doubt with sexual jealousy) revealed that Ricardo in fact meant no more to him than did any other object. Like Ricardo, Jones 'cared for no one, friend or enemy' (4:6:271).

To him Ricardo was scarcely an individual in his his own right, being merely 'of the faithful-retainer class -- absolutely identified with all my ideas, wishes, and even whims' (4:11:304).

Ricardo's claims to the contrary suggest his deep-seated insecurity. He was not self-possessed. He dreaded the 'damaging' effect of failure 'upon his own appreciation of Martin Ricardo' (3:10:213) and could not brook Jones's opinion of Heyst as "'a very self-possessed man.

"Ay, that's it. Self --" Ricardo choked with indignation. "I would soon let out some of his self-possession through a hole between his ribs" (3:10:216). This response, and his bravado, mark Ricardo as labouring under an inferiority complex, a mark of inauthenticity but still in Sartre's view a free project of a person's own being-for-himself in the world when confronted with some other existent. Consciously or not, the individual has chosen that inferiority complex, which he should acknowledge and fight against -- since it stems from the projection of his initial plan of failure into a system of many separate failures. In maintaining the choice of inferiority, rather than overcoming it, he is of bad faith. But Ricardo did not have sufficient knowledge of himself to effect such a Nietzschean self-overcoming, and he 'was human enough to suffer from the discovery of his limitations' (4:1:234). "'What do you know about yourself?'" Jones had asked in response to Ricardo's assertion that Heyst was not "'likely to be cleverer than I am'" (3:10:224).

Not that Jones had any greater portion of self-knowledge. In his supercilious self-grandeur he saw himself, despite his Satanic manner, as an aloof god: "'I am he that is'" (4:11:302), he announced in words redolent of the Old Testament burning bush that addressed Moses. This might sound

them -- in short, a result of his bad faith towards himself, as Seymour-Smith has commented.⁵⁰ Nostromo's death, ostensibly an accident (like Lena's), would not have occurred had he not returned to the island by night for the silver. Again, character is fate.

To the last he could not free himself from the world's opinion of him, the fear that the absence of the four ingots Decoud had taken would have been interpreted by others as theft by the Capataz, a blemish on his public reputation. 'The silver has killed me' (3:13:460), he gasped in his dying breath; what really killed him was his chosen devotion in bad faith to it -- and, ironically, his desire to be true to his 'essence', which, as he saw it, lay in 'the admiring eyes of men' (3:12:433). This meant being someone else's man rather than his own: the Goulds, Teresa Viola predicted early on, would display him publicly with the boast, "'This is our Nostromo!'" (1:4:53). He did indeed become Gould's man, an 'invaluable' tool in his plans for the silver (2:1:139). As Johnson has remarked,⁵¹ both Nostromo and Gould formed their basic modes of being in relation to the Sartean in-itself of the San Tomé silver, which condemned them to inauthenticity. Nostromo embraced the saving of the ingots as the very foundation of his existence, making it more important than the fetching of a priest for the dying Teresa, who upbraided him for succumbing to "'the praise of people who have given you a silly name -- and nothing besides -- in exchange for your soul and body'" (2:7:226). Yet Teresa's words do indicate that at the time Nostromo, desperate for public acclaim, was unreflectively following his own inner imperative, misguided though it was: "'Ah! you are always yourself, indeed'" -- even if his resolve was "'folly'" that would "'betray'" him (2:7:227). Through the removal of the treasure he did not deliberately

like an affirmation of self (and indeed it does remind us that every man is a discrete individual). But Jones and Ricardo did not utilise their individuality to alter themselves. Instead, they were like Sartre's 'evil man' who 'clings to himself, he is what he is' (Nothingness 65).

The ultimate sterility of Jones's inauthentic existence is mirrored in his corpse-like mien, an emaciated slave to a 'material inducement' -- his desire for Heyst's non-existent booty (4:11:306) -- and to sexual jealousy when he discovered Ricardo's knowledge of Lena's presence. He was 'a masquerading skeleton out of a grave' (4:11:312) -- soon to be literally in a grave, in all probability by his own hand, as Davidson suggested. "'Alone, his game clearly up, and fairly trapped'" (4:4:327), he evaded his self by surrendering it to the in-itself of the ocean.

Though at the novel's end, in the words of Shakespeare's Prince of Verona, 'all are punished' and an absurd universe has wrought a senseless dénouement, we realise that the value of individual lives has lain in the manner in which they were lived. Heyst and Lena may have been brought low by the unreflective Ricardo and Jones, but in their anguished deliberation the lovers achieved a degree of authentic selfhood -- however brief -- never approached by their antagonists.

The sense of authentic selfhood gained by the lovers in Nostramo was even briefer, Nostramo's recognition of his false priorities coming too late. In the arms of Giselle Viola, 'the slave of the San Tomé silver' (3:12:445) finally resolved to unburden himself of his secret hoard. But the release this decision brought was not to last. The 'perpetual struggle and the strife he carried in his breast', born of 'his silver fetters' (3:13:449), remained with him to the very moment of the death that came as a direct result of his having hidden the ingots and having become enslaved to

embark on any carefully considered new project of selfhood; he merely sought to enhance the considerable reputation he already possessed among the 'they'.

But the potential for recognising and altering one's inauthenticity is ever present. Waking from his long sleep after the rigours of hiding the silver, Nostromo seemed to emerge from a condition of non-conscious in-itself into conscious for-itself. 'He stood knee deep amongst the whispering undulations of the green blades with the lost air of a man just born into the world . . . , and stretched himself with a slow twist of the waist and a leisurely growling yawn of white teeth, as natural and free from evil in the moment of waking as a magnificent and unconscious wild beast. Then, in the suddenly steadied glance fixed upon nothing from under a thoughtful frown, appeared the man' (3:7:347). He was an individual esse capable of cogitare and open to the possibility of authentic existence.

With a sense of revulsion he now perceived the empty inauthenticity of his life. Whether he would surmount this sense of despair lay solely in his hands. Like Razumov, he was left with the terrible question, 'Where to?' (3:8:353). Nostromo could not return openly to his masters -- who in any event had never taken him 'into account' (3:8:353) -- even though in service to them and their silver he had ridden roughshod over Teresa's request, placing 'material interest' above her spiritual needs.

Dr Monygham, seeking to exploit Nostromo's despair for his own purposes (which to the doctor meant what he thought was best for Emilia Gould), offered him the blandishment that he was "'the only man"' with the "'power to save this town and . . . everybody from . . . destructive rapacity"' by surrendering the silver to Sotillo, Perdito or Gamacho (3:9:380). "'You must be true to yourself, Capataz. It would be worse than folly to fail now"' (3:9:382). This plunged Nostromo into further uncertainty as to where

exactly his loyalty to his desire for a truer self lay. "True to myself. How do you know that I would not be true to myself if I told you to go to the devil with your propositions?" (3:9:382). He still felt that "there is no getting away from a treasure that once fastens upon your mind" (3:9:385) and, to his credit, acknowledged to himself that he was the silver's victim. 'To become the slave of a treasure with full self-knowledge is an occurrence rare and mentally disturbing' (3:12:432), and the existentialist would consider it incumbent on the individual to act purposefully on such recognition. But Nostromo, though he 'hated the feel of the ingots', 'clung' to the instrument of his alienation 'with a more tenacious, mental grip' (3:12:432). When he finally did make a choice that augured fuller selfhood, death intervened.

The silver that led to Nostromo's death left virtually no character in the novel untouched -- particularly not the Goulds, as we shall see further in chapter 4. The figure in Nostromo whose life is the most obviously inauthentic, however, is Martin Decoud, who enters the scene described as 'an idle boulevardier . . . welcomed in the pleasure-haunts of pressmen. This life, whose dreary superficiality is covered by the glitter of universal blague, like the stupid clowning of a harlequin by the spangles of a motley costume' (2:3:151-2), clearly reveals Decoud's inauthenticity, and calls to mind the Russian 'harlequin' in Heart of Darkness (2:122) with his 'destitution, his loneliness, the essential desolation of his futile wanderings. For months -- for years -- his life hadn't been worth a day's purchase' (3:126).

Decoud's manner 'induced in him a Frenchified -- but most un-French -- cosmopolitanism, in reality a mere barren indifferentism posing as

intellectual superiority . . . he was in danger of remaining a sort of nondescript dilettante all his life' (2:3:152). In Sartrean terms, this danger could be averted only by Decoud's purposefully fashioning a project for the attainment of a more rewarding life. Antonia had castigated him years earlier for 'the aimlessness of his life' (2:3:154), yet his decision to support Costaguana's attempts at political liberation was made in bad faith, with all his usual levity and cynicism. Though he may have informed Emilia Gould that 'he felt no longer an idle cumberer of the earth' by having become 'the Journalist of Sulaco' (2:3:156), his existence remained an uncommittted sham. Indeed, he admitted that his journalism did not spring from what he considered to be his true self but was in fact "'deadly nonsense. Deadly to me!'" (2:5:172). His strongest aspiration was to carry Antonia 'away out of these deadly futilities of pronunciamientos and reforms' (2:5:175).

Certainly Decoud considered himself prepared to take any risk for Antonia's sake, with "'faith in my own ideas, in my own remedies, in my own desires'" (2:6:198). But he failed to act on this belief in his intellectual independence. Though he realised full well that his life was inauthentic, that the views of the 'crowd' were a Kierkegaardian 'untruth' to him, he simply perpetuated his cynical self-superiority, much as Razumov initially did. Curiously enough, Decoud's very determination to remain in Sulaco for Antonia's sake was in fact a flight from the self he perceived himself to be at the time -- as his admitted sense of 'solitude' testified (2:6:210). He insisted that his decision to aid in the removal of the silver was undertaken not through any desire of "'running away'" (2:7:218) but out of love for Antonia. He would go with the Capataz de Cargadores only "'to return -- to play my part in the farce to the end, and, if

successful, to receive my reward, which no one but Antonia can give me" (2:7:219). He was of course not successful, and the silver dragged him to the depths of the Placid Gulf.

Monygham, too, ultimately gave himself over to the silver, by virtue of his loyalty to Emilia Gould. It 'claimed him at last! This claim, exalted by a spiritual detachment from the usual sanctions of hope and reward, made Dr Monygham's thinking, acting, individuality, extremely dangerous to himself and to others, all his scruples vanishing in the proud feeling that his devotion was the only thing that stood between an admirable woman and a frightful disaster' (3:8:362). His 'terrible pursuit of his idea' (3:8:364) led him to treat Nostromo as simply an object, which consigned them both to inauthenticity. 'He did not think of him humanly' but as 'the only possible messenger to Cayta' (3:8:362). Though 'he esteemed highly the intrepidity' of the Capataz, he 'valued' him 'but little, being disillusioned as to mankind in general, because of the particular instance in which his own manhood had failed', aware that 'the most dangerous element common' to all men was 'the crushing, paralysing sense of human littleness, which is what really defeats a man struggling with natural forces, alone, far from the eyes of his fellows' (3:8:363) -- Decoud's fate exactly.

Clearly Monygham revealed many of the qualities existentialists associate with inauthentic being. But through his loyalty to Emilia he did eventually find the conception that gave his life meaning, the personal truth Kierkegaard demands each man find for himself in order to achieve authentic selfhood. It is such authenticity (however brief) that ultimately redeems existence, as we have seen Conrad repeatedly suggest -- in Jim, Stein, Razumov, Tekla, Natalia, Lena and, now, even Dr Monygham. It is a

central theme throughout his work, and one that unfolds very much along existential lines.

This pursuit of authenticity is evident too in Heart of Darkness, though here the emphasis is not so much on an existential quest for authentic selfhood as on a degree of profound self-discovery unmatched in any of Conrad's other works. Kurtz not only knew himself, he was himself. Not that Kurtz is shown fashioning a deliberate Sartrean project of what he wished himself to become: his purpose was to unveil his deepest self unfettered by the inauthentic claims of Heidegger's conventional 'they'. We find him already supremely self-assertive, rather than still engaged in a series of arduous attempts at achieving 'the individual completion of the self which haunts the for-itself' (Sartre, Nothingness, 91). Whether his behaviour was morally reprehensible or not, and whether he himself considered it monstrous or not, Kurtz acted on the promptings of his own dictates, not those of Kierkegaard's detested 'crowd' -- and thereby experienced a depth of existence unknown to men who are constantly preoccupied with inauthentic Marcellian 'functionalism'.

Like Jim, Kurtz lived out his self-discovery in a remote world removed from the constraints of his former social milieu or class, in a realm where 'anything can be done' (2:91). The Congo, Marlow says, was to Kurtz what England once was to a Roman commander 'nineteen hundred years ago' (1:49): 'one of the dark places of the earth' (1:48). Again, all is relative. That Marlow is able to admire Kurtz's achievement amid its moral ambiguity lies in his seaman's perspective as a 'wanderer' who 'did not represent his class' (1:48). If the omniscient narrator is viewed as being entrenched in his nineteenth-century setting, Marlow has greater flexibility of viewpoint -- even though he may be regarded, in Lionel Trilling's words, as an 'honest

soul' who despite his recognition of civilisation as 'fraudulent and shameful' none the less has a 'passionate commitment' to it.⁵² 'The utter savagery' in the 'mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men', says Marlow, is 'detestable', an 'abomination' (1:50).

Yet he does point out that neither he nor his listeners aboard the Nellie ever experienced to the same degree the Sartrean sense of abandonment to his own resources endured by the man who had had 'to face the darkness' (1:50). 'What saves us is efficiency' (1:50), that busyness which makes us the world's 'prey', as Jaspers phrases it (Philosophy 2:5), and which in its baser dimensions reduces the individual to the status of 'a mere assemblage of functions' (2:2). This rote functionalism is given graphic depiction in the labouring Congolese who were ordered to dig an artificial hole just so as to give them 'something to do' (1:65). The only valuable work is the existential kind that offers you 'the chance to find yourself. Your own reality -- for yourself, not for others -- what no other man can ever know' (1:85). This was not given to the fireman on Marlow's river craft, who was also condemned to the inauthentic existence of a 'useful' object. 'He ought to have been clapping his hands and stamping his feet on the bank', at one with his world; 'instead of which he was hard at work, a thrall to strange witchcraft, full of improving knowledge'^(2:97). 'To look at him was as edifying as seeing a dog in a parody of breeches and a feather hat, walking on his hind-legs' (2:97). Even the station manager (though by no means in the same demeaned category as the company slaves) was a mere cipher. One who 'originated nothing, he could keep the routine going -- that's all' (1:74), like the Nietzschean 'objective man' who does not know 'how to affirm or how

to deny' (Evil 207:116).

Marlow would gain a deeper apprehension of life only once he had moved beyond 'the idleness of a passenger', beyond the 'they' with whom he would find he no longer had any 'point of contact', beyond 'the uniform sombreness of the coast' and the 'world of straightforward facts' that 'seemed to keep [him] away from the truth of things, within the toil of a mournful and senseless delusion' (1:61). As the existentialists constantly emphasise, preoccupation with quotidian activities leaves little time for reflecting on what one's personal truths should be.

Yet the possibility of transcending inauthenticity is always present; once again we recall Kierkegaard saying that man is ever 'in process of becoming' (Postscript 84), which, as Edmond Jaloux has broadly argued, is patently true of so many Conradian figures.⁵³ The doctor who asked to measure Marlow's head as he set off for the Congo was of the same opinion; "and, moreover, the changes take place inside, you know" (1:58). "It would be interesting for science to watch the mental changes of individuals, on the spot" (1:72). But to an existentialist the physiology of an individual can never reveal his essence.

As in his constant emphasis on the unfathomable mystery of Jim the individual, Marlow in Heart of Darkness repeatedly stresses the impossibility of knowing another's 'mineness'. He would second Sartre's contention that, because each of us is ultimately alone in the world, we are closed to a full understanding of and by any other fellow being -- or, indeed, to absolute self-knowledge. 'It is impossible', Marlow says, 'to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence -- that which makes its truth, its meaning -- its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream -- alone' (1:82). Once more we are

reminded of Satre's assertion that humankind has no shared essence, but that each individual creates his own particular essence, left to make his own discoveries about the self he is at 'any given epoch of [his] existence'.

Marlow certainly recognised the inauthentic straits of his own life when he encountered a 'whirl of black limbs' (2:96) on the river bank at an early stage of his journey, putting us in mind of the narrator in Nostromo (4:4:317), who remarks that 'it may safely be said that primitive man did not go to the trouble of inventing tortures. He was indolent and pure of heart. He brained his neighbour ferociously with a stone axe from necessity and without malice'. There is, though, a marked tension between the controlled tone in Nostromo and Marlow's articulation of a similar sentiment, where his language is rampant with kinetic images and propelling syntax that convey the vibrancy of the free natives' unfettered jungle life, yet is infused with suspensions and question marks that suggest the speculative nature of his remarks, which are but uncertain gropings at explaining the unfathomable. In Marlow's words, the natives were not 'inhuman. . . . They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity. . . . Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you just the faintest trace of a response to that terrible frankness of that noise. . . . And why not? 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' (2:96-7).

These are sentiments that would be wholly endorsed by Nietzsche, whom Freud regarded as having looked more deeply into human nature than anyone before him.⁵⁴ Nietzsche, who admired the Greeks' 'intellectual predilection for the hard, gruesome, evil, problematic aspect of existence' (Tragedy 17), has Zarathustra command mankind to 'become hard!' (56:29:240). Man's recognition of his conflicting impulses is in Nietzsche's estimation what gives him his capacity to create: 'For every strong and natural species of man, love and hate, gratitude and revenge, good nature and anger, affirmative acts and negative acts, belong together. One is good on condition one also knows how to be evil; one is evil because otherwise one would not understand how to be good' (Power 351:191). To become "'good human beings", herd animals, blue-eyed, benevolent, "beautiful souls" -- or as Mr Herbert Spencer would have it, altruistic -- would deprive existence of its great character' (Ecce Homo 330). Zarathustra despises those 'who think themselves good because they have crippled paws' (35:128). The multiplicity of the human self -- as manifold as that of the universe -- cannot be reduced to systematic formulae; as we remember Nietzsche saying, 'I mistrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity' (Idols 25).

Yet Nietzsche is painfully aware of the darker elements which infuse that multiplicity, what Whitman called the 'multitudes' he 'contained'. The Birth of Tragedy (2:39) speaks of how terrible and revolting to current moral standards the deep urges in the hearts of men are: men have 'the most savage natural instincts . . . , including even that horrible mixture of

sensuality and cruelty which has always seemed to me to be the real "witches' brew". 'Man rests, with the unconcern of his ignorance, on the pitiless, the ravenous, the insatiable, the murderous'.⁵⁵ In him is 'matter, fragment, excess, clay, mud, madness, chaos; but in man there is also creator, sculptor, the hardness of the hammer, the divine spectator and the seventh day' (Evil 225:136). It requires a robust psyche to acknowledge this, and Nietzsche's 'new barbarian . . . who comes from the heights', a Promethean 'barbarian', is bred of the 'noble caste', whose 'superiority lay, not in their physical strength, but primarily in their psychical -- they were more complete human beings (which, on every level, also means as much as "more complete beasts" --)' (Evil 257:173). They had the inner strength to confront 'the horrible truth' which in lesser men promotes lassitude (Tragedy 7:60).

That Kurtz had 'clay, mud, madness, chaos' within him is borne out by the 'black, dried, sunken heads' in his domain (3:130), showing to Marlow that Kurtz 'lacked restraint' (3:131), that hallmark of the Nietzschean 'great man' whose 'joy lies in self-constraint' (The Anti-Christ 57:178). The heads revealed 'that there was something wanting in him. . . . Whether he knew of this deficiency himself I can't say. I think the knowledge came to him at last -- only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early. . . . I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude -- and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core' (3:131). To Marlow, then, Kurtz's whispered cry of 'The horror! The horror!' (3:161) remained enigmatic, but suggestive of some profound

discovery that Kurtz had made about himself and the world. As he lay in his death-throes, there came over Kurtz's face 'the expression of sombre pride, of ruthless power, of craven terror -- of an intense and hopeless despair. Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptataion, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision -- he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath --

'"The horror! The horror!"' (3:149).

Avoiding that falling 'prey' to the routine world which Jaspers warns us against (Philosophy 2:5), Kurtz had in solitude, Nietzsche's 'terrible mistress', looked into the Nietzschean 'abyss' of the self -- and judged it a place of horror enveloped by a universe of horror, his 'wide and immense stare embracing, condemning, loathing all the universe' (3:156). What the precise nature of this horror was, Marlow never clarifies. But his intimations lend themselves to an existential reading that what Kurtz perceived was the nothingness, the 'hollowness', of his self and the world -- that, in Camus's words, 'everything is absurd' (The Rebel 10), and that in the midst of his terrible freedom he was abandoned to invent his own values, to pass judgement on himself through tormented inner struggle. Kurtz's soul, Marlow makes plain, 'had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad. I had -- for my sins, I suppose -- to go through the ordeal of looking into it myself. No eloquence could have been so withering to one's belief in mankind as his final burst of sincerity. He struggled with himself, too. I saw it, -- I heard it. I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself' (3:145).

Kurtz clearly did not have the strength for Camusian revolt against the

Sartrean 'nausea' which comes with the realisation that everything is 'superfluous' (Nausea 131), that 'there is no sense in life a priori' (Humanism 54), a realisation which to Sartre's characters is not destructive but liberating. As Johnson comments, there was nowhere Kurtz could look outside or within himself for ordained or innate sanctions.⁵⁶ He was left with the awareness that there is nothing man is meant to be: man is the nothingness from which all sense of being comes, from which, as Sartre says, all differentiation arises. Kurtz, looking into himself, made the horrendous discovery that he was 'hollow' -- nothing.

But even though Kurtz failed to overcome this discovery, failed to transcend the self he was so as to embark on a new project of self, Marlow considers the very fact of Kurtz's discovery to have been a 'victory' (3:151). By grasping (if not straddling) the abyss, Kurtz had grown spiritually in his acceptance of himself as the sole creator of values and in his confrontation of his own emptiness, the poverty of his conscience, encountered through 'his intelligence . . . concentrated . . . upon himself with horrible intensity, yet clear' (3:144). To Marlow, meeting Kurtz had revealed new depths about himself, humanity and the world. Marlow himself had been faced with 'a choice of nightmares' (3:138): life in the 'whited sepulchre' of the 'city' amid Kierkegaard's 'untruth' of 'the crowd', and the wilderness with its 'unspeakable secrets' (1:138) and 'the moral shock' they produced (3:141). Aware of the 'something altogether monstrous' (3:141) that Kurtz represented, Marlow nevertheless resolved to 'be loyal to the nightmare of my choice. I was anxious to deal with this shadow by myself alone . . . this wandering and tormented thing' (3:141) which had achieved that sovereign individuality Nietzsche so admires, only

to be crushed by the awesome knowledge it revealed.

Crushing too was the kind of wisdom Nietzsche records as having been imparted by Dionysus's companion Silenus at the urging of his captor, King Midas: "'Oh, wretched and ephemeral race, children of chance and misery, why do you compell me to tell you what it would be most expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best for you is -- to die soon"' (Tragedy 3:42). And it was Kurtz's 'fate . . . to be buried presently in the mould of primeval earth' (3:147), to lose his tormented Sartrean for-itself to non-conscious in-itself.

Despite the fact that Marlow 'had been permitted to draw back [his] hesitating foot' (3:151) from the edge that Kurtz had stepped over, Kurtz's view of things permeates Marlow's: 'Droll thing life is -- that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself -- that comes too late -- a crop of unextinguishable regrets' (3:150). This is the voice of an existential absurdist (though silent here on man's ability to overcome this bleak vision), who is yet able to assert that 'Kurtz was a remarkable man', who had carried out the existentialist's injunction to discover one's own truths about oneself and the world, to judge them according to one's own values amid affirmation of one's sovereign individuality. 'He had something to say. He said it. Since I had peeped over the edge myself, I understand better the meaning of his stare, that could not see the flame of the candle, but was wide enough to embrace the whole universe, piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the darkness. He had summed up -- he had judged. "The horror!" He was a remarkable man. After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candour, it had conviction, it had

a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth' (3:151). Kurtz's cry 'was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by abominable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory!' (3:151). It had given him a measure of self-moving authenticity denied to those whose habitual condition of life straitens their range of experience.

Even though Kurtz had realised that he rode -- as Nietzsche says mankind does -- on the back of a tiger (tellingly introduced by Coppola in Apocalypse Now), he had had the courage of a Nietzschean Ja-sagender to affirm his own truths, to live out the full range of his manifold impulses, possessing like Zarathustra 'the highest and the nethermost forces of human nature, the sweetest, wantonest and fearfullest'.⁵⁷ Marlow, by contrast (even if his hesitating foot did suggest something of the eagle's talon), returned to civilisation and its crowds leading their inauthentic lives. 'I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams' (3:152) -- like Nietzsche's 'belauded sages of the academic chairs' who, finding wisdom in 'sleep without dreams', 'knew no higher significance of life' (Zarathustra 2:28). Marlow was left to a world he found empty of hope and desire as he 'tottered about the streets . . . grinning bitterly at perfectly respectable persons' (3:152). In the presence of Kurtz's Intended, he experienced Sartrean nausea at the oppressive gratuity of circumambient being, 'a sensation of panic in my heart as though I had blundered into a place of cruel and absurd mysteries not fit for a human being to behold' (3:157). He had a heightened and

alienating apprehension of the banality of quotidian life in comparison with the profundity of Kurtz's existence, which had given Kurtz a degree of authenticity most men never approach -- even though he had ultimately failed of full authenticity on account of his moral deformities.

Yet Marlow could not bring himself to disabuse the Intended of her 'great and saving illusion' (3:159). She was not (as T. S. Eliot's women of Canterbury say of average mankind) able to bear too much reality. Only the psychically strong dare look deeply into things, we remember Nietzsche warning, because 'the more superficially and coarsely it is conceived, the more valuable, definite, beautiful, and significant the world appears. The deeper one looks, the more our valuations disappear -- meaninglessness approaches' (Power 602:326). 'Woe to the fatal curiosity', he says, 'which should once be able to look through a crack out and down from the chamber of consciousness, and which should then divine that man rests, with the unconcern of his ignorance, on the pitiless, the ravenous, the insatiable, the murderous'.⁵⁸ Marlow could never have told the Intended what he had encountered in the Congo: 'it would have been too dark -- too dark altogether' (3:162). It was a darkness, however, that had offered both him and Kurtz a depth of experience and knowledge -- terrible though it was -- unknown by the Heideggerian 'they' who are consigned to the shallows of bland inauthenticity.

3 Condemned to Be Free

For the existentialist, engaging one's possibilities for authentic selfhood is crucially tied to one's complete freedom (albeit amid powerfully oppressive constraints) to choose a certain line of action above another, with all the responsibility this entails. Such freedom is a pervasive theme in Conrad, finding its most radical presentation in Heart of Darkness.¹ Marlow emphasises how in 'utter solitude without a policeman . . . , where no warning voice of a kind neighbour can be heard whispering of public opinion . . . you must fall back upon your own innate strength' (2:116). As we have seen, Kurtz had no societal restraints, no guide other than himself. His was a particularly naked freedom with, as Sartre would say, 'no limits . . . except freedom itself'; he was 'condemned to be free' (Nothingness 439). He had full reign, as Berdyaev would point out, to create the monstrous as well as the good (cf. Christian Existentialism 145). And in his 'hollowness' Kurtz chose to enact 'unspeakable rites' (2:118), devoid of any sense of wider responsibility.

As Macquarrie points out, 'There can be few themes, if any, nearer to the heart of existentialism than freedom. The theme is present in all the existentialist writers'.² And crucially linked to freedom, as we shall see, are choice, action and responsibility. The notion of man's utter freedom receives an especially profound theoretical discussion in Nikolai Berdyaev's Christian Existentialism anthology (cf. 136-53), where in somewhat metaphysical and mystical language Berdyaev asserts that freedom needs no proof: it is already there as a condition of our existing. 'Freedom', he says, 'is baseless, neither determined by nor born of being' (137). It

'proceeds from the abyss which preceded being . . . the act of freedom is primordial and completely irrational' (136). Freedom cannot be grasped by thought and can be known only when it is exercised. 'The sphere of existential freedom is distinctly different from the sphere of objectivized and determined nature' (137).

But, Berdyaev continues, 'we see at once that freedom has two different meanings. By freedom is meant either the primordial, irrational freedom which precedes good and evil and determines choice between them, or the final, reasonable freedom, freedom in good and truth, which is to say that freedom is understood both as the starting point and the way, and also as the end and the aim' (138). He thus distinguishes between the freedom which is prior to action and that which is subsequent to it. As a result, freedom in the world of men should not be regarded as irresponsibly arbitrary. It is linked to problems of sin and evil, involved in a dialectic whereby it can easily pass over into its opposite. The second kind of freedom can lead to 'compulsion and force in truth and good, to forced virtue, . . . to a tyrannical organization of human life' (140). Freedom therefore contains the seed of its own destruction. 'The tragedy of the world-process is that of freedom: it is born of the inner dynamic of freedom, of its capacity of changing into its opposite' (140).

Yet freedom must be preserved and increased, despite risk and tragedy, since if freedom and existence are virtually synonymous, there is no humanity or human dignity without it. And Berdyaev links freedom to creativity, 'the mysterious power to create out of nothing' (145). Man can create the monstrous as well as the good, the beautiful, and the useful. Thus creativity must be given full play, so as to allow man the opportunity

of fashioning the self and the world he desires. 'Freedom needs resistance and struggle. . . . The ancient taboos surround man on every side, cramp his moral life. And to liberate himself from their power, man must first feel himself inwardly free, and only then can he struggle externally for freedom. . . . Man's liberation is not only from something, but for something. And this for is man's creativity' (142-3).

In Kierkegaard and Sartre too freedom is equated with existence. One does not first exist and then become free; to be human is already to be free. 'Freedom is identical with my existence', says Sartre (Nothingness 44). As Orestes declares in The Flies (121), 'I am my freedom'. Kierkegaard regards the self as the element of freedom in a dialectic between possibility and necessity -- freedom being the future possibility of the open self hedged about by the structural quality of the self that is already present amid the pressures that afflict it. And with such freedom comes anxiety, the 'dizziness of freedom which occurs when . . . freedom . . . gazes down into its own possibility' (Dread 55).

Man is terrifyingly free to create his own essence and his own values: as Sartre's Orestes tells Zeus, upholding his own integrity by admitting without regret to his murder of Aegisthus, 'Suddenly, out of the blue, freedom crashed down on me and swept me off my feet. . . . I knew myself alone, utterly alone in the midst of this well-meaning little universe of yours. . . . And there was nothing left in heaven, no right or wrong, nor anyone to give me orders'. A few lines later Orestes comments, 'I am doomed to have no other law but mine. . . . For I, Zeus, am a man, and every man must find out his own way' (The Flies 121-2). Man's freedom is the only foundation of values. Professor Mathieu in The Age of Reason (320) considered himself 'free in every way. . . . He could do what he liked, . . .

there would be for him no Good nor Evil unless he brought them into being. . . . He was alone, enveloped in [a] monstrous silence, free and alone, without assistance and without excuse, condemned to decide without support from any quarter, condemned forever to be free'.

This was very much the position of Kurtz, who, recognising that he was wholly free to act as he chose, saw himself in his report as a man "'with the might of a deity"' among "'savages"'. "'By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded"' (2:118), in the complete freedom to create our own standards of good and evil in a world where no absolute morality applies, where man is left to formulate his own notion of what he and the world truly are. Given the excesses he perpetrated, Kurtz (as Watt has remarked)³ would have done well to recognise the need, as Camus puts it, not to be like men who have 'deified themselves' and so been driven to 'inhuman excesses' (The Rebel 305). Kurtz's behaviour may point to the desirability of moral absolutes, but it even more clearly demonstrates that none exist. Whatever emotional longings Conrad (like Hardy) might have had for religious sanctions, his fiction denies the presence of any guiding moral force from beyond man.

Like the wounded helmsman on Marlow's river boat, Kurtz had 'no restraint' within himself (2:119), just as he had none from beyond himself. Instead, he indulged his every inclination unchecked, like some reckless deity. The youthful Russian 'harlequin' (2:122) looked on him as a sort of Old Testament God who "'could be very terrible"', who had come "'with thunder and lightning"', omnipotent: "'there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly well pleased"' (3:128). Kurtz lived 'beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations', impervious to any appeal 'in

the name of anything high or low. . . . There was nothing either above or below him. . . . He had kicked himself loose of the earth' (3:144).

As with Sartre's Mathieu, then, Kurtz 'could do what he liked, . . . free and alone, . . . without excuse, condemned to decide without support from any quarter' (Reason 320). Given the possible consequences of choice, however, Sartre stresses the tremendous responsibility that inheres in it. And the implications of responsibility extend beyond the individual chooser to all others as well: 'I am . . . responsible for myself and for all men, and [create] a certain image of man as I would have him to be. In fashioning myself I fashion man'; 'nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all' (Humanism 30, 29). (Adam Gillon is thus somewhat misleading in saying that Sartre considers man's freedom to be 'expressed in purely arbitrary preferences'; 'arbitrary' suggests ill-considered, capricious irresponsibility.)⁴

Sartre argues that in creating values through our choices we do not choose a pre-existing good but render something good when we choose it in good faith. He is vague on exactly how this happens, but apparently man's sense of responsibility -- allied to his conscience -- should provide sufficient guidance. No one can be truly himself and act in good faith if he chooses as his project of selfhood the images of pure ego or anti-social fascist, for example, since these would bespeak a maimed existence.

Responsibility, then, is crucial in exercising one's freedom. 'When a man commits himself to anything', says Sartre, 'fully realising that he is not only choosing what he will be, but is thereby at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole of mankind -- in such a moment a man cannot escape from the sense of complete and profound responsibility' (Humanism 30). So, in taking an anguished decision one commits both oneself

and all mankind. Since one's sense of responsibility should control one's choices, only a diminished existent not responsibly himself makes choices that adversely affect men at large: the image one chooses for oneself should be an image one could choose for all men.

This awesome responsibility, so embroiled in risk, descends on man through his being utterly reliant on himself alone, from his given position as the sole arbiter of worth. 'I am responsible for everything in fact', declares Sartre, 'except for my very responsibility, for I am not the foundation of my being' (Nothingness 555). Paradoxically, this sense of responsibility is curiously liberating as far as Sartre is concerned. 'The one who realizes in anguish his condition as being thrown into a responsibility which extends to his very abandonment has no longer either remorse or regret or excuse; he is no longer anything but a freedom which perfectly reveals itself and whose being resides in this very revelation' (556).

Nietzsche shares this view of the relation between responsibility and liberty, but in a personal framework: 'What is freedom? That one has the will to self-responsibility' (Idols 137). Sartre emphasises more insistently responsibility towards others in addition to that towards the self. 'Man being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world' (Nothingness 553). Jaspers too recognises the wider sphere of responsibility: 'In communication I feel responsibility not only for myself but for the other, as if he were I and I were he' (Philosophy 2:53).

Kurtz, of course, did not use his freedom to make decisions in a Sartrean or Jaspersian manner. In choosing to act as he did, he was not

involved in fashioning a project of what it was he wished himself (and thus all mankind) to become; he was simply giving free play to his present self without regard for wider responsibility. In heeding his inner call, he was merely being his 'hollow' self.

The conscience of the 'cannibals' aboard Marlow's boat, on the other hand, involved a far greater sense of responsibility. After all, Marlow relates, 'they did not eat each other before my face', and when their 'provision of hippo-meat . . . went rotten' (2:94) their self-restraint prevented them from eating the officials. 'Why in the name of all the gnawing devils of hunger they didn't go for us -- they were thirty to five -- and have a good tuck in for once, amazes me. . . . I saw that something restraining, one of those human secrets that baffle probability, had come into play there. . . . Was it superstition, disgust, patience, fear -- or some kind of primitive honour?' (2:104-5). Mentioned last, 'honour' seems to be Marlow's presiding conclusion: an innate impulse in man -- his conscience -- to move in the direction of selfhood through a sense of responsibility towards the world. As Edwin M. Moseley has observed,⁵ Marlow points here to the belief that man's moral sense is as inborn as flesh and passions -- a notion Conrad would have discovered Wordsworth propounding in The Prelude -- even if it varies from man to man and is subject (as in Kurtz) to aberrations.

Unlike the 'cannibals', then, Kurtz with his 'hollow' self chose the worse of the directions offered by what Kierkegaard calls the 'either/or' inherent in any choice and so moved, in Jaspers's terminology, 'toward nothingness'. To Jaspers, choice lies at the very core of human existence; every choice we make affects us. 'My Existenz, as a possibility, takes a step toward being or away from being, toward nothingness, in every choice or

decision I make' (Philosophy 2:4). Hence I exist authentically by virtue of conscious, independent choice. If a decision is made for me, I am turned into material for another. In Sartre's words, 'I choose myself perpetually . . . otherwise I should fall back into the pure and simple existence of the in-itself' (Nothingness 480).

Since the self is not a ready-made given, man projects himself into one chosen possibility rather than another and so begins to determine who he will be and thus ultimately what mankind will be. Because decision-making enables man to create his own true self, Kierkegaard takes the view that 'the most tremendous thing which has been granted to man is: the choice, freedom' (Journals 372). 'This treasure is deposited in thine own inner self: there is an either/or which makes a man greater than the angels' (Either/Or 2:149). The choosing of either this possibility or that pledges man to take charge of his own future, which entails risk and therefore involves anxiety. In wrestling with a decision, man comes face to face with himself -- and this is often disturbing, as Kurtz so graphically discovered. His indulgence in pure ego revealed his crippled sense of responsibility, pointing to the vital need for anguished deliberation in the formation of one's values in a universe without given absolutes. Like Conrad, no major existentialist philosopher would support the possibility Dostoevsky raises in The Brothers Karamazov that in the absence of God everything is allowable; responsibility sets powerful limits. Kurtz, as Marlow comments, had in his overt freedom clearly moved 'beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations' (3:144).

Jim on the other hand acted very differently in similar circumstances. Like Kurtz, he also ended up in a realm where his word was truth, his values nakedly sovereign. Unlike Kurtz, though, he was engaged in a quest for a self that he had deliberately set himself to attain, rather than in an unrestrained confrontation with the heart of nothingness. As a result, Jim's freedom of choice for action was exercised in the Sartrean spirit of responsibility, which holds that any action must be undertaken with all men in mind. When we make choices in 'a project of sincerity' (Nothingness 79), 'what we choose is always the better; and nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all' (Humanism 29).

The existentialist would of course point out that Jim was already a free agent long before his more obvious form of freedom (at least from earlier constraints) in Patusan. He was free to choose his own career, free to abandon it when it proved inauthentic for him, free not to join the Patna, free not to jump from her, free not to face the consequences of that jump, free to give up his flight from his deed and strive to become a heroic man of action -- however much it might have seemed to him that a malignant fate compelled his choices. And, as we have seen Kierkegaard contend, such 'freedom of choice' is 'the most tremendous thing which has been granted to man' (Journals 372), since amid its rigours it affords the perpetual possibility of self-transcendence to a fuller life.

Jim's decision to enter the mercantile marine was not made with that profound sense of commitment which to the existentialist is the hallmark of decisive, willed action. 'To will', says Marcel in his Metaphysical Journal (185-6), 'is in some way to commit oneself; by which I mean to commit or bring into play one's own reality; to throw oneself into what one wills'. Freedom requires the anchorage of commitment: "'You are free

. . . "' Mathieu's friend Brunet tells himⁱⁿ Sartre's Age of Reason (152-3).
 "'But what's the use of that same freedom, if not [to commit yourself]? . . .
 You live in a void, . . . you're adrift, you're an abstraction, a man who is
 not there". To Heidegger, there are no non-conative acts: one weighs
 choices that will affect future events in one's field of concern, or care
 (Sorge), committing oneself to something in an attempt to gain a fuller sense
 of self.

Initially, Jim did not carefully consider his free choices. Instead,
 his vital decision to go to sea rested on the flimsy basis of some 'light
 holiday literature' that had stirred his imagination (1:11), and it
 catapulted him into a world he found sterile. Yet, rather than extricate
 himself from his life at sea, he reversed his 'idea of going home' (2:16)
 and drifted into the position of chief mate aboard the Patna, idly dreaming
 of 'valorous deeds.'^(3:21) But, declares a Yeatsian epigraph, 'in dreams begins
 responsibility', and by the time of the trial Jim's decisions were of a
 completely different order. He chose to be 'frank with himself' (6:62), to
 face his action squarely rather than "'clear out"' as the skipper had
 (7:64). During the expected sinking of the ship he had been presented with
 the 'chance' for heroic action but had chosen cowardice (7:67), and he now
 decisively proposed to redeem himself.

Jim's vacillation amid the chaos of the foundering Patna bore all the
 qualities of Kierkegaard's tormenting either/or situation with its
 'dizziness of freedom' (Dread 55). He told Marlow 'that his first impulse
 was to shout and straight away make all those people leap out of sleep into
 terror; but such an overwhelming sense of his helplessness came over him
 that he was not able to produce a sound . . . he scrambled out on deck . . .

and . . . his knees wobbled a good deal as he stood on the foredeck looking at another sleeping crowd' (7:69). He thought of shoring up the bulkhead but considered it a hopeless task, feeling that 'he could do nothing, now he was alone. There was nothing to do but to sink with the ship' (8:79).

Yet one of the basic conditions of freedom, Sartre remarks, is the presence of 'obstacles to be cleared. . . . It is necessary that they be simply there, wholly brute, in order that there may be freedom' (Nothingness 506). Camus would insist that Jim rebel against the sense of futility and passivity that enveloped him as he stood aloof from the other officers, struggling to free the boat that would save them, prey to 'a strange illusion of passiveness, as though he had not acted but had suffered himself to be handled by the infernal powers who had selected him for the victim of their practical joke' (8:86). One has to rebel against circumstances (or fate, or the gods; as Camus puts it, 'A revolt is always one against the gods as external forces and pre-established authority -- starting with the rebellion of Prometheus, an assertion by man against pre-ordained destiny').⁶

To the existentialist, man as a free agent at all times is unable to escape action, and responsibility for it; the evasion of one kind of action is simply to follow some other kind. In Sartre's words, 'Everything takes place as if I were compelled to be responsible. I am abandoned in the world, not in the sense that I might remain abandoned and passive in a hostile universe like a board floating on the water, but rather in that I find myself suddenly alone and without help, engaged in a world for which I bear the whole responsibility without being able, whatever I do, to tear myself away from this responsibility for an instant. I am responsible for my very desire of fleeing responsibilities. To make myself passive in the world, to

refuse to act upon things and upon Others is still to choose. . . . The one who realizes in anguish his condition as being thrown into a responsibility . . . is no longer anything but a freedom which perfectly reveals itself and whose being resides in this very revelation' (Nothingness 556). This Jim sought to deny, excusing himself as 'the victim' of 'infernal powers'.

Heyst in Victory similarly tried to evade responsibility for his lack of purposeful action, telling Lena that his father was 'responsible for what my life is, or rather has been' (3:3:166). Heyst senior had been one of those Freudian discontents of civilisation, 'the most weary, the most uneasy soul that civilization had ever fashioned to its ends of disillusion and regret' (2:3:87). Yet the narrator does 'not refuse him a measure of greatness, for he was unhappy in a way unknown to mediocre souls' (2:3:87), dismayed at men's failure to use their innate freedom wisely -- a freedom he upheld even in his final work, in which 'he claimed for mankind that right to absolute moral and intellectual liberty of which he no longer believed them worthy' (2:3:87). This, as Johnson comments,⁷ reveals the frightening contingency of man in a universe with no moral plan, hence the elder Heyst's injunction to his son to detach himself from his fellow beings-in-the-world -- an injunction the younger Heyst freely chose to espouse but for which he subsequently blamed his father.

In the same way, Heyst had to bear responsibility for his choosing to elope with Alma/Magdalen to Samburan, though even in this action he had sought to avoid taking the decision himself, telling her to 'command' him (2:2:78). He had 'reflect[ed] with insufficient knowledge', filled with 'the desire to act' (2:2:76). Initially, therefore, he tried to foist

responsibility for the decision to elope on to her, but it was he after all who had offered 'to buy [her] out' or 'steal [her]'. "'You do something'", she had countered. "'I didn't begin it, did I? It was you who came along and spoke to me . . . you must do something'" (2:2:78). Even after the elopement Heyst felt inclined both to face its consequences and to consider the future as being beyond his control. In one of those frequent passages in which Conrad moves from the direct speech of a character to third-person narrative that is a curious mingling of the character's thoughts and authorial comment, we find Heyst feeling that 'what must be must be' (2:2:86).

Thus Heyst (like so many other characters in Conrad) shifted responsibility on to circumstance, much in the way Morrison did in excusing his ability 'to lay by any sum of money' (1:2:29). But Morrison was readier than Heyst to acknowledge his own shortcomings in this regard, even if he came to a dubious conclusion: 'It was partly the fault of circumstances and partly of his temperament; and it would have been very difficult to apportion the responsibility between the two. . . . With a worried air he ascribed it to fatality' (1:2:29), rather like the nameless Assistant Commissioner in The Secret Agent excusing himself of responsibility for his inauthentic existence by considering himself 'the victim of an ironic fate' (6:125). Verloc too abrogated his personal responsibility by believing that his 'fate' had been 'taken out of his hands', that his situation was 'no one's fault' (11:212, 215). An existentialist would of course point out that his situation had been brought about by Verloc himself in his failure to refuse Valdimir's demand that he bomb the Greenwich Observatory, in his failure to exercise his Sartrean possibility of saying no.

Nostromo was also quick to blame circumstance for his situation,

feeling that 'he had been betrayed' by his masters and by 'unseen forces' rather than by himself (3:8:351, 352), much as Emilia Gould considered the wall between her and Charles to be the work of 'evil spirits': San Tomé had become a 'fetish' that 'had grown into a monstrous and crushing weight. It was as if the inspiration of their early years had left her heart to turn into a wall of silver-bricks, erected by the silent work of evil spirits, between her and her husband' (2:6:205). But Sartre would insist that it was the Goulds themselves, not 'evil spirits', who were responsible for their subservience to the mine. Stressing our 'autonomy of choice', he would not excuse Emilia's 'passive part' in permitting this situation (see Nothingness 556).

Such shifting of responsibility also marked Razumov in Under Western Eyes, yet another novel in which freedom, decision, action and responsibility are crucial. Prior to his recognition of his own self-betrayal, he attempted to blame his ancestry and upbringing for his shortcomings. The professor of languages likens Razumov's 'memorandum' to a mirror in which 'a threatened man may look fearfully at his own face . . . , formulating to himself reassuring excuses for his appearance marked by the taint of some insidious hereditary disease' (3:1:220). But Sartre would insist that genetic inheritance or environment can never be blamed -- as Razumov later discovered: "'It's myself whom I have given up to destruction'" (4:3:318). He alone was ultimately responsible for his own sparagmos, set in motion by his chosen response to the Haldin incident.

Just as Razumov's free decision to side with 'autocracy' revealed what he was at the time, so Jim's leap from the Patna -- his avoiding of responsibility -- exposed him as what Marcel would term 'the guilty

participant in an inexcusable blunder' (The Philosopher and Peace 11). His self-revelatory action in this case was of the kind Sartre considers to be 'non-reflective' (Nothingness 36): Jim simply discovered that he "'had jumped. . . . It seems"' (9:88). Yet to the existentialist even action that is not consciously chosen is originated by the self, revealing it and affecting its future and that of the selves around it. The impulsive act in Sartre's Dirty Hands when Hugo shoots Hoerderer after finding Jessica in his arms is an instance in which, 'far from determining the act', the motive 'appears only in and through the project of an action' (Nothingness 448). Hugo none the less identifies himself with his act and points to Hoerderer's part in its occurrence: 'A man like Hoerderer doesn't die by accident. He dies for his ideas, for his political program; he's responsible for his death' (Dirty Hands 247). By our own actions we determine our fate, which is to say, our character -- as we saw in chapter 2.

Jim at first tried to evade responsibility for what had been his own free choice of action aboard the Patna. Marlow describes him as clutching at 'some conviction of innate blamelessness [that] . . . checked the truth writhing within him at every turn' (7:64), seeking to blame the 'unreasonable forces' of the world, 'the unthinking might of nature, or the stupid brutality of crowds' (7:72). From Jim's perspective, the fault lay primarily in his fellow officers: "'I tell you they were too much for any man. It was their doing as plainly as if they had reached up with a boat-hook and pulled me over"' (10:97). He felt that 'everything had betrayed him' (8:77), an attitude which in Marlow's existential view was at variance with 'the truth writhing within him' -- which suggests that, like Razumov and Nostromo, Jim had betrayed himself.

Eventually, though, he did come to recognise that he was 'responsible'

(10:94) for his action all the same, that his present self had been nakedly exposed in his freedom. As Marlow comments, 'When your ship fails you, your whole world seems to fail you. . . . It is as if the souls of men floating on an abyss and in touch with immensity had been set free for any excess of heroism, absurdity, or abomination' (10:95) -- Kurtz's condition exactly. In Sartre's words, 'I find myself suddenly alone and without help' (Nothingness 555), left with the Berdyaevian freedom to 'create' the monstrous or the good. And Jim's freedom landed him in 'an everlasting hole' (9:89).

His condition at this point was very much like that of Razumov after Haldin had taken him into his confidence, a confidence Razumov had freely permitted: he could at any time have 'cut short that talk and told this man to go away' (1:1:68). By allowing himself to become embroiled, Razumov was faced with the terrible choice between aiding Haldin or betraying him to the authorities -- Kierkegaard's anxiety-laden 'either/or which makes a man greater than the angels' (Either/Or 2:149), and which to Nietzsche carries within it the potential for advancement: 'one is still fruitful only at the cost of being rich in contradictions' (Idols 44). Taking a decision was unavoidable for Razumov. And choice entails risk, as both Haldin and Razumov discovered. In his dilemma, Razumov too experienced Kierkegaard's 'dizziness of freedom' (Dread 55), left more alienated than ever by his eventual decision to betray Haldin.

In fact, Razumov's fateful decision 'could hardly be called a decision. He had simply discovered what he meant to do all along' (1:2:83). In spite of all his anguished vacillation, he had (like Jim) merely heeded the inauthentic self he was at the time, the self wedded (like Nostromo's) to

the esteem of the conventional 'they', who applauded his choice. "'You have done well"', Prince K---- assured him twice (1:2:85, 86). As Razumov had confided to Haldin, "'I must get acknowledged in some way before I can act at all"' (1:2:100).

Razumov's Sartrean apprehension of being utterly 'abandoned' in the world, 'without anything or any person being able to lighten' the weight of his responsibility (Nothingness 555), penetrated his nightmares of 'walking through drifts of snow in a Russia where he was as completely alone as any betrayed autocrat could be' (1:2:104). Tormented by the unforeseeable aspect of his free actions, he 'envied the materialism of the thief and the passion of the incorrigible lover. The consequences of their actions were always clear and their lives remained their own' (1:3:114). This the existentialist would recognise as simply a perpetuation of Razumov's desire to evade responsibility, since the need to exercise one's freedom wisely is just as incumbent on thieves and lovers as on anyone else. But he considered his torment unique, and succumbed to the debilitating malaise that existentialists identify with a lack of purposeful action.

As a result, Razumov acted 'with an air of profound indifference. . . . He did nothing at all' (1:3:106). He thought nostalgically of the 'freedom' of his earlier life (1:3:118), though that life had in fact been tainted by inauthentic allegiance to the 'they', whose standards Kierkegaard would insist he was free to surpass, just as Abraham had had the freedom to sacrifice Isaac in defiance of accepted morality at the call of conscience. He was left to forge 'the true Razumov . . . in the willed, determined future' (1:3:113) by engaging his Heideggerian Dasein (being-there) and fashioning his Wesen (essence) through his own deliberate choices by sheer dint of will.

This was Jim's position too, and his first step in such engagement came with his recognition of his Patna self in order to overcome it. 'Man's liberation', we remember Berdyaev saying, 'is not only from something, but for something. And this for is man's creativity' -- in Jim's case, as in Razumov's, the creation of a new being-for-itself. 'Freedom', Sartre asserts in 'Materialism and Revolution', means 'rising above a situation in order to get a perspective on it' (Essays 235-6). Jim had gained a fresh view of himself, and it now remained for him to surpass that self -- as he ultimately did in Patusan after a long flight in a bad-faith attempt to escape his deed, which is to say, his self, since Sartre contends that man is 'nothing else but the sum of his actions' (Humanism 41). (Hopkins gives this poetic form in sonnets like 'As Kingfishers Catch Fire', where 'Each mortal thing . . ./ Selves -- goes itself' through its actions: 'myself it speaks and spells;/ Crying What I do is me'. Drawing on Duns Scotus and the notion of actus, Hopkins suggests that by acting you 'selve', actualise yourself, which he illustrates so memorably in the 'act' of the eponymous kestrel in 'The Windhover'.)

Properly speaking, existential action should be intensely personal, engaging the full spectrum of one's being. In Sartre's formulation, 'There is no reality except in action. . . . "Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realises himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is"' (Humanism 41). As John Macmurray argues,⁸ the self is an agent and exists only as agent. Though it may be a subject, it cannot exist as subject -- it can be a subject only by virtue of being an agent: it is a subject in and for the self as agent. Yet the self can be an agent only by being a subject

as well.

To the existentialist, action is thus a product of the entire man as the unity of a person who expresses himself in all his activities and thereby creates himself. As Macquarrie comments,⁹ a man's actions are more than empirically observable deeds, for in them the individual is both projecting and realising an image of personhood. It is in action, which entails freedom, decision and responsibility, that a man is most truly and fully himself. Not surprisingly, then, one's actions are crucially important, hence Kierkegaard's desperate desire 'to be clear in my mind what I am to do' (Journals 15). As Sartre maintains, man is a form of doing, of choosing and realising himself, rather than simply a form of being. And the bedrock of action is the freedom of the agent, his conscious recognition of himself as a separate existent, his self-projection towards what he conceives of as possible.

Heidegger is quick to stress that not all actions are equal. There is a vast difference between authentic action and humdrum quotidian action. Sanborn, encapsulating Heidegger's position,¹⁰ points out that it is usually easy to perform the actions needed merely to maintain oneself in the everyday world. But if a man remains fixed in the day to day, he lacks the insight to understand his basic possibilities and is content to satisfy external rules and be guided by public norms. He does not heed the call of personal conscience, because he is lost in present entanglements. Authentic action is not what simply happens to the self but what the self brings about through recognising its own potentiality for being; in authentic action, man 'goes towards' himself. For Marcel, we recall, the essence of an act is to commit the agent (cf. Metaphysical Journal 185-6). There cannot be authentic action without commitment and attendant responsibility, since an

individual and his acts are inseparable. It is a person who acts, not a depersonalised 'One'. To deny one's actions is to deny oneself; actions are a means to self-assertion in the world. As Sartre maintains in 'Materialism and Revolution', 'That the agent be free' is one of 'two necessities of action'; the other is 'that the world in which he acts be determined' (Essays 244). Thus, action both reveals human freedom and alters the condition of the world. An act (as Marcel also asserts) is something that modifies a situation; it is more than sheer happening or performance. The choice that leads to action is a choice as to one's position in the world, and, as we have seen Sartre contend, whatever one chooses for oneself one chooses for everyone.

As a result Jim, in wrestling with the problem of his proper course of action, appeared to Marlow to be grappling with an 'obscure truth . . . momentous enough to affect mankind's conception of itself' (7:75), clearly evoking Sartre's view that 'in fashioning myself I fashion man' (Humanism 30). But the briars of the workingday world constantly impeded Jim's potential for a fuller life as he failed during the ensuing years as a Chandler's boy to overcome those Sartrean 'obstacles to be cleared' (Nothingness 506). Instead, he drifted -- 'waiting for . . . something in the nature of an opportunity' (19:154).

Razumov experienced similar irresolution. Yet Sartre would argue that his 'unsettled mind and shaken conscience' (4:1:292) were, like Jim's, the very basis of the young student's freedom to make of himself whatever he wished, his potential to 'redeem his existence' (4:2:299) through conquering the despair of inauthentic being. The peripeteia in Razumov's downward slide initially came with his electing to reveal the truth about himself to

Natalia Haldin, though he had once thought he would 'never be found prepared' to act on a decision that was genuinely true to himself (3:3:250). This revelation was preceded by another clear instance of Kierkegaard's 'dizziness of freedom' that inheres in any choice attending the threshold of non-quotidian action. Razumov 'was like a man defying his own dizziness in high places and tottering on the edge of the precipice' (4:3:324). His admission to Natalia opened the way for him to reveal himself 'voluntarily' (4:4:337) to the revolutionaries as well, making him truly feel the inner freedom for self-creation that Berdyaev speaks of: "'Today I made myself free from falsehood, . . . independent'" (4:4:338). Thus, even though Razumov's actions eventually left him deaf from Nikita's blows, he did achieve a condition of being at one with himself, self-fulfilled -- just as his actions brought self-fulfilment to Tekla and to Natalia, who could assert: "'My eyes are open at last and my hands are free now'" (4:5:345).

Winnie Verloc in The Secret Agent also eventually discovered such 'freedom' (11:226) when she rid herself of the husband who had consigned her to the status of a reified possession. 'She was a free woman' (11:226) -- but with 'really no idea where she was going to' (11:227). 'For she did not exactly know what use to make of her freedom' (11:228), of her Kierkegaardian possibilities for action that would offer her a new self. 'No signs are vouchsafed' in Sartre's world (Humanism 38), and Winnie was condemned to freedom of choice with only herself to guide her.

This was Heyst's position in Victory too, when faced by Jones and Ricardo. His Sartrean contingency in the world demanded engagement but gave him 'no line of action' (3:9:212). "'Is there no guidance?'" he had asked of his father years before (3:1:150). None, was the elder Heyst's implied response, upholding Sartre's assertion that 'no rule of general morality can

show you what you ought to do' (Humanism 38). Like every other man, Axel Heyst was left to his own resources, 'absolutely free', as Sartre puts it, to follow the action of his choice (Nothingness 509). Existentialists would maintain that even with the woman he had named Lena beside him he was still individually responsible for anything he might have done, just as Winnie was responsible for the consequences of having stabbed Verloc.

Although Winnie's act cemented her freedom, it immediately assailed her with Kierkegaardian 'giddiness' (12:237), and her new sense that her former bonds no longer applied soon passed into fear of the outcome of her having reduced her husband to 'nothing' (12:237), an action that ultimately brought her to the same condition by her own hand, unable to muster Camusian rebellion against the 'terror and despair' she now perceived at the heart of things (13:267). Yet she had for a brief moment used her freedom to assert her own authenticity.

Her phlegmatic husband of course never experienced even such brief authenticity. As we saw in the previous chapter, he was innately averse to action. 'He could not all at once, either in his own home or in larger assemblies, take the initiative of action' (3:81). As Sartre reminds us, however, even inaction is action of a sort. To play a passive part in the world -- like Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon, Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, or Eliot's Prufrock -- does not remove the self's condition of being a responsible agent. Thus, to Sartre responsibility would inhere in even the most humdrum of Verloc's activities, not to mention his bombing of Greenwich Park, which -- like all his actions -- lacked any inner enthusiasm or commitment. He carried out the sabotage under external compulsion, failing to assert his Sartrean freedom to say no to Vladimir's demand for

'activity' (2:59), that no which affords man the dignity of sovereign selfhood.

In consequence Verloc, plagued with Kierkegaardian 'giddiness', felt himself 'hopelessly lonely in the world', estranged from his wife, who could not assuage him with 'the usual remedies' of sex (3:85). As Camus insists, each man creates his own condition in the world, and Verloc alone was responsible for his having succumbed to the pressure of the 'Hyperborean swine' Vladimir (9:198), for his having allowed himself to be propelled towards the bombing and thus his murder at Winnie's hand when she discovered his role in Stevie's unintended death.

In planting the bomb Verloc had no genuine desire to remedy what he might in Sartrean terms have perceived as a lacking in a present situation, which could in certain circumstances lead to sabotage performed in good faith for the sake of a better future. Thus a dynamiter, for example, perceiving present conditions in a factory as inadequate, might genuinely believe that the workers would benefit from sabotage, and his action would be a deliberate effort to remedy a lack. And, indeed, if he agonises over his decision and reflects on it profoundly, his act may be seen as action in the proper sense (even though some might consider it misguided), since it is characterised by a decision made not by an abstracted reasoning faculty alone but by the whole self in good faith, entailing commitment to a project of desired selfhood.

Verloc's bombing, in contrast, would be seen by Sartre as an action performed by someone enslaved to inauthentic being. Burdened by a fatalistic sense (which he was free to overcome) that no further action could save him, he 'felt terribly empty physically' (11:212), oppressed by 'an immense load of weariness' (11:228), so that he was simply unable to avoid Winnie's

knife when he saw it coming towards him. The Assistant Commissioner had in fact offered Verloc the "'advice . . . to clear out while you may"' (9:197), a suggestion the lethargic secret agent chose to ignore. As the commissioner commented to Sir Ethelred, "'Even if there were no obstacles to his freedom of action he would do nothing. At present he hasn't enough moral energy to take a resolution of any sort"' (10:204). Verloc's own inauthentic action had trapped him. Though 'Mr Verloc never meant Stevie to perish with such abrupt violence' (11:210), Nietzsche would stress that the results of actions cannot be evaded, whatever the intentions behind them.

Like Verloc, Comrade Ossipon was also 'no man of action', despite his 'attitude of defiance' (3:78). His imperatives sprang not from inner freedom but from his 'evil gift' to invoke the 'sinister impulses which lurk in the blind envy and exasperated vanity of ignorance, in the suffering and misery of poverty, in all the hopeful and noble illusions of righteous anger, pity, and revolt' (3:78). The Professor told Ossipon that he regarded him and the other 'revolutionaries' as "'slaves of the social convention, which is afraid of you; slaves of it as much as the very police that stand up in the defence of that convention. . . . It governs your thought, of course, and your action, too, and thus neither your thought nor your action can ever be conclusive"' (4:93). Although the Professor is also ultimately given an unfavourable cast, he does set himself apart from the anarchists, none of whom Sartre in 'Materialism and Revolution' would see as a true revolutionary, who 'is defined by his going beyond the situation in which he is placed. And because he does go beyond it towards a radically new situation, he can grasp it in its synthetic wholeness, or if you like,

he makes it exist for himself as totality. Thus it is by means of this thrust towards the future and from the point of view of the future that he realizes it. . . . He must consider himself an historical agent' (Essays 210-11). The anarchists in The Secret Agent do not exhibit such a 'thrust towards the future', and in the Professor's estimation Chief Inspector Heat and Karl Yundt are equally unfree, "'like to like. The terrorist and the policeman both come from the same basket. Revolution, legality -- counter moves in the same game; forms of idleness at bottom identical"' (4:94).

On this view, neither Heat nor Yundt was engaged in authentic action, and Verloc's bombing was equally devoid of value in the eyes of the Professor: "'Solidarity with the extremist form of action is one thing, and silly recklessness is another"' (4:99). To the Assistant Commissioner, Verloc's act was merely a breaking of the 'rules of the game' (6:132) that he and Heat played by in their subservience to conventionality, which to Berdyaev is freedom turned into 'compulsion and force in truth and good, to forced virtue, . . . to a tyrannical organization of human life' (Christian Existentialism 140).

Even if the commissioner appreciated Heat's 'zeal and ability, moderate in himself', he did so without any 'moral confidence' (6:127) and felt alive only when resolving to investigate the Greenwich incident himself, as a means to escaping 'desk work, which was the bane of his existence because of its confined nature and apparent lack of reality' (6:141). Though the commissioner deliberately 'made up his mind to some course of action' (6:140), the narrator immediately points out that his decision was grounded in temptation, which Heidegger regards as a mark of inauthenticity (cf. Time 223). 'He had that very moment succumbed to a

fascinating temptation' (6:140), rather than asserted a long-term commitment to something that would offer him a fuller life -- even though his action did take him in that direction nevertheless. 'Reflecting upon his enterprise', he 'seemed to lose some more of his identity. He had a sense of loneliness, of evil freedom' (7:151).

Such 'evil freedom' was of course the distinguishing feature of Jones and Ricardo in Victory, in which, we recall, Heyst moves from initial 'inertia' (1:1:19) and 'detachment' (2:2:86) to active engagement of himself and the world, as represented primarily by Jones and Co. Though made at his father's prompting, his withdrawal -- 'his indifference as to roads and purposes' (3:4:178) -- had in the last analysis been of his own choosing. And Sartre would contend that Heyst could not escape responsibility for this decision or for his decision to elope with Alma/Magdalen. Not surprisingly, having 'engaged himself . . . to an action big with incalculable consequences' (2:2:80), he was assailed by the existential 'doubts' and anxiety that inhere in such action. No man can anticipate every last consequence of his action, and, 'like the rest of us who act, all that [Heyst] could say to himself . . . was: "We shall see!"' (3:3:158-9).

His earlier attempt at action with 'purposeful energy' (1:3:35), on behalf of the Tropical Belt Coal Company, was not of the deeply existential kind that he now undertook. His new position in which he and Lena were faced with the threat of Jones and Ricardo was a radical change from his previous choice to evade action, which in an early conversation with Davidson he had branded as "'devilish'" and the reason why "'this world is evil upon the whole'" (1:6:57). "'I suppose I have done a certain amount of harm, since I allowed myself to be tempted into

action. It seemed innocent enough, but all action is bound to be harmful.

. . . I shall never lift a little finger again" (1:6:56-7). Now, faced with Jones and Ricardo, he came to the Heideggerian realisation that there are different kinds of action and that purposeful action is in fact a means to conquering the evil spawned by inauthentic action. He and Lena would be called on to garner the strength to effect Camus's demand to 'defy the fates' (1:6:59). Previously 'disenchanted with life as a whole' (2:1:67), Heyst now chose to overcome his taedium vitae through rebellion against it: "I am going to confront these scoundrels" (4:10:298).

His attempt failed, of course, and he sank again into a 'formless, hideous' malaise, thinking that 'he who experienced such a feeling had no business to live -- or perhaps was no longer living' (4:11:313, the existential notion that man cannot truly be said to exist until he has achieved authentic being. With Lena mortally wounded, 'he looked down intently at her still face', remaining 'absolutely idle. There did not seem anything more for him to do' (4:13:323). Finally overcome by his sense of futility, death by fire was his only answer. Though John A. Palmer considers Heyst's suicide an 'existential affirmation', a triumphant repudiation of his earlier life,¹¹ this is severely muted by Davidson's words towards the end of the novel: "I suppose he couldn't stand his thoughts before her dead body -- and fire purifies everything" (4:14:327). Even if Heyst did take his own life as a free agent rather than have it foisted on him, his suicide was the outcome of his inability to engage his existential freedom to surpass his perception of his life's nullity; the narrator makes no mention of Heyst experiencing a triumph of the kind Lena achieved.

Lena's earlier life had plainly been one in which she had failed to

make affirmative use of her freedom, allowing herself to be oppressed by the Zangiacomo crew. With Heyst, however, she did not simply drift into her elopement but actively embarked upon it as a personal rebellion against circumstance. And through this active decision she experienced -- like Natalia Haldin and Winnie Verloc -- a fresh awareness of her individual freedom, which carried with it 'the sensation of having been abandoned to her own devices. . . . She was really alone' (3:9:206), like Heyst and Sartre's Mathieu, 'free and alone, without assistance and without excuse' (Reason 320). 'She had not been forced into' eloping with Heyst, not been 'driven, scared into it. . . . She had come to him of her own free will' (4:8:285).

On Samburan, removed from the masses, Heyst and Lena (like Kurtz and Jim) felt more clearly able to create their own values and standards of morality: "'There's no one here to think anything of us, good or bad'" (3:3:160). Though Lena may have turned to Heyst for her sense of personal worth ("I can only be what you think I am" [3:3:160]), existentially she remained dependent on herself alone for her choice of action. But her belief that Heyst's love removed her condition of solitude did enable her to confront Ricardo with purposeful action, even if she still wondered whether she had been for Heyst nothing more than 'a violent and sincere choice of curiosity and pity -- a thing that passes' (4:12:315). Her conviction that her sense of self was inextricably linked to Heyst carried her beyond the specious appeal of Ricardo's blandishments, and when he offered her his knife to 'feel the balance' she decisively seized her chance and took 'the very sting of death' into her hands. 'She had done it!' (4:12:317). She firmly intended to use Ricardo's knife on him, but Jones's bullet intervened

-- the outcome of her decision to resist the representatives of the outside world, her free decision for 'self-sacrifice' (4:5:257).

Or so-called self-sacrifice. In Nietzsche's words from Human, all too Human (1:57:75), 'the individual loves something of himself, a thought, a desire, a production, more than anything else of himself; he therefore divides his nature and to one part sacrifices all the rest'. As Michel says of any existential man, 'The inner man must choose whether to act in reliance upon some value transcendent to man, or in allegiance to a physical love of his own life, prolonged at any cost by any means'¹² -- a choice the Romantics emphasised a century before Kierkegaard. In heeding what she felt was her strongest inner imperative, Lena demonstrated that 'mind and will are potentially more powerful than the absurdity of the universe; they are capable of inventing values upon which paradoxically men can base triumphant, even though defeated, action'.¹³

This was very much Jim's position once he had undertaken Patusan, which he chose to go to in an 'experiment' of 'his own doing'; in Marlow's existential view, Jim 'was responsible for it and no one else' (22:176). There at last he exercised his freedom in a way that enabled him to create his own world through decisive action prompted by his Marcellian commitment to the ideal self he had proposed for himself, as all men are beholden to do. In the end, Jim 'had regulated so many things in Patusan! Things that would have appeared as much beyond his control as the motions of the moon and stars' (21:168-9).

Initially, though, Marlow presents Jim entering Patusan in full Sartrean abandonment, 'alone . . . and engaged in a world for which [he bore] the whole responsibility' (Nothingness 555). He 'would have nothing but the soles of his two feet to stand upon, and he would have first to find

his ground at that' (22:177). Like Sartre's Mathieu, he was 'free and alone, . . . without support from any quarter, condemned forever to be free' (Reason 320). And 'every day added a link to the fetters of that strange freedom' (26:199). His commitment to Patusan left him with 'no appeal, as it were; he was imprisoned within the very freedom of his power' (29:214).

It was, however, a joyous freedom. Jim was 'like a man released from bonds who stretches his cramped limbs, runs, leaps, responds to the inspiring elation of freedom' (35:249). He had taken charge of his freedom, and so of his life. He had espoused what Kierkegaard terms the ethical mode, in which man acts not just for gratification of the moment but commits himself to long-range purposes by responsible, decisive choice. Its opposite, the aesthetic mode, as John Wild comments,¹⁴ is one of hedonism, in which the individual pursues materialism and avoids commitment to any long-term purpose. He makes no decisive choices to which he commits his entire self and then upholds. Instead, he seeks pleasure in the moment and flees from anxiety. In the ethical mode, on the other hand, the individual is loyal to lasting decisions, recognising his own humanity and responsibility.

Of course, the existentialist does not suggest that a decision be taken once and for all without further deliberation. It must continually be reaffirmed in the changing situations produced by a world of becoming. Kierkegaard points to this in the example of his own decision to break off his engagement to Regina Olsen: the choice not to marry her was a decisive one that, in Barrett's view,¹⁵ split Kierkegaard in two and had ultimately to be met as a choice of himself, since it determined what he would become.

He saw the pain of alternatives: a life of unbridled sensuality or an absolutely religious one. The choice involved both torment and triumph, and it had to be renewed freely day by day throughout Kierkegaard's life to be given meaning. The drastic either/or of choice entailed sundering himself from a certain possibility for his self, throwing him back on the reality of that self. The ethical self chooses the whole of itself and, in reiterating its past choices, withstands the flux of time by preserving an existential continuity through passing moments.

Thus, in the highest moments of decision-making the individual disregards conventional opinion and makes a choice in obedience to his own personal conscience. Not that decisions should occur in a vacuum; man must plunge himself into making decisions that will affect his situation in the world. We recall again Marcel's and Sartre's insistence that man engage the world by pledging himself to long-range decisions that extend beyond any immediate situation. Every time a man chooses his engagement in 'a project of sincerity', whatever this choice may be, it is impossible to prefer another to it.

This was certainly true of Jim in Patusan. Heeding his own conscience and his father's injunction 'never . . . to do anything which you believe to be wrong' (36:257), he acted as he saw fit -- but, unlike Kurtz, with a profound sense of responsibility. In the process, he accomplished energetic self-assertion, much like Leggatt in The Secret Sharer when, as Cox has pointed out,¹⁶ the captain proved to himself that he was not just a rigid automaton blindly obeying the seaman's code but could take exceptional measures when necessary once he had achieved self-recognition. Jim's self-assertion clearly went beyond Nietzsche's demand for 'the will to self-responsibility' alone (Idols 137) and extended to all the populace

whose champion he was. In the battle against Sherif Ali he unequivocally 'made himself responsible for success on his own head' (26:200).

Jones and Ricardo in Victory could not have been more different, utterly devoid as they were of responsibility towards others. Having in Sartrean terms 'exchanged [their] disturbing "freedom-for-evil" for an inanimate character of evil' (Nothingness 65), they never once embarked on action born of a responsible choice made in the Kierkegaardian anxiety of an either/or situation. Their respectively effete and braggadocian claims of their evilness merely revealed their enslavement to their view of themselves, which -- like all men -- they were free to change. Just as the Sartrean coward can, like Jim, become a hero if he decides to, so the evil man is free to pass 'beyond his evilness'. Instead, Jones acted 'as if the world were still one great, wild jungle without law' (2:5:103), and Ricardo openly asserted, "'I don't care what I do'" (3:6:115). He pursued Lena through unrestrained lust and impulsively wished to "'put a hole between [Heyst's] ribs'" (3:10:216). In a Kierkegaardian framework, Ricardo lived in the aesthetic mode rather than the ethical, never pausing to distinguish between the two. All actions were 'one to him, as long as by the act he liberated the suffering soul of savagery' within him (4:1:237).

In a Sartrean world which demands that each individual create his own values, Ricardo had chosen for himself 'the morals of a cat' (2:7:128). His ape-like functionary, Pedro, strapped by the limitations of his narrow subjectivism, 'had no morals. Nothing could be more hopeless' (2:7:129). Though Ricardo exhibited vigorous action, viewing life as 'a particularly active warfare . . . vividly aware that it held many possibilities of failure' (3:10:213), his action lacked the virtue of conscious commitment.

And, as Suresh Raval has remarked, 'unless actions spring from intending human selves they are liable to have their own inhuman momentum'.¹⁷

Jones behaved with similar disregard for the long-term effect of his actions, which were in the nature of a 'trade' rather than a 'vocation' (2:6:108). He simply delivered himself over to his 'boredom', giving up his freedom to change himself, choosing instead to chain himself to his conception of himself as evil. As Michael Williams comments, Conrad does not explain away evil as lying outside man, who would then not be responsible (though Williams strangely sees Conrad as a 'Catholic' rather than a 'humanist' writer).¹⁸ Jones's actions went untrammelled by the existential anxiety of reflection; like Kurtz, he could kill a man without any 'confounded fuss' (2:7:122), without 'turn[ing] a hair' (2:7:124).

Jim on the other hand, as we have seen, took full responsibility for the war against Sherif Ali, as Sartre would agree he should have. 'If I am mobilized in a war, this war is my war. . . . I deserve it first because I could always get out of it by suicide or by desertion. . . . For lack of getting out of it, I have chosen it . . . and everything takes place as if I bore the entire responsibility for this war' (Nothingness 554). Jim was by no means deluded in thinking himself "'responsible for every life in the land"' (43:297), since to the Bugi, in their 'simple form of assent to his will', his truth had become theirs (43:296). And truth to his own self -- nothing else -- led to his end. Like Sartre's Hoerderer in Dirty Hands (247), 'he was responsible for his own death'. In his self-possession (tinged though it was with egotism and narcissism) Jim let his inner directives dictate his actions, not external compulsion as in the case of Verloc, and he came down 'of his own freewill' to meet Gentleman Brown (41:287), to whom his talk of 'responsibility' was repugnant (41:2887).

Nostromo too was ultimately responsible for his own death, and his final act of returning for the ingots shows that he had still not completely 'regained his freedom' (4:12:447) from the silver that he had served so vigorously (as Heyst had once served the coal company), though in the sense of everyday action, not the Heideggerian understanding of authentic action by which man 'goes towards' himself through commitment and responsibility, action that is the product of an anguished free decision. Yet in the last analysis he and the other major figures of Nostromo had freely chosen (whatever the inducements for them to do so) to form their fundamental modes of being in relation to 'material interest'.¹⁹ San Tomé, like the 'stony levels of Azuera' (1:1:40), left you 'free to call the devil to your aid with impunity' (1:1:42).

Careful consideration played little part in Nostromo's desperate adventure, which he -- like Razumov -- undertook through the value he placed on being '"well spoken of"' (2:7:219) by the Heideggerian 'they'. Sartre reminds us that it is left to the individual to assign whatever value he chooses to his existence: 'there is no sense in life a priori . . . it is yours to make sense of, and the value of it is nothing but the sense that you choose' (Humanism 54). And Decoud's letter to his sister depicts the Capataz as 'a man for whom the value of life seems to consist in personal prestige' (2:7:221). Nostromo alone was responsible for choosing that value -- as he was for the consequences of his actions throughout the silver escapade, particularly his failure to kill Hirsch when he discovered him in the lighter. 'Nostromo did nothing', allowing Hirsch to fall into Sotillo's hands; 'the moment of silencing him for ever had passed' (2:8:241, 248). Similarly, in Victory Heyst failed to dispatch

Jones when he might have: "'If I want to kill him, this is my time", thought Heyst; but he did not move' (4:11:310). He was somewhat like Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon at the very end of Waiting for Godot when, having decided they will 'go', just 'remain standing'. Later, 'by simply shouldering Mr Jones', Heyst might have grabbed the revolver that was to kill Lena, but again he did not act, 'his very will . . . dead of weariness' (4:11:312).

None of Nostromo's actions occurred with conscious existential resolve to embrace an authentic project of selfhood. Though his actions were of considerable importance to himself and to subsequent events, they were different only in degree, not kind, from Mitchell's 'fussy action' (4:8:353) that had so irked Nostromo in the way that 'the necessity of overcoming small obstacles becomes wearisome to a self-confident personality as much by the certitude of success as by the monotony of effort' (4:8:352-3). The silver, Nostromo later reflected, had led him to abandon 'in their last extremity' both Teresa and Decoud -- actions 'paid for by a soul lost and by a vanished life', leaving their perpetrator 'a hunted outcast' (4:10:416) through devotion to the treasure.

The same may be said of Martin Decoud, who never undertook anything with a sense of commitment, except his wooing of Antonia. His trip to Sulaco as 'the executive member of the patriotic small-arms committee' (2:3:152) may have seemed to his sister as having been made with 'earnestness' (2:3:153), but its chief attraction had in fact been the amusement it offered him and the chance to renew his acquaintance with 'the beautiful Antonia, as Miss Avellanos was called in Sulaco' (2:2:150), she with her 'self-possessed manner' and dedication to a cause (2:1:153). Though Decoud, 'the dilettante in life, imagined himself to derive an

artistic pleasure from watching the picturesque extreme of wrong-headedness into which an honest, almost sacred, conviction may drive a man' like Don José (2:5:188), he himself none the less misguidedly chose to ally himself to a cause simply for Antonia's sake. Thus, he accompanied Nostromo as a 'man with a passion, but without a mission' (2:7:219), without an ethical Kierkegaardian long-term commitment to a Sartrean project for selfhood. To a man who like Nietzsche and Sartre had no firm belief in supernatural sanction, the responsibility for his decision was his alone. Even his suicide lacked the quality of affirmative action, despite its coming amid the 'vague' realisation that he had 'misdirected' his life (3:10:413). His death was a mere Heideggerian falling away from Sartrean for-itself to brute in-itself, as the silver dragged him to the depths of the Placid Gulf.

The Goulds too lost their possibilities for authentic being through freely choosing devotion to the silver. Gould's father had early on warned 'his fourteen-year-old Charles' of 'the injustice, the persecution, the outrage' of San Tomé, 'the fatal consequences attaching to the possession of that mine' (1:6:79). The younger Gould, however, chose to regard the mine as a source of 'hope, vigour, and self-confidence' against 'weary indignation and despair' (1:6:80), an attitude he adopted without any careful deliberation, laying hold of San Tomé in an 'angry desire for action . . . the enemy of thought and the friend of flattering illusions', looking to immediate action for a 'sense of mastery over the Fates' (1:6:86). Even though the mine had killed his father, he persisted in his misguided personal view -- as Decoud made quite clear to Emilia Gould: "Are you aware to what point he has idealized the existence, the worth, the

meaning of the San Tomé mine?"' (2:6:199).

Though Gould espoused San Tomé at the time with the noble intention of making the mine 'a serious and moral success' (1:6:86), his decision turned out to have been made in bad faith to his best interests. In their 'illusion' he and his wife chose the silver as a means 'to make good their vigorous view of life against the unnatural error of weariness and despair', doing so without considering profoundly the Kierkegaardian either/or of the whole situation, trusting instead to an 'idea of rehabilitation' that 'was so vague as to elude the support of argument' (1:6:92). Indeed, in making her happiness dependent on 'materialism' Emilia was consigning herself to something she had 'never considered'; in truth, the 'only real' side of her relationship with Charles rested on the 'immaterial' (1:6:93) -- a truth she failed to recognise in time. She too was therefore in Sartrean bad faith of the kind that involves an unconscious lie to the self.

Even if Gould was ultimately acting in bad faith in that his undertaking later crippled his for-itself, his devotion to the mine was sincere in relation to his self at the time and carried a strong sense of commitment to a well-intentioned, long-range plan, the hallmark of what Kierkegaard considers ethical behaviour to be. The mine, Gould felt, was 'dependent on himself alone. It was a serious affair, and he . . . took it grimly' (1:6:98). He certainly did not shirk his perception that, in Sartre's words, he bore 'the whole responsibility' for the 'weight of the whole world on his shoulders' (Nothingness 553). But any existential commitment has constantly to be reassessed, and changed if necessary; Gould doggedly pursued his decision without any repeated reflection on its wisdom.

His wife was less comfortable about this preoccupation with what she considered to be the 'most awful materialism' (1:6:99), and her failure to

follow up this sentiment made her responsible for the subsequent barrenness of her inauthentic existence. Rather than assert her freedom to sunder herself from the world of materialism, she acquiesced in its encroachment, mindless of Jaspers's comment that 'Existenz warns me to detach myself from the world lest I become its prey' (Philosophy 2:5).

Gould, having cast his mine into the political fray and citing the adage that 'God is very high above' (2:5:193) -- implying man's free agency -- adopted as his deliberate 'choice' (2:5:192) the threat of dynamiting the mine, using it as a political weapon. He did this much to Emilia's burgeoning concern, which followed her realisation that the mine had come between them. Camus would insist that she was free to rebel against San Tomé's insidious power, yet even in her fuller perception later of the silver's corrupting influence she failed to take action that would have led to authentic being. And for her husband the mine continued to provide the basis of his existence, of what he thought was true for him. As the chief engineer of the railway commented to Dr Monygham, 'Things seem to be worth nothing by what they are in themselves. I begin to believe that the only solid thing about them is the spiritual value which everyone discovers in his own form of activity' (3:1:275) -- Nietzsche's contention exactly: 'Man merely assigned values to things in order to maintain himself; he created the significance of things, a human significance!' (Zarathustra^{15:6!}_^).

Monygham, however, felt that he himself did not 'put spiritual value' on his own actions, in a cynical attempt to avoid deluding himself (3:1:275), and Gould also gradually began to lose his idealised vision of San Tomé as he came to realise that it 'had brought to a point all the consequences involved in his line of conduct, with its conscious and

subconscious intentions' (4:4:321), or what Sartre would term its reflective and non-reflective choices.

Ultimately, the intentions behind Gould's actions carried little weight in the material world; only their consequences mattered -- as the Monteros well knew. Their followers, 'violent men but little removed from a state of utter savagery', shared primitive man's recognition 'of success as the only standard of morality' (4:5:327), the view Nietzsche ascribes to the prehistoric 'pre-moral' age of man in Beyond Good and Evil (32:45). Whatever value Gould had given his actions, he eventually felt himself suffering from 'fellowship in evil' (4:7:343) and was actually relieved when he no longer had the silver to protect in the midst of warring factions. "'I am glad we've removed it. . . . It would have been a danger and a curse"' (4:7:346).

But his freely chosen loyalty to the silver had already destroyed the best in him: his affection for his wife and his compassion for the poor of Costaguana. Emilia was left to her 'immense desolation . . . all alone in the Treasure House of the World' (4:11:431), and the populace left to penury and the turmoil of war. And in an existential framework Gould had no excuse for his actions. Like all men, he was condemned to utter freedom of choice (however powerful the factors that influenced him) to undertake the actions he did -- with full responsibility for their outcome, as we have seen Conrad insist throughout the major novels.

4 Being with Others

'In the beginning is relation', declares Buber (I and Thou). We are all, in Sartre's phrase, contingent 'existences-in-the-world-in-presence-of-others', existing either authentically or inauthentically with our fellow men. As Macquarrie elaborates,¹ the existentialist regards authentic being-with-others as that mode of relation to another which promotes existence in the full sense, allowing one to stand out as human in freedom and responsibility. Conversely, inauthentic being-with-others depersonalises and dehumanises. Therefore existence with others is judged authentic to the degree to which it permits individuals the freedom to become the unique persons they wish to make of themselves: true community allows for true diversity.

Such diversity, however, is all too often absent. In Kierkegaard's 'untruth' of 'the crowd', the tyranny of conformity allows scant room for individual excellence, promoting a situation in which 'all things at one common level lie', as Yeats puts it in 'These Are the Clouds' (Poems 107). Nietzsche's 'herd' (as at Power 20:17) abhors difference and brooks no deviance from its norms. Thus, it tends to pull down those who rise above its dead level. Which is why existentialists (and their Romantic precursors) generally demand that the individual defy the masses as an initial movement towards the freedom that will open him to fulfilling relations with his fellows. Even if Sartre insists that no wholly authentic being-with-others is ever possible, it must be attempted all the same, since one's achievement of personal authentic selfhood is never fully

satisfying on its own. One should, Kierkegaard stresses, aim to be a self that moves beyond itself to the wider community of men, for, as Nietzsche warns, 'how narrow . . . everlasting meditation on the ego makes us!'² But though we must 'go beyond the individual and idiosyncratic', we should do so 'only in alliance with the individual'.³

Sartre more than most emphasises this Nietzschean primacy of individuality over community, as his famous line in No Exit (47) testifies: 'Hell is -- other people' (though this surely implies its corollary, 'Heaven is -- other people'). But even if to Sartre others are often obstacles to an individual's self-fulfilment, he does (as we saw in the preceding chapters) uphold the need for engagement with and concerned responsibility towards others. This points to the conflicting claims of individuality and what lies beyond it. Like Nietzsche, Sartre underlines the tension inherent in personal relationships as they are experienced by most existents, who tend to be worlds unto themselves, 'locked in selfhood', as T. S. Eliot says, each seeking to absorb or transcend the other. Thus to Sartre 'the essence of the relations between consciousnesses is not the Mitsein; it is conflict' (Nothingness 429).

This conflict, Sartre argues, arises not from any deliberate ill will but simply from the bald fact of our 'contingent' existence. 'The fact of the Other is incontestable and touches me to the heart. I realize him through uneasiness; through him I am perpetually in danger. . . . The Other does not appear to me as a being who is constituted first so as to encounter me later; he appears as a being who arises in an original relation of being with me and whose indubitability and factual necessity are those of my own consciousness' (Nothingness 275). This embroils us in

attempts to subjugate or possess others, thereby impinging on their freedom. 'While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me. . . . Descriptions of concrete behaviour must therefore be envisaged within the perspective of conflict' (364).

Yet this situation of conflict can be mitigated by opening oneself to others and seeking genuine communion with them, so that Kierkegaard fervently maintains that the 'self which is the aim is not merely a personal self but a social, a civic self' (Either/Or 2:220). 'It is dangerous', he says, 'to isolate oneself too much, to evade the bonds of society' (Journals 28). 'He who has ethically chosen and found himself has himself as . . . a concrete self which stands in reciprocal relations with these surroundings, these conditions of life, this natural order'. And the quality of this reciprocity should constantly be enhanced, since 'the personal life as such' achieved by the solitary individual is 'an isolation and hence imperfect; in the fact that through the civic life he comes back into his personality the personal life manifests itself in a higher form' (Either/Or 2:219-20).

To accomplish this 'higher form' of selfhood (which for Kierkegaard is attained through Christianity), one should strive to transform 'every relationship between man and man into a relationship of conscience and thereby also into a relationship of love' (Love 138). In such relationships men live as co-existents; without them, they live simply as contingent objects. In Marcel's words, 'Fundamentally, I have no reason to set any store by myself, except in so far as I know that I am loved by other beings who are loved by me' (Mystery 2:9). Or, more particularly,

that I am loved by another individual in a bond that exceeds even the already considerable bonds with others enjoyed by the social self. Through love, declares Sartre, we 'feel our existence is justified' (Nothingness 371) -- a sentiment Conrad wholly endorses.

Yet it is not until his last major novel, Victory, that Conrad makes the quest for genuine interpersonal relationships through love an overriding theme, though he does of course explore the question of authentic being-with-others in numerous earlier works also. As Paul L. Wiley observes in a general way,⁴ after Nostramo the erotic strain increases in Conrad's fiction and the novelist regularly focuses on the evidence love gives of man's willingness to establish a protective bond with another of his kind, stressing the consequences of its neglect through a decline of moral feeling in society. Newhouse too⁵ indicates Conrad's emphasis in his later works on man's salvation through devotion to another person, and among these novels it is in Heyst and Lena that Conrad provides a particularly intricate depiction of people overcoming the isolation of inauthentic personal being by moving beyond the confines of selfhood to a wider engagement with others through the existential desiderata of genuine communication, solicitude, fidelity and love to achieve a Sartrean sense of personal justification for their existence. In consequence, Victory offers a useful expository model for these concerns, which I shall set out in some detail before reinforcing them through references to other exemplary works by Conrad later in the chapter.

Initially, Axel Heyst was as isolated from the wider community of men 'as if he were perched on the highest peak of the Himalayas', surrounded

on his island by the monotony of 'a tepid, shallow sea' (1:1 19). He had imposed this way of life on himself through what he professed was 'a taste for solitude' (1:4:37); but in truth, the narrator tells us, Heyst 'was not a hermit by temperament. The sight of his kind was not invincibly odious to him', and his visit to the Tesmans indicated 'that his detachment from the world was not complete', that 'the wandering, drifting, unattached' Swede shared the 'innate curiosity about our fellows which is a trait of human nature' (1:4:40-1). After all, the existentialist would point out, there is no side-stepping being-with-others. As Heidegger emphasises, 'Sofar as Dasein is at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being' (Time 163). Thus, man should develop in a fulfilling way this inescapable relation between his self and the world that makes up his field of concern (Besorgen) by engaging in solicitude (Fursorge) towards others (see Time 157ff.)

To Heidegger, one cannot avoid a sense of concern, and he illustrates this in the Roman myth of Care taking up a bit of earth into which Jupiter had breathed spirit and which was called homo, because it was fashioned from humus. Saturn judged that Care would possess the animated clay as long as it lived, after which Earth would receive its body and Jupiter its spirit. Hence care is intrinsic to man, both generally and with regard to other people. In relation to another, a man is not simply an object of practical concern but one of personal concern. It is this personal concern that the word solicitude should properly convey (see Time 157), though both solicitude and general concern, as Macquarrie mentions,⁶ may be expressed in the negative mode of pushing things out of the way rather than using them, of neglecting or resenting the other person rather than actively caring for him. To exist simply as an anonymous 'One' without

solicitude for another Heidegger considers living in the Mitwelt as a mere contingent creature, ignoring one's ontological freedom that is the sole means to fuller communication with others.

Thus Victory's Captain Davidson in his concern for Heyst, in his 'affection' for him as his 'self-appointed protector' (1:5:44), feared for his friend in his misguided self-exile and 'spiritual starvation' (3:1:152) -- almost as though Davidson were heeding Kierkegaard's warning that 'it is dangerous to isolate oneself too much, to evade the bonds of society' (Journals 28). For Heyst (as his elopement with Alma/ Magdalen so tellingly revealed) was indeed tied to the necessity for human company, despite all his appearances of having 'no connexion with earthly affairs and passions', of being utterly 'detached from feminine associations' (1:7:61).

Through seeking to avoid the 'realities of common human enterprise' and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to, Heyst's self had become what Kierkegaard terms 'an isolation and hence imperfect' (Either/Or 2:220). Accordingly, Heyst was 'disenchanted with life as a whole' (2:1:67). He was 'moved by [the] sense of loneliness which had come to him in the hour of renunciation' undertaken at his father's bidding (2:1:68) and later 'was hurt by the sight of his own life, which ought to have been a masterpiece of aloofness' (3:1:149), sharing the existentialist view that life without a committed relationship to another leaves one unsatisfied, condemned to the shallows of inauthentic being. In Nietzschean terms, Heyst would have to 'go beyond the individual and idiosyncratic'. And the conflicting claims of these two opposing demands -- his father's injunction and his own desire for human connection -- led of

course, as H. M. Daleski points out,⁷ to a sense of self-division in Heyst that would not surprise Kierkegaard and Sartre.

Heyst's initial foray back into the world of merely contingent existents disturbed him. The Zangiacomos' orchestra repelled him with its clamorous music and vacuous sexuality: 'in the movements of the bare arms, in the low dresses, the coarse faces, the stony eyes of the executants, there was a suggestion of brutality -- something cruel, sensual, and repulsive' (2:1:69). Even more disturbing was 'the unnatural spectacle' of the spectators' 'indifference'. Heyst himself 'felt a shudder of pity' for the orchestra members, 'for these beings, exploited, hopeless, devoid of charm and grace' (2:1:70). 'Temperamentally sympathetic', he was concerned about them -- a concern that would grow into Heideggerian solicitude (augmented by sexual interest) for the girl who 'had captured Heyst's awakened faculty of observation; he had the sensation of a new experience. That was because his faculty of observation had never before been captured by any feminine creature in that marked and exclusive fashion. He looked at her anxiously, as no man ever looks at another man' (2:1:71).

The girl too responded with 'alarm' (2:1:73); being-with-others, we recall Sartre saying, leaves us feeling threatened by those who share our contingent existence before we attain deeper relationship with them. Marcel feels that one can only overcome this Sartrean 'uneasiness' in the face of 'danger' by opening oneself to others, by fostering what he terms one's availability (disponibilité), one's willingness to be at the disposal of another through sympathetically viewing the other as a bodily presence that is not just an external object. In The Philosophy of Existence (26) Marcel remarks, 'The person who is at my disposal is the

one who is capable of being with me with the whole of himself when I am in need; while the one who is not at my disposal seems merely to offer me a temporary loan raised on his resources. For the one I am a presence; for the other I am an object'. Sadly, most people do not make themselves available but are closed, preoccupied with themselves in their anxiety to maintain themselves in what they see as a threatening world. Thus Marcel urges that each individual be fully present to the other. 'Presence denotes something rather different and more comprehensive than the fact of just being there; to be quite exact one should not actually say that an object is present' -- man alone has that potential (Homo Viator 15).

The contrasting modes of treating others either as fully present co-existents or as brute objects Buber terms I-Thou and I-It relations, compound terms that have primary application to any situation, depending on its quality. 'The primary word I-It can never be spoken with the whole being' (I and Thou 3), and in such a relation whatever lies in one's field of concern is seen purely as an external instrument. In an I-Thou relation, by contrast, one's solicitude opens one to the other person to allow a fuller connection whereby he is not simply on hand as an object. As Macquarrie points out,⁸ each of the two forms can wander over into the other. They are not absolutely distinct, and the I-Thou relation can tragically degenerate into an I-It one when we turn a fellow being into a thing, an instrument, through exploitation, discrimination and prejudice -- as in the extreme cases of slavery and prostitution. On the other hand, the I-It can blossom into the I-Thou, marked by wholeness and openness.

Heyst clearly demonstrated his potential for an I-Thou relationship in his sympathetic response to Mrs Zangiaco's treating Alma/Magdalen as a

mere object when she pinched her. This initial sympathy was soon deepened by the girl's 'physiognomy' (2:1:74) -- and to Sartre and Marcel the physical is the very basis of any interpersonal relation, since the body is the self (which is also Zarathustra's view: 'Body am I entirely, and nothing more, and soul is only the name of something in the body' [4:32]). Because I dwell in a relationship with my body that 'resists being made wholly objective to the mind . . . ', says Marcel, 'I can properly assert that I am identical with my body' (Mystery 1:101). As Sanborn notes,⁹ to me my body is not an external object like other objects, since I cannot separate myself from it. Thus I can relate to another only via my body and all its attributes, its opportunities for communication and wider knowledge, and we recall the biblical use (as at Genesis 4:1) of the verb to know as a synonym for sexual intercourse. I participate in my body as an incarnate being, feel myself to be my body and my sensations. And to Sartre sensation is neither wholly subjective nor objective: the warmth of water, for example, is a quality of an object, but it also gives information about the body that senses it, a means of apprehending both the object and one's own body. So too my touching another person reveals something both of myself and the person I touch.

The existentialist emphasises also that we perceive the other's body as a totality, not as an assemblage of discrete parts. As Macquarrie expresses it, we say 'He raised his hand' rather than 'His hand went up'. The movement of the hand is viewed not in isolation but as part of a whole situation in which a body is not simply an item but a user of the world. Hence Sartre's contention that because 'I can not perceive any organ of the Other's body in isolation, . . . my perception of the Other's body is radically different from my perception of things' (Nothingness 345). The

other's body is not a mere thing: it is the other person. 'Pierre's body is in no way to be distinguished from Pierre-for-me' (346). Yet my body does in a sense become an object for the other person, and vice versa. The other has a view of me that I can never have of myself. 'My body is there not only as the point of view which I am but again as a point of view on which are actually brought to bear points of view which I could never take; my body escapes me on all sides' (352).

This can lead me to feel alienated from my own body, a sensation that is expressed in such affective states as shame, shyness and embarrassment, in which I am aware of my body not as it is for myself but as it is for the other. And I attempt to escape being an object for the other through love, through a longing to assimilate him to myself. But for this to happen the other has to love me, and to make him love me I have paradoxically to become an object to excite that love. At times this may take the form of exciting his lust, whereby I lapse into the in-itself of brute flesh. Yet what I in fact strive for is to excite him as a total subjective individual with whom I desire union. Therefore, Sartre argues, desire is not to be equated with lust, since desire always goes towards something beyond the limits of my subjectivity -- which means that desire, properly defined, is for a transcendental object that engages the whole personality: 'I am the accomplice of my desire' (Nothingness 388). Desire, however, reveals to me my sexuality, which is a necessary ontological part of my being-with-others and is a project of being, which precedes it, just as infantile sexuality precedes the physiological maturity of the sexual organs that mark each of us as a sexual existent.

Berdyayev too stresses that human sexuality has an inescapable

ontological dimension and is not just a biological function. 'Man's sexual nature cannot be placed on the same level with other functions of his organism, . . . such as the circulation of the blood. In man's sexuality we perceive the metaphysical roots of his being. . . . Sexuality is not a special, differentiated function of the human being. It is diffused throughout man's whole being, penetrates all his cells and determines the whole of his life' (Christian Existentialism 98-9).

Accordingly, the narrator in Victory does not evade the sexual nature of the lovers' relationship. Early on already we see their 'lips touch', albeit 'lightly' (2:2:85) in this the Victorian age, when George Eliot in Adam Bede is obliged to indicate coitus by a dropped handkerchief. 'The girl called Alma' was 'flesh and blood', not a disembodied 'dream' (2:3:87, 88). Later, 'while [Heyst] was looking into her eyes she raised her bare forearm [rather than 'her bare forearm went up'], out of the short sleeve, and held it in the air till he noticed it and hastened to pose his great bronze moustaches on the whiteness of the skin. Then they went in' (3:3:161) -- a modestly presented inception of foreplay implicitly leading to coitus indoors. With him she experienced the power of sexuality, 'swinging between the abysses of earth and heaven in the hollow of his arm' (3:4:176).

The narrator repeatedly (though Cox thinks unsuccessfully)¹⁰ stresses their physical intimacy, but in terms that constantly highlight their desire for contact with the entire self of the other -- that Sartrean flavour whereby the lover seeks the being-for-itself of the beloved. In Stern's paraphrase of Sartre,¹¹ through love I hope to possess the other in so far as he is a self, a subject, a freedom endowed with a gaze (and thus an individual perspective), for only as such did he possess my being. The

lover wants to possess not just an object but a subject, a living freedom. And this aspiration of the lover is expressed by sexual desire. Properly speaking, desire aims to possess the beloved's body not simply as physiological reality but as the incarnation of the other's freedom. This freedom, his being-for-itself, pervades the beloved's whole body even to its surface, hence Sartre's assertion that 'by touching this body I . . . finally touch the Other's free subjectivity. This is the true meaning of the word possession' (Nothingness 394).

As Mary Warnock comments,¹² Sartre explains love not as 'ownership' but as a lover's desire to possess his beloved's consciousness, his freedom. And he wishes to possess his beloved because both lover and beloved are in a sense created by each other through their voluntary choice of each other. The Sartrean lover 'wants to possess a freedom as freedom . . . but demands that this freedom as freedom should no longer be free' (Nothingness 367). In love one makes oneself an object for another, but an object of special, limitless value, seeking to control his freedom to value any third person above oneself. Man, however, cannot absolutely attain this unconditional value he desires, so that in making himself an object for the other person he tries to overcome the subjectivity that precludes himself from being a sheer object, and love can then degenerate into masochism. Alternatively, one attempts to turn the other person into an object rather than a fully human individual, and love, as Sanborn remarks,¹³ can then change into lust, masochism into sadism. In lust the other's subjectivity collapses, in that he is regarded as a physical object to be appropriated at will -- an attitude that is checked when the other reconstitutes himself as a subject by exercising his freedom. And Sartre

feels that the other's freedom always remains out of reach, so that every attitude is finally frustrated. Extreme frustration is then embodied in hate, resulting from the discovery that there is no way of uniting wholly with the other or of salvaging one's own freedom.

These pitfalls of sexuality, as we shall see, were amply true of Jones, Ricardo and Schomberg. But they were less so of Heyst and Lena. Heyst may have experienced 'the flattered vanity of his possession of this woman', but at the same time Lena 'felt in her innermost depths an irresistible desire to give herself up to him more completely' (3:4:170). He in turn felt 'she would enslave him altogether by the sheer beauty of the sound' of her voice, 'suggesting infinite depths of wisdom and feeling' (3:4:176). Yet even their elevated form of mutual possession was tinged with the Sartrean insistence that one can never wholly possess the other as one longs to. As Heyst confessed to Lena, "'It is because I think so much of this possession of mine that I can't have it complete enough'" (3:4:177).

Sex and language, Macquarrie argues,¹⁴ imply that no individual is complete without others, and even so-called casual acts of sex are not merely peripheral to existence but are bound to affect the persons concerned quite deeply, for in them too something of the totality of being-with-others is expressed, however badly. Of course there is in them an element of exploitation in which the exploiter regards the other as a Buberian It, in which the sexual act flows from less than the whole self, but even then some aspect of our totality is affected. And if it is the prime characteristic of an I-Thou relationship that the whole person is involved, then there is a sense in which the desirable form of the sexual act is the paradigm of such a relationship, since ideally it is

total ecstasis, total contact and total mutuality. Sartre falls short when inclining to view sex in isolation rather than as a series of acts that occur within a relationship between two people, a relationship which involves much more than the act of sex alone and which the act concentrates and nurtures as part of a broader, ongoing ecstasis whereby the two persons interpenetrate each other's existence in innumerable ways. Thus it is that Macquarrie considers truly human sexuality to be 'a highly sophisticated existential phenomenon'¹⁵ that can lead to knowledge both of oneself and the other person and can promote a sense of authentic being-with-others.

This was the mode of Heyst's and Lena's sexual responses to each other, which were very different from Wilhelm Schomberg's towards Alma/Magdalen. The hotel keeper constantly 'prowled round her, mute, hungry, portentous behind his great beard, or else assailed her in quiet corners and empty passages with deep, mysterious murmurs from behind, which, notwithstanding their clear import, sounded horribly insane somehow' (2:2:77). To Schomberg she was just an object of lust, and his words to her imparted no sense of true communication -- unlike hers to Heyst, which 'seemed' to make 'the illusion of human fellowship on earth vanish before the naked truth of her existence' (2:2:78). Her voice, emanating from her physical presence, 'seduced Heyst by its amazing quality . . . a voice which would have made silly chatter supportable and the roughest talk fascinating'. Even though their 'conversation' was 'perfectly insignificant' (2:1:74), it offered what Buber terms dialogue, which suggests the 'mutual' character of a relationship between people that entails genuine communication and can never be one sided, dominating or possessive. It demands openness and the

willingness to listen and receive as well as to speak and give, so that to Buber betweenness is the key element in any desirable interpersonal relationship.

Such Buberian dialogue is central also to Marcel, who asserts that through communication the self and the other become mutual creations. A prime means of effecting communication is of course language, though not simply as speech for the sake of speech. 'When language is used without true significance', says Jaspers in Man in the Modern Age (119), 'it loses its purpose as a means of communication, and becomes an end in itself . . . it is verbosity in place of reality'. But in true communication I am revealed to myself, along with the other. The greater the failure to communicate, the less authentic one's being, increasing despair. Our individual well-being thus depends on caring engagement with others that promotes a full sense of Buberian betweenness of the kind the lovers in Victory achieved. Even in the early stages of their acquaintance 'the mere vibrating, warm nobility of the sound' of Alma/Magdalen's voice 'found its way into Heyst's heart', and he responded to the totality of her being and the 'good faith' it expressed (2:1:74, 75). In their openness towards each other, even a smile produced for the outside world could give Heyst 'a sort of ardour to live which was very new to his experience', 'the awakening of a tenderness, indistinct and confused as yet, towards an unknown woman' (2:2:79, 80). Already he was beginning to move beyond himself towards a transcendental object that properly defines desire in Sartrean terms.

Another aspect of Heyst's self-transcendence was his commitment to helping Alma/Magdalen escape her life among the Zangiaco crew: he 'engaged himself' by a 'promise' that produced a new 'fulness of heart' (2:2:80, 81). As Nietzsche observes, man is the only animal capable of

making a promise, which points to his interconnectedness with other individuals and the community, a relation founded on fidelity, on faithfulness to the engagements we pledge ourselves to. For Marcel a person, engagement and community together form a continuity. Fidelity is an intrinsic human quality that makes genuine community possible, a transcending of oneself towards others through commitments to them. Such commitments involve at the same time the higher Sartrean purpose of one's striving to achieve the image one has of what humanity should be, so that fidelity becomes a treasured attribute -- particularly because, as Marcel puts it, the 'menace of betrayal . . . overshadows our whole world'. 'Faithfulness is . . . the exact opposite of inert conformism. It is the active recognition of something permanent . . . it refers invariably to a presence' (Existence 21-22). And such interpersonal fidelity is of course to Conrad among the supreme virtues. What is valuable in the temporal world, he asserts in his preface to A Personal Record (xxiii), 'rests notably, among others, on the idea of Fidelity'.

To the existentialist, fidelity enhances both giver and receiver. In 'sustaining' Alma/Magdalen, Heyst felt so 'changed' that he was surprised to find his outward appearance unaltered, 'a belittling of his recent experience' (2:2:83, 86). The girl he named Lena had become to him 'the most real impression of his detached existence' (2:3:88), an anchor in his aimless drifting -- not unlike the 'one piecee wife' of his Chinese servant, who 'had anchored Wang to the spot by her charms' (3:1:153, 154). Lena's charms produced in Heyst more than sexual longing: they awakened full care and concern, a Heideggerian solicitude that 'pleased and soothed her' (3:5:183). Her reciprocal 'infinite and tender concern for him'

(4:5:268) amid the dangers he faced 'warmed her heart, exalted her mind with a sense of an inconceivable intensity of existence' (4:9:293).

As Alma/Magdalen her existence with the Zangiacomo troupe had clearly relegated her to an inauthentic life as a sheer object with no sustaining human contact, a life of 'sordid conditions and brutal incidents' among those who were 'anything but musicians by profession' (1:5:45), among prostitutes and pimps. When Davidson first heard of her running away with Heyst his immediate reaction was to think, 'with the air of a man who knows life' (1:5:47), of a merely sexual liaison -- all the more startling in a man like Heyst, the 'perfect gentleman' (1:5:48), who must have found her 'specially attractive' (1:5:50).

She had certainly been sufficiently attractive to interest Schomberg, even though she was indeed ultimately 'nothing' to the hotelier (1:5:52). He was right in saying that he did not 'care' for her, an attitude that is all too often the dominant mode of being-with-others whereby, in Sartre's words, when I look at people 'I am fixing the people whom I see into objects; I am in relation to them as the Other is in relation to me' (Nothingness 266); we exist in a Buberian I-It relationship. The fact that Lena was formerly known indiscriminately as Alma or Magdalen heightened her reification, which in turn affected her own view of herself. She had become so self-effacing that she felt by living alone with Heyst she would not 'be in anybody's way . . . not even a dog's' (2:2:82).

It was Heyst's love that eventually gave her a firm identity and a name (thereby 'creating' her, as Sartre claims all lovers do in choosing each other). This lent her a sense of what Buber terms confirmation, by which the full existence of each person involved in a relationship is confirmed by the other, imparting a feeling of personal worth that Sartre

considers to be 'the basis for the joy of love when there is joy: we feel that our existence is justified' (Nothingness 371). Though Sartre considers man's existence completely contingent, without any foundation, he feels that in love man attempts to discover a grounding for his being through becoming his partner's absolute choice, not just a relative, contingent choice. Lovers feel themselves created for each other and so no longer think themselves *de trop*. Indeed, Lena came to feel that Heyst alone gave her existence validity: "'If you were to stop thinking of me I shouldn't be in the world at all!'" (3:3:159). They had become available to each other in a fully Marcellian sense, whereby 'the person who is at my disposal is the one who is capable of being with me with the whole of himself when I am in need' (Existence 26).

Heyst's love, then, turned Lena into 'a human being who counted; because she was no longer defending herself for herself alone' (4:2:239). Conrad depicts a similar situation of self-affirmation through love in an Indonesian setting in Almayer's Folly, where, as Peter J. Glassman comments,¹⁶ Nina discovered an escape from her inhibiting identity through Dain, who experienced a concomitant release from his constricting self, the kind of quickened sense of being which Aissa excited in Willems in An Outcast of the Islands -- though Willems (somewhat like Heyst) did to an extent use Aissa as a bulwark against experience. Once their love dissipated, Willems could not endure Aissa's staring at him, since he felt -- as Hunt Hawkins has remarked¹⁷ -- that it transformed him into a mere object under her Sartrean 'look' (as at Nothingness 257ff.)

The relationship between Heyst and Lena was not, however, so impossibly idyllic as to be devoid of Sartrean interpersonal conflict, and

Lena 'betrayed always a shade of anxiety' (34:3:159). But such anxiety was usually assuaged by the plenitude of their mutual presence. Even their silences in each other's company carried a fulfilling sense of communication. Lena 'was no chatterer. She was rather silent, with a capacity for immobility, an upright stillness'. Not that their Buberian dialogue provided utter self-revelation: 'in the intimacy of their life her grey, unabashed gaze forced upon him the sensation of something inexplicable reposing within her . . . reserving itself even in the moments of complete surrender' (3:3:164). This suggests Sartre's contention that no absolute interpersonal union is possible, but it also accords with Buber's demand that dialogue in its full sense not deny each partner the room to be himself or herself, to preserve unique otherness. There should be not absorption but mutuality.

To Buber the fact of relation (a word he confines solely to relationship between persons, which is fundamental and primordial in human existence) implies the equally primordial fact of what he terms distance, which has the potential for slippage into a situation in which a genuine relation is lost or fails to be actualised -- so that there is a constant dialectical tension against which the drama of the interpersonal is played out. Any genuine I-Thou relationship contains an element of distance, since it is not sheer union but a condition in which each party retains his unique otherness, the room to be himself without merging completely into the other as happens in possessive affection or mystical love. Buber, Macquarrie reminds us, insists that we must have respect for the other and not try to change him to our idea of what he ought to be.

The fact of such separateness in Heyst and Lena's love did not, however, prevent their feeling more authentically alive in each other's

presence, even when this sensation was tinged with disturbance. 'Heyst stood the frank examination' of Lena's Sartrean look 'with a playful smile, hiding the profound effect these veiled grey eyes produced -- whether on his heart or on his nerves, whether sensuous or spiritual, tender or irritating, he was unable to say' (3:3:164-5). But at least he had been lifted from the vapidness of his rootless existence. 'The girl he had come across, of whom he had possessed himself, to whose presence he was not yet accustomed, with whom he did not yet know how to live; that human being so near and still so strange, gave him a greater sense of his own reality than he had ever known in all his life' (3:3:169-70).

Lena in turn was stimulated by 'that intense interest which his person awakened in her mind and in her heart' (3:4:171). 'He had given to life a savour, a movement, a promise mingled with menaces, which she had not suspected were to be found in it. . . . She thought that he had opened her to the feelings of delicate joy, that the very uneasiness he caused her was delicious in its sadness' (3:8:204). Even that 'uneasiness' Sartre points to in interpersonal relationships is transmuted by love. With all its cross-currents, 'her love for this man' imparted 'something rapturous and profound going beyond the mere embrace' (4:4:250), beyond even the considerable sense of ecstasis Macquarrie perceives in bodily orgasm,¹⁸ which connotes the fulness of exsistere, of existence as suggestive of going out of oneself; the individual goes out from himself to the other in a unity of being-with-the-other (a unity Sartre says falls away into separate consciousnesses after orgasm). And the sexual act is not only ecstatic but also an intimation of a total sharing of being.

Heyst's bond with Lena was clearly quite different from the kind of

association he had formed with Morrison when, Heyst said, "'I had, in a moment of inadvertance, created for myself a tie. . . . One gets attached in a way to people one has done something for. But is that friendship? I am not sure what it was. I only know that he who forms a tie is lost"' (3:3:169). It required that greater openness of Marcellian availability to create the profound value of his relationship with Lena, who with a Sartrean sense of frustration wanted to bridge even Buber's desirable distance between them. "'I only wish I could give you something more, or better, or whatever it is you want"' (3:4:177). Certainly the lovers did grow closer and closer. 'He raised her hand to his lips, and let them rest on it for a space . . . feeling, in this moment of perfect quietness, that in holding her surrendered hand he had found a closer communion than they had ever achieved before. But even then there still lingered in him a sense of incompleteness not altogether overcome -- which, it seemed, nothing ever would' (3:4:178-9). As Sartre contends, the other's freedom is always ultimately elusive. Lena 'had the secret of individuality which excites -- and escapes' (3:4:181).

The interplay of submission, possession and the longing for completeness recalled to Heyst his father's grim evaluation of love. "'Of the stratagems of life the most cruel is the consolation of love -- the most subtle, too; for the desire is the bed of dreams"' (3:5:184). But even though Heyst feared that their love might one day dissolve into the insubstantiality of a dream, that fear did not render love worthless while it lasted, despite his being well aware of the Sartrean conflict love entails. "'I suppose"', he remarked to Lena, "'a certain amount of quarrelling is necessary for existence in this world"', a world, the narrator comments, 'in which love itself rests as much on antagonism as on

attraction' (3:5:186) -- a less virulent phrasing of Sartre's belief that love is perpetually fraught with insecurity and the danger that the one lover can change the other into an object. Also, love remains linked to sexuality, a fundamental structure of our being-for-others that (as Stern points out¹⁹) is for Sartre the bedrock of 'collaboration, conflict, rivalry, emulation, engagement, obedience': they 'all include as their skeleton -- so to speak -- sexual relations' (Nothingness 407). In Nietzsche's opinion, too, sex involves 'perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliations' (Tragedy 1:33).

Regardless of the antagonistic aspects of their love, Heyst was none the less buoyed by the fulness of Lena's Marcellian presence, by what even Sartre concedes to be the sustaining power of love, which lends to lovers a sense of justification for their existence akin to Buber's notion of confirmation. Though Heyst was 'struck . . . by the physical and moral sense of the imperfections of their relations', this simply 'made him desire her constant nearness, before his eyes, under his hand, and which, when she was out of his sight, made her so vague, so elusive and illusory, a promise that could not be embraced and held' (3:5:186). "'There's that in you, Lena, which can console me for worse things, for uglier passages'", he told her -- and embraced her with a caress that 'warmed his heart' (3:5:187). His great longing was that they might "'live untroubled and learn to know each other'" (4:8:283).

Though disturbed by 'the vague apprehension of a distant future, in which he saw Lena unavoidably separated from him by profound and subtle differences', Heyst recognised the Kierkegaardian transcendence towards another which she provided, that 'he no longer belonged to himself' alone;

'there was a call far more imperious and august' (3:8 203). In the same way, Lena had a sense of being impelled by a 'force that was outside of her and more worthy' (4:12:315). Amid the dangers posed by Ricardo she felt herself going beyond her own selfhood in her Heideggerian solicitude for Heyst, whom she sought to 'protect' in response to feeling herself 'sustained' by the 'encircling and protecting pressure' of his arms (4:4:251). 'Exalted . . . with a sense of an inconceivable intensity of existence' (4:9:293) born of her devotion, she wished to take the 'struggle' of resistance 'upon herself, in a great exaltation of love and self-sacrifice . . . altogether on herself, every bit of it' (4:5:257). Despite her doubts as to her ultimate value for Heyst she still placed him above herself, thinking that even if she were to die 'she would hold in herself the impress of something most rare and precious -- his embraces made her own by her courage in saving his life' (4:12:315).

Likewise, Heyst saw Lena's image 'constantly before his eyes, with all the pathos and force of its appeal, august, pitiful, and almost holy to him' (4:11:309), a source of veneration beyond his circumscribed selfhood. Each was transported by the other through the mutuality of their togetherness -- unlike Mrs Schomberg, who lived a life of utter isolation with her husband among those who frequented their hotel, 'speaking to no one, and no one speaking to her. Schomberg himself took no more interest in her than may be implied in a sudden and totally unmotivated scowl. Otherwise the very Chinamen ignored her existence' (1:5:45). When Davidson, 'easily sorry for people', tried to make conversation with her, 'she was so unused to being addressed by customers that . . . she jumped exactly like a figure made of wood, without losing her rigid immobility. . . . One was inclined to think of her as an It' (1:5:46).

But even such a reified 'waxwork figure . . . without expression, without movement, without voice, without sight' (1:5:49) gained a brief moment of fuller being by moving beyond herself towards others through her resolve to aid Heyst and Alma/Magdalen in their elopement. Yet Davidson ignorantly put her action down to 'some interest of her own to serve. She was too lifeless to be suspected of impulsive compassion' (1:5:50). Her husband's view of her as simply an unappealing object is stressed by the narrator's remark that physically (especially 'in her night attire') she 'looked the most unattractive object in existence -- miserable, insignificant, faded, crushed, old' (2:5:96), in dismal contrast to 'the feminine form' Schomberg 'had ever in his mind's eye' (2:5:97). He did not regard his wife as a Marcellian presence, relating to her instead in a degraded I-It way. In her dependence on him, however, 'his swollen, angry features awakened in the miserable woman over whom he had been tyrannizing for years a fear for his precious carcass, since the poor creature had nothing else but that to hold on to in the world' (2:5:97).

Dependent though his wife was on him, Schomberg had no solicitude for her personal well-being, forcing her to rummage 'absolutely idiotic with fright' through Jones's luggage while he lounged 'in manly, careless attitudes on the veranda -- keeping watch' (2:5:97). His defence was that Jones 'wouldn't touch a woman', though for her the search was 'an awful job; but she did go in, because she was much more afraid of Schomberg than of any possible consequences of the act' (2:5:98). And her thanks for her labours was a muttered, '"Stupid female!"' (2:5:98).

As Sartre would point out, Schomberg's frustration with his wife turned to hatred. For him she was simply an external instrument unable to

nurture any enhanced sense of his own personal worth. 'The possession of Mrs Schomberg was no incitement. . . . Instead of caring for no one, he felt that he cared for nothing. Life was a hollow sham' (2:5:99). Clearly their relationship imparted no mutual justification whatsoever. Indeed, he longed to be rid of her: '"I wish"', he exclaimed to Ricardo, '"you would carry her off with you somewhere to the devil!'"' (2:5:103). Nor was Schomberg's attitude towards Lena one of tenderness. She was purely a sexual object for whom he '"would have kicked everything to pieces"' (2:5:105). Yet she did at least awaken lust in him, animalistic though it was; Mrs Schomberg, on the other hand, was to him just a lump of unappetising flesh, as the graphic physical descriptions of her emphasise. Sexuality had no power to draw husband and wife together. 'Dressed for duty' in her nightgown, Mrs Schomberg would simply 'stare straight before her' (2:8:145), locked in isolation like her spouse. Focusing yet again on how bodily repulsive she was in her husband's view, the narrator comments that Schomberg felt his life to be 'blighted . . . and never with such force as when . . . he perceived that woman sitting patiently in a chair, her toes peeping out under the edge of her night-dress, an amazingly small amount of hair on her head drooping on the long stalk of scraggy neck, with that everlasting scared grin showing a blue tooth and meaning nothing -- not even real fear. For she was used to him.

'Sometimes he was tempted to screw the head off the stalk . . . quite unaware that he had murdered the poor woman morally years ago. . . . Her bodily presence was bitterly offensive, because of its contrast with a very different feminine image. And it was no use getting rid of her. She was a habit of years, and there would be nothing to put in her place' (2:5:107-8).

The narrator's stressing of the body continues in his depiction of 'plain Mr Jones and Co.' Our first view of them is during Schomberg's meeting them at the mail-boat, eyeing (or in Sartre's term 'fixing') them -- as he did everyone -- as 'either the objects of scandalous gossip or else the recipients of narrow strips of paper with proper bill-heads stating the name of his hotel' (2:4:91-2). In an almost melodramatic way their very appearances connoted their characters. Jones had a 'handsome but emaciated' face, a body that was 'long and loose-jointed', with 'slender fingers' (2:4:92), 'long feminine eyelashes' and an 'air of withered youth' (2:4:95) under his 'delicate and beautifully pencilled eyebrows' (2:5:101). Ricardo, whom Jones insisted 'must have the room next to mine' (2:4:92), was 'a muscular, short man with eyes that gleamed and blinked, a harsh voice, and a round, toneless, pock-marked face ornamented by a thin, dishevelled moustache' (2:4:93).

Their factotum, Pedro, was 'a nondescript, hairy creature'; 'the lower part of his physiognomy was over-developed; his narrow and low forehead, unintelligently furrowed by horizontal wrinkles, surmounted wildly hirsute cheeks and a flat nose with wide, baboon-like nostrils . . . he displayed a pair of remarkably long arms, terminating in thick, brown hairy paws of simian aspect' (2:4:92). He had a 'trained-animal manner' (2:4:93) and was 'more like a performing bear . . . than a human being' (2:4:95), obviously dehumanised and depersonalised by his inauthentic relationship with Jones and his secretary, to whom he was just '"like a sort of dog -- dashed sight more useful, though"' (2:7:124). Indeed, Ricardo 'had a propensity to talk about "his Pedro", as some men will talk of their dog' (4:9:292), and thought nothing of cracking him on the head

with a 'heavy piece of wood' (3:6:193), adding: "'If it wasn't that he can be made useful in one way or another, I would just as soon have let the governor shoot him'" (3:7:194).

The 'physiognomy' (2:4:91) of all three was to have a firm bearing on the way they related to others. They certainly left Schomberg 'disconcerted . . . utterly' (2:4:96), promoting in him that Sartrean sensation of uneasiness, of feeling oneself in danger, produced by the incontestable contingency of another person. Jones was venomous towards everyone, but particularly so towards women, whom he considered "'a perfect curse"; "'I can't stand women near me. They give me the horrors'" (2:4:94). The very mention of Mrs Schomberg evinced in him 'a horrified recoil' (2:5:103); at the news of 'eighteen women' in the hotel orchestra he 'let out an exclamation of dismay' and 'swore violently' (2:5:105). As a misogynist, he clearly had no inclination to seek full relationships with women, particularly not relationships grounded in sexuality. Even in his suggested homosexuality he treated others as objects, like the "'ragged, bare-legged boy that he had picked up in the street'" of a "'one-horse Mexican pueblo"' (2:7:131).

His secretary's attitudes to women clearly placed them in the position of objects for lust, with sadistic overtones. "'Not that I wanted to do them any harm; but I felt the power in myself'" (2:6:115). "'Take 'em by the throat or chuck 'em under the chin is all one to me'" (2:8:142). As we saw in chapter 3, Ricardo's view of Lena was simply as "'meat'" too good for "'tame'" Axel Heyst (4:3:244). Seeing her with 'her fingers busy with her dark hair, utterly unconscious, exposed and defenceless -- and tempting' (4:1:236), his response was one of sheer animality: 'the instinct for the feral spring could no longer be denied' (4:1:237). He

displayed none of the transcendental character of desire as defined in Sartrean terms.

Ironically, Ricardo recognised this very attitude in Schomberg. As he told Lena, "'He was hot after you"' (4:2:242). And the thought of Heyst's physical contact with her fuelled 'the torment of his jealousy' (4:12:318), which 'started gnawing at his breast as the image of Heyst intruded itself on his fierce anticipation of bliss' (4:6:272). The power of Lena's sexual hold over him produced alternating bouts of sadism and masochism in Ricardo, which Sartre would recognise as the outcome of his viewing himself and Lena as no more than brazen objects for each other. Ricardo had sado-masochistically approached her 'with the delighted obedience of a man who could at any moment seize her in his hands and dash her to the ground' (4:12:316). "'I am dog-tired . . . '", he told her, "'as tired as if I had been pouring my life-blood here on these planks for you to dabble your white feet in. . . . What you want is a man, a master that will let you put the heel of your shoe on his neck"' (4:12:317).

There was obviously none of what Buber would consider true dialogue between them, just as Ricardo and Jones had none with any of the other characters. 'Ricardo displayed no conversational tone', and his employer, though he 'appeared communicative enough', had a 'hollow' voice that 'sounded distant, uninterested, as though he were speaking from the bottom of a well' (2:5:100-1) with 'some sort of menace from beyond the grave' (2:5:102). Their 'wild' talk (2:5:102), full of bravado accounts of their cruelties, was designed to repel others rather than promote relations of mutuality. During their stay at Schomberg's hotel Jones in fact usually maintained a 'contemptuous silence' and 'never addressed himself to

Schomberg with any general remarks, never opened his lips to him unless to say "Good morning" -- two simple words which, uttered by that man, seemed a mockery of a threatening character' (2:6:108).

Ricardo, the narrator wryly comments, turned out to be 'infinitely more communicative than his patron', exchanging 'at least twenty words every day' with Schomberg (2:6:110)! At one point he even let forth 'an unsuspected stream of loquacity' (2:6:112) as he related his meeting Jones for the first time, when Jones "'looked at me -- quietly . . . in a slow way. . . . He seemed to touch me inside somewhere'" (2:6:113). To Jones, however, even Ricardo was ultimately just a mere creature, his satellite from 'the faithful-retainer class' (4:11:304) rather than a full partner in his life. Jones simply found 'a man of his sort extremely useful' (3:7:197). But he was none the less tinged with sexual jealousy when he discovered Ricardo's designs on Lena, enough to shoot the "'woman-lover -- the prevaricating, sly, low-class amorous cuss!'" (4:11:310). This jealousy, though, did not betray any sense of Jones caring for Ricardo as an object of transcendental concern, just as he did not care for any other living soul, 'friend or enemy' (4:6:271). Jones merely treated his secretary as a tool, in the same way as he did all "'the common herd . . . one must make use of the brutes'" (4:11:311). In his fevered response to Ricardo's lust for Lena he branded them "'mud souls, obscene and cunning! Mud bodies, too -- the mud of the gutter!'" (4:11:314). His fellow beings-in-the-world were clearly nothing more than stark clay to Jones.

Ricardo had similarly barren relationships with others. Talking to Schomberg, he remarked: "'Now, here we sit, friendly like, and that's all right. You aren't in my way. But I am not friendly to you. I just don't care. . . . You are no more to me one way or another than that fly there'"

(2:6:115). It is to state the obvious that Ricardo did not relate to Schomberg with Heideggerian solicitude, whereby men exhibit personal concern. And without solicitude, one is in the Mitwelt as a sheer contingent being. Indeed, both Ricardo and Jones actively despised any loving contact with their fellows. 'There was a similarity of mind between these two -- one the outcast of his vices, the other inspired by a spirit of scornful defiance, the aggressiveness of a beast of prey looking upon all the tame creatures of the earth as its natural victims' (3:10:220). This constant stress on Ricardo's animality, linked to his brutal use of others in terms of sheer instrumentality, shows how far he fell short of that more complex human sexuality which imparts knowledge of the other -- the kind of sexuality Heyst displayed in his very different response to Lena.

The lack of full relationship with another produced in Jones the ennui that is his frequently mentioned hallmark. Even his suggested sexual encounters involved lassitude: having "'picked up"' a Mexican urchin, Jones simply "'lay all day long in a dark room"' (2:7:131), finding no sense of union with the boy. As for other races, both he and Ricardo (like Schomberg) regarded them as brute instruments not worth consideration. 'These white men looked on native life as a mere play of shadows. A play of shadows the dominant race could walk through unaffected and disregarded' (2:8:143). Heyst's treatment of his servant, Wang, was substantially more caring, though it did not of course approach the depth of his solicitude for Lena, his beloved possession whose entire self he longed to know. Even as she lay dying he was enthralled by 'the charm, the fascination, of that mortal flesh' (4:13:323); he was her

possession as much as she was his. "'Oh, my beloved -- all my own at last!'" she murmured (4:13:322).

This is not the female possessiveness despised by D. H. Lawrence but possession characterised by solicitude to the point of self-sacrifice, Lena's 'tremendous victory, capturing the very sting of death in the service of love' (4:13:323). (The echo here of I Corinthians 15:55 is palpable: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' -- questions phrased in the context of love as resurrection and transformation.) As Moser has commented,²⁰ in Conrad's later characters love takes precedence over life. Lena's love, as Seymour Gross emphasises, was 'transcendent', and her 'beatific death' contrasted sharply with 'the desperate and despairing suicide of Jones-Ricardo'.²¹ In her final moments she was buoyed by the vision of Heyst 'ready to lift her up in his firm arms and take her into the sanctuary of his innermost heart -- for ever! The flush of rapture flooding her whole being broke out in a smile of innocent, girlish happiness; and with that divine radiance on her lips she breathed her last, triumphant, seeking for his glance in the shades of death' (4:13:324).

Heyst's relationship with her had also infused his own crabbed existence with a new radiance, awakening him -- albeit it too late -- to a new credo: "'Woe to the man whose heart has not learned while young to hope, to love -- and to put its trust in life!'" (4:14:326). There is a quality of existentially aware affirmation in this, as Palmer has remarked,²² even though it is finally darkened by the very last word in the novel, Davidson's emphatic "'Nothing!'"

The love relationship between Jim and Jewel in Lord Jim, written fourteen years before Victory, is not given quite the meticulous depiction accorded Heyst and Lena's, but its enhancing and self-transcending qualities are nevertheless unmistakable. Jim of course eventually left Jewel 'at the call of his exalted egoism' (45:312). Yet the sagely Stein accepted that "'he loved her very much"' (37:261), and Jim himself remarked to Marlow, "'I love her dearly. More than I could tell"' (32:229). Jim and Jewel provided for each other those sublime moments in which 'our souls, as if freed from their dark envelope, glow with an exquisite sensibility that makes certain silences more lucid than speeches' (32:229). Even though she never understood him fully, there was a deep Marcellian communication between them that went beyond language. And as Jaspers asserts, 'Love is the substantial source of communicative self-being'; it is communication's 'font and its luminary' (Philosophy 2:66, 64). By virtue of her 'vigilant affection' (29:214) Jewel became for Jim -- as Lena for Heyst -- an anchor in his roving existence, a transcendental object of his Heideggerian care and solicitude. Without such loving bonds (as we shall see in the final section of this chapter), men and women are consigned, as we remember Kierkegaard putting it, to lives that are 'an isolation and hence imperfect' (Either/Or 2:220).

There is no doubt that Jim and Jewel did not, as Sartre insists no one can, attain total immersive union (which in any case Buber considers undesirable). But in Marlow's account Jim did experience that self-transcending quality existentialists recognise as an attribute of love. From his first mention of this love Marlow points to its extraordinariness, its superiority to most 'such stories', which are often not 'stories of love at all. For the most part we look upon them as

stories of opportunities: episodes of passion at best, or perhaps only of youth and temptation, doomed to forgetfulness in the end, even if they pass through the reality of tenderness and regret' (28:208) -- a view the narrator of Nostromo ascribes to Emilia Gould, who chose to look on love as 'only a short moment of forgetfulness, a short intoxication, whose delight one remembered with a sense of sadness, as if it had been a deep grief lived through' (3:11:431). 'This view mostly is right', comments the Marlow of Lord Jim, 'and perhaps in this case, too. . . . Yet I don't know. To tell this story is by no means so easy as it should be -- were the ordinary standpoint adequate' (28:208). Despite Marlow's reminding us of the uncertainty inherent in any personal appraisal, he does emphasise the unusual profundity of Jim and Jewel's love.

Marlow considered the emblem of this love to be the grave of Jewel's mother, on the 'rustic fence' of which Jim himself had worked 'with his own hands'. In this, the raconteur told his listeners, 'you will perceive directly the difference, the individual side of the story. There is in his espousal of memory and affection belonging to another human being something characteristic of his seriousness. He had a conscience, and it was a romantic conscience', which apprehended through Jewel her mother's suffering at the hands of Cornelius. 'For where is the man -- I mean a real sentient man -- who does not remember vaguely having been deserted in the fullness of possession by someone or something more precious than life?' (28:209) -- by an object, in Sartrean terms, of transcendental value.

Jewel's value for Jim was signified by her very name, given to her by him, as Heyst gave Lena hers. Jim 'called her by a word that means

precious, in the sense of a precious gem', which he spoke 'with a marital, homelike, peaceful effect' (28:210). The word might suggest a treasured inanimate possession, but even if this were how Jim perceived her there is still, Sartre says, the value of the special link of possession that infuses something of myself in the object I own, since there is an ideal presence of the for-itself in the possessed in-itself. Jim, however, clearly did not see Jewel as a reified possession. Indeed, he felt himself gratefully indebted to her: '"You know . . . "', he told Marlow in his elliptical way, '"can't tell you how much I owe to her"' (28:210).

Even the 'third-class deputy-assistant resident, a big, fat, greasy, blinking fellow' whom Marlow encountered en route to Patusan, had heard of Jim's jewel, which he naturally assumed to be a literal gemstone. The news had spread far and wide, along with the report of the woman whom 'the white man treated with great respect and care' (28:212), and who in turn adored him. Jewel's 'tenderness hovered over him like a flutter of wings. She lived so completely in his contemplation that she had acquired something of his outward aspect' (29:214). So profound was their Buberian betweenness that she displayed a propensity to merge with him, to surmount the constant dialectical tension between relation and distance that Buber (and, more stridently, Nietzsche and Sartre) observe in all personal relationships.

In consequence Jewel feared losing Jim, as her perpetual watchfulness over him revealed. 'Her vigilant affection had an intensity that made it almost perceptible to the senses; it seemed . . . to envelop him like a peculiar fragrance. . . . He was jealously loved, but why she should be jealous, and of what', Marlow says, 'I could not tell. The land, the people, the forests were her accomplices, guarding him with vigilant accord, with an air of seclusion, of mystery, of invincible possession'

(29:214). Jealousy in love, Marlow suggests, is one of those 'inexplicable' things -- as in the case of Selvin, one of his chief mates, who 'was the victim of such black imaginings that if he did not get a letter from his wife at the expected time he would go quite distracted with rage and jealousy . . . the man made a little hell on earth for himself' (14:121). The narrator of Nostromo tends to follow Sartre's explanation that such jealousy arises from each lover's wishing to be the other's chosen object of special, limitless value, from a longing to control the other's freedom to place a higher value on any third person. Hence, Dr Monygham is described as having 'come to dislike heartily everybody who approached Mrs Gould with any intimacy' (3:11:421), and Nostromo himself, when thinking Giselle might marry Ramirez, as having felt 'the venomous fangs of jealousy biting deep into his heart. He was appalled by the novelty of the experience, by its force, by its physical intimacy' (3:12:440).

Similarly, Jewel feared that Jim would value someone from the world beyond Patusan above herself. 'Her lover . . . came to her . . . gifted with irresistible seductions; but what would become of her if he should return to these inconceivable regions that seemed always to claim back their own?' Marlow felt that he himself was regarded by Jewel as part of that outside world ready to 'whisk Jim away out of her very arms; it was my sober conviction', he says, that 'she went through agonies of apprehension during my long talks with Jim; through a real and intolerable anguish' (32:232). Marlow could not bring himself to tell her why the outside world had no claim on Jim, but he did assure her that 'in the whole world there was no one who would need his heart, his mind, his hand'

(33:239). Yet her desire for him to value her above all others was so intense that she did not believe even Jim himself when he tried to reassure her.

Marlow is not reticent about grounding the intensity of Jim and Jewel's love in the body. He 'more than once . . . saw her and Jim . . . come out together . . . the two forms very close, his arm about her waist, her head on his shoulder. Their soft murmurs . . . penetrating, tender' (29:214). It was widely known that 'they walked side by side, openly, he holding her arm under his -- pressed to his side -- thus -- in a most extraordinary way' (28:212-13). This would not surprise Berdyaev -- or Sartre, who feels that there is no other way to seek union with another's being-for-itself, the other self's free subjectivity that pervades the beloved's whole body even to its surface. It is a stress on the sexual dimension of love that appears again and again in Conrad, evident even in the early love of Charles and Emilia Gould in Nostromo: Gould 'contemplated' his wife 'from the height of his long legs with a visible appreciation of her appearance. The consciousness of being thus contemplated pleased Mrs Gould' (1:6:89). Like many other 'businessmen', the narrator tells us, Gould was 'sanguine and imaginative' as a lover, kissing his wife 'very tenderly' (1:6:93, 100). Mongyham's love for Emilia too is presented in physical terms: aboard the Hermes his 'heart dilated within him' (3:11:418) at the sight of her as 'he devoured her stealthily with his eyes' (3:11:419).

The physicality of the love between Nostromo and Giselle is portrayed even more graphically. The Capataz, 'broad shouldered, narrow hipped and supple', with a 'muscular neck and bronzed chest' (2:7:223), was 'an attractive young fellow . . . attractive to men, women, and children,

just by that profound quietness of personality which, like a serene twilight, rendered more seductive the promise of his vigorous form and the resolution of his conduct' (2:7:224-5). With Giselle's 'voice [enveloping] him like a caress' (3:12:441), he extolled the loveliness of her body, from her 'hair like gold' to her 'little feet' (3:12:442). 'The charm of her body' enthralled him as he 'breathed her ambient seduction in the tumultuous heaving of his breast' (3:12:443). 'He held her head in his two hands, and showered rapid kisses upon the upturned face that gleamed in the purple dusk. Masterful and tender, he was entering slowly upon the fullness of his possession . . . the man careless of loves became gentle and caressing. . . . He called her his star and his little flower' (3:12:443-4).

Thus, through physical love Nostromo at last had his humanity enhanced by the presence of another -- rather like Monygham, who as 'a concession to Mrs Gould's humanizing influence' wore the 'little white jacket' that was 'the badge of his esteem for her' (1:6:70). Likewise Father Ramón, admiring Emilia's 'earnest interest in the concerns of [the] people', also 'felt his own humanity expand' (3:6:337, 338), that heightening of selfhood which Kierkegaard considers an outcome of human relationships marked by 'conscience' and 'love' (Love 111). Giselle's love gave Nostromo the strength to cast off his silver shackles as 'he felt her warm, breathing, alive, quivering in the hollow of his arm. In the exulting consciousness of his strength, and the triumphant excitement of his mind, he struck out for his freedom' (3:12:445) and told her of the treasure he planned to overcome at last so as to embark on a new and open life. The words "'I love you" . . . cast a spell stronger than the accursed spell of the

treasure; they changed his weary subjection to that dead thing into an exulting conviction of his power' (3:12:446).

This enhancing power of physical love so stressed by existentialists is also strongly evident in the account of Razumov and Natalia's relationship by the professor of languages in Under Western Eyes. Their intimacy was triggered when Razumov, by flinging both his hands out to her 'with the greatest readiness and warmth', imbued Natalia with 'some of that hope, inspiration and support' once imparted by her dead brother (2:4:187). After this gesture, mused the professor, they 'would understand each other quickly' (2:4:188), discover that increase in knowledge about oneself and others which existentialists claim for genuine relationships. The power of a profound interpersonal bond did indeed promote a new openness in Razumov, unlocking his potential for authentic being. This of course took time. When next they met, he rested 'his gaze on Miss Haldin, but certainly did not look into her eyes which were so ready for him' (2:4:192), his guilt preventing an immediate acceptance of her Marcellian availability.

The professor, taken with Natalia, was 'not disappointed' at Razumov's appearance either (2:4:192). In fact, he later thought him 'very good-looking' (4:1:299). Razumov 'had a line of the jaw, a clean-shaven, sallow cheek; his nose was a ridge, and not a mere protuberance . . . , his dark hair curled low on the nape of his neck; in the ill-fitting brown clothes there were sturdy limbs; a slight stoop brought out a satisfactory breadth of shoulders'. He was 'studious -- robust -- shy', with 'a muscular, firm . . . handshake' (2:4:192). His eyes, 'of a clear brown colour and fringed with thick black eyelashes', were 'not at all unpleasant' (2:5:195).

The physicality of Ramumov's and Natalia's mutual feelings was clearly

a significant element in their response to each other. Razumov took her 'hand in its black glove, which closed on his, and held it -- detained it quite visibly. . . . He . . . raised his head, and was looking straight into her face now, while she held his hand. They stood like this for a long moment' (2:4:193). Again we recall Sartre's contention that we come under another's 'look' as a body, and that 'by touching this body I . . . finally touch the Other's free subjectivity' (Nothingness 394).

Yet sexuality that renders the other simply an object is a barren affair, as in the case of The Secret Agent's Adolf Verloc, purveyor of 'photographs of more or less undressed dancing girls' as items of lust (1:45). It was also primarily as an instrument of gratification that he viewed his wife. With her 'full bust . . . and broad lips' (1:46); 'her youth; her full, rounded form; her clear complexion', Winnie provided 'wifely attentions' (1:47) to Verloc with his 'heavy-lidded eyes [that] rolled sideways amorously and languidly . . . and . . . his thick lips capable of much honeyed banter' (1:48). Eventually, of course, not even 'the usual remedies' offered by an 'experienced wife' held any appeal for Verloc amid the pressures of Vladimir's demands. Somewhat like Schomberg in Victory, 'he beheld his wife . . . get into bed in a calm, business-like manner which made him feel hopelessly lonely in the world' (3:85).

Winnie was unsettled by this lack of sexual interest in her: "'You are tired of me'", she remarked to Verloc in obvious hope of contradiction (9:185), since he was vital to her 'practical existence' (9:189). Her welfare and Stevie's, after all, depended on him. Consciously turning herself into an object for his lust in a way Sartre would clearly recognise, she attempted to dissuade her husband from his notion of

emigrating by giving him 'a glance of which the Winnie of the Belgravian mansion days would have been incapable, because of her respectability and her ignorance'. He would never leave, she told him, because "'you would miss me too much"' (9:186).

In her loneliness after murdering Verloc, Winnie was quick to clutch at Ossipon when he unexpectedly encountered her. Ossipon, of course, was always ready to exploit women as sexual instruments, particularly when they 'put some material means into his hands' (12:266). He preyed on 'silly girls with savings-bank books' (3:81), and he had 'shamelessly inviting eyes, whose glance had a corrupt clearness sufficient to enlighten any woman not absolutely imbecile' (11:220). Not recognising Winnie, he thought her merely another sexual prospect. 'Comrade Ossipon was not afraid of strange women, and no feeling of false delicacy could prevent him from striking an acquaintance with a woman apparently very much intoxicated. Comrade Ossipon was interested in women. He held up this one between his two large palms, peering at her in a business-like way', evaluating her potential for prostitution (12:240). When he eventually recognised her, he was 'attentive not to discourage kind fate surrendering to him the widow of Comrade Verloc' and at once began his sexual ploy: "'I've always thought of you -- ever since I first set eyes on you"' (12:240).

Winnie's warm response surprised him; a dash of intimacy could enable even Ossipon's self to grow. Her calling him Tom 'thrilled [him] with pride', for 'it was a name of friendship -- of moments of expansion' (12:243). Yet to him Winnie ultimately remained primarily a thing of 'material considerations, such as the business value of the shop, and the amount of money Mr Verloc might have left in the bank' (12:242). Thus she

was even more 'welcome' to him when he discovered 'she had all the money' (12:248).

In spite of his purely 'practical' intentions (12:245), however, Ossipon did provide a human stay for Winnie in her distress as 'she sank against his breast' (12:248). About to repeat her past mistakes, she in desperation turned herself -- as Sartre would point out -- into an object for him, promising to "'love"' him, "'slave"' for him, if he would help her escape the gallows. "'I've no one in the world. . . . Who would look at me if you don't!'" She would give him sex without any demands for conventional respectability: "'I won't ask you to marry me", she breathed out in shamefaced accents' (12:253).

But Ossipon had no wish for any long-term connection. Indeed, Winnie's desperate clinging produced in him Lawrentian visions (as in Women in Love) of her 'twined round him like a snake, not to be shaken off' (12:255), a tie that would make him her possession rather than she his. 'Fixing' her, as Sartre would say, into a purely material object, Ossipon 'gazed scientifically at that woman' and imagined he saw Lombroso's 'murdering type' (12:259), whom he lost no time in abandoning.

Jim, too, ultimately abandoned Jewel, but in the full anguish of leaving a transcendental object of love, not one of brute lust. Like Heyst towards Lena, he responded initially to her condition of misery rather than just her physical allurements. 'He sympathized deeply with the defenceless girl, at the mercy of that "mean, cowardly scoundrel"', Cornelius (30:217). 'It was more than pity; it was as if he had something on his conscience, while that life went on' (30:219). Not until their mutual escape did Jim discover that they were in fact 'fond' of each other

(32:229), discover her 'devoted readiness' to watch over him even in his sleep (31:224) -- which left him 'remorseful, touched, happy, elated' (31:225). She provided him with an anchor for his contingent existence, that sense of 'justification' which we recall Sartre regarding as 'the basis for the joy of love' (Nothingness 371). 'He realized that for him there was no refuge from that loneliness which centupled all his dangers except -- in her. "I thought"', he told Marlow, "'that if I went away from her it would be the end of everything somehow'" (31:226).

Such Buberian 'confirmation' for a previously drifting life surfaces time and again in the major novels -- even in the early days of the Goulds' love in Nostromo: the 'splendour of hopeful love' gave an 'idea of rehabilitation' to 'their life' (1:6:92). Dr Monygham in turn discovered rehabilitation through his love for Emilia, living as he did 'on the inexhaustible treasure of his devotion' (3:11:418). In much the same way Decoud found justification for his existence through Antonia's love. 'Turned journalist for the sake of Antonia's eyes' (2:5:189), he now had a greater sense of purpose (even though he did not espouse her cause). As he affirmed to Emilia, "'There is nothing I would not do for the sake of Antonia. There is nothing I am not prepared to undertake. There is no risk I am not ready to run'" (2:6:198).

For all his scepticism about human relationships, Decoud placed great value on the power of love, viewing his stirring address to the 'sort of Junta of Notables' as the product of 'the passion of [his] love for Antonia. For if ever man spoke well, it would be from a personal feeling, denouncing an enemy, defending himself, or pleading for what really may be dearer than life' (2:7:213). This is very much the position taken by Nietzsche, who, as Michael Hamburger reminds us, insists that only what is

personal remains for ever incontrovertible.²³ Indeed, Decoud felt that Antonia's love alone made life worth living, approaching Marcel's contention that 'fundamentally, I have no reason to set any particular store by myself, except in so far as I know that I am loved by [another being who is] loved by me' (Mystery 2:9). In the initial stages of the silver escapade Decoud had felt his existence buoyed by the thought of his beloved, his rowing acquiring 'an ideal meaning from his love for Antonia, . . . whence he drew his strength and inspiration' (2:7:234). When suddenly he perceived his bodily distance from her in the darkness of the gulf, he felt his existence to be utterly without justification -- and so chose death in his isolation on the Great Isabel.

Nostromo too found self-justification in the promise of love, experiencing a new sense of purpose as he 'thought of Giselle' while rowing his small boat out to the island to ask Giorgio Viola for her hand (3:12:437). She became the very reason for his decision to give up the silver for ever -- and hence became the very means by which he might have achieved authenticity, just as Natalia Haldin in Under Western Eyes became Razumov's means to fuller selfhood. By the same token Tekla's devotion to Razumov gave her existence new purpose. In her resolve 'to take care of' him (4:5:343) she at last 'found work to do after her own heart' (4:4:341), sitting with him in hospital, determined never to 'abandon him' (4:5:343). Later, in their 'little two-roomed wooden house' in the suburb of a small town in southern Russia, she 'tended him unweariedly with the pure joy of unselfish devotion. There was nothing in that task to become disillusioned about' (4:5:347); her life had worth.

Even the acerbic Peter Ivanovitch eventually found new meaning for his

Well, it is a trust, too. . . . I believe I am equal to it"' (32:229). As Marcel comments in Being and Having (132), 'The more I am, the more I assert my being, the less I think myself autonomous'. Though this might sound like a refutation of Sartre's view that one is ultimately thrown back on one's own resources in whatever one does, we remember Sartre's insistence that one is none the less obliged to take cognisance of others when formulating one's sovereign values. Accordingly, Jim felt profoundly his responsibility to Jewel and the wider community.

Yet, for all the love and devotion he found in Jewel and the populace, and though he did feel "'satisfied . . . nearly"' (32:21), Buberian distance remained between them. Even his beloved confidante could not provide Jim with ultimate, lasting fulfilment in a world of flux, and this manifested itself in her fear that he would one day leave. Marlow, on the other hand, was convinced that 'nothing . . . could separate Jim from her', as Jim himself had sworn (33:233), in spite of her encouraging him to go away in order to save himself. 'She was unselfish when she urged Jim to leave her, and even to leave the country. It was his danger that was foremost in her thoughts' (33:234) as -- like Lena -- she elevated the transcendental Sartrean object of her love above her own self. 'By nothing but his mere presence he had mastered her heart, had filled all her thoughts, and had possessed himself of all her affections' (33:234). Indeed, Marcel would regard Jim's 'presence' as more than 'mere': it was full 'availability'.

Nevertheless, Jewel filled herself with 'incertitude and fear. . . . She should have made for herself a shelter of inexpugnable peace out of that honest affection' (33:236), have drawn on her belief that he "'was

life when he discovered love after the death of Madame Eleanor de S----, perceiving again the value of human relationship he had once glimpsed as a czarist prisoner, when the most profound incident in his life had been his meeting the 'quiet, pale-faced girl [who] . . . had come out to the mines to join one of his fellow convicts . . . with the hope of helping him to escape. But she arrived too late. Her lover had died only a week before' (2:2:147). The 'quiet, sad face of the heroic girl' and her devotion to her lover had sustained Peter Ivanovitch during his own 'hunted existence' in chains (2:2:148), as had his subsequent encounter with a second woman, whose 'unexpected cry of profound pity . . . restored him to the ranks of humanity' (2:2:150).

Despite the deleterious influence of life with Madame de S----, Peter Ivanovitch's latent potential for a caring relationship was momentarily revealed when he responded existentially to Natalia as a full co-existent, to 'the harmonious charm of her whole person, its strength, its grace, its tranquil frankness' -- only to turn from her in his stern belief that 'the beauty of women and the friendship of men were not for him' (2:4:183). He ultimately forsook the sterility of this attitude, of course, and "'united himself to a peasant girl'" whom he "'simply adore[d]'", returning to Russia at "'tremendous risk . . . all for [her] sake'" (4:5:349). Yet again Conrad shows love giving a Sartrean sense of justification to a formerly pointless existence.

In a similar way (and like Heyst to Lena), Jewel lent to Jim an exultant feeling that his life had worth: "'You take a different view of your actions . . . '", Jim told Marlow, "'when you are made to understand every day that your existence is necessary -- you see, absolutely necessary -- to another person. I am made to feel that. Wonderful. . . .

more true than any other man"' (33:237). And certainly her fears were lightened by the joy of their mutual presence, which -- as in Victory -- the outside world eventually broke in on. With Marlow's departure from Patusan, the beetles prevailed over Jim's butterfly self. 'The shadow of impending separation', Marlow relates, 'had already put an immense space between us, and when we spoke it was with an effort' (35:249); the threatened loss of mutual solicitude brought a diminution of communication as the spectre of distance intervened. Yet even with the grim prospect of separation Marlow thought with 'a gratitude, an affection', of the 'straggler' whose kinship had given his life too a Sartrean sense of 'justification' amid 'the ranks of an insignificant multitude' (35:251). The Marlow of Heart of Darkness encountered no such firm bonding with anyone in his 'isolation' among men with whom he 'had no point of contact' (1:61).

Thus Jim -- as we shall see more fully in a moment -- had given to Marlow a sense of personal value just as he had to Jewel, who was left inconsolably bitter when he left her to follow the stronger 'call of his exalted egoism' (45:313), of his self-assertion in the face of the danger Brown posed. Deep though his love for her was, Jim forsook it for what he felt driven to regard as a truth more powerful to him -- the laying to rest of his Patna self through confrontation with a man whose being-with-others lacked any redeeming aspects. Brown was a man known for 'the arrogant temper of his misdeeds and vehement scorn for mankind at large and for his victims in particular' (38:265). His gang were 'the nondescript spawn of the South Seas. None of them cared' (38:268). Brown tore apart 'the social fabric of orderly, peaceful life, when every man was sure of tomorrow, the edifice raised by Jim's hands' (40:281). He despised the

'joy' that Jim produced in the community he had wrought (40:284), 'the trust, the love, the confidence of the people' (41:286).

The ardour of these feelings between Jim and the populace may well have waned in time, but at his death they were still in full flower, crowned with Jewel's 'passion, her anger, and, above all, her fear and her unforgiving love', as well as with Tamb' Itam's 'fidelity and a belief in his lord so strong that even amazement is subdued to a sort of saddened acceptance of a mysterious failure', preserving to the end his 'air of guardianship, of obedience, of care' (42:293). To them Jim's loss was beyond evaluation, an 'eternal separation' that produced 'a great grief' amid their 'ardent and clinging affection' (43:296). As Marcel comments in The Mystery of Being (1:181), 'When I put the table beside the chair I do not make any difference to the table or the chair, and I can take one or the other away without making any difference; but my relationship with you makes a difference to both of us, and so does any interruption of the relationship make a difference'. 'A man's more intense life', comments Marlow, 'makes his death more touching than the death of a tree' (21:170).

To the people of Patusan and to 'her who loved him best', Jim's ultimate loneliness was 'a cruel and insoluble mystery' (43:296). 'People had trusted him with their lives . . . ; and yet they could never, as he had said, never be made to understand him' (45:307). Although this accords with Sartre's insistence that there can be no absolutely authentic being-with-others, it also upholds his belief that personal relationships are nevertheless not to be shunned, since they can heighten sense of self and make us 'feel our existence is justified' (Nothingness 371). In this world such brightness might indeed come quick to confusion, but it is still

worth the striving for.

Certainly Jewel's love had expanded Jim's humanity. The early Jim 'felt he cared for nothing' (3:21), particularly during his sensation when adrift in the Patna's lifeboat that he and the other officers 'were like men walled up quick in a roomy grave. No concern with anything on earth. . . . Nothing mattered' (10:95). They were as indifferent to the fate of the pilgrims as the colonials in Heart of Darkness were to that of the soldiers and clerks who 'got drowned in the surf': 'nobody seemed particularly to care' (1:60-1). In the wreck of the Patna, Marlow commented, 'there was something abject which made the isolation more complete -- there was a villainy of circumstances that cut these men off more completely from the rest of mankind' (10:95-6).

During the trial Jim looked on other people primarily as threats, which is Sartre's view of how we regard other contingent beings when we lack firm interpersonal bonds. This was initially Jim's attitude even towards Marlow, who he thought had called him a 'cur', though in fact of course Marlow showed sympathetic concern for the young man so 'fair of face, big of frame, with young, gloomy eyes' (4:29). At first skirting his response to Jim's physical attractiveness, Marlow ascribed his interest in him to his seaman's code as 'a member of an obscure body of men held together by a community of inglorious toil and by fidelity to a certain standard of conduct' (5:43-4), by a 'bond' which is so 'close' that 'besides the fellowship of the craft there is felt the strength of a wider feeling -- the feeling that binds a man to a child' (11:101). 'The bond of the sea', Marlow says in Heart of Darkness, holds sailors' 'hearts together through long periods of separation' (1:45). The interpersonal bond of life aboard ship manifested itself even in Marlow's relationship

with the helmsman who guided him up the Congo. 'It was a kind of partnership', Marlow recounted. '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' (2:119).

Conrad speaks poignantly in his preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus' (xlii) about his desire to 'awaken' a sense of fidelity among men, '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'. Hence the presiding aridity of the worlds of Nostromo and Under Western Eyes where such Marcellian fidelity is all but absent, which is even more the case in The Secret Agent, Conrad's depiction of what Seymour-Smith calls 'a society in which loyalty does not exist'.²⁴ There is indeed painfully little evidence of fidelity in Verloc's world, despite Adam Gillon's general claim²⁵ that in Conrad man displays a profound affinity for his fellow beings-in-the-world, a brotherhood that transcends economic, political, national, social or racial differences. This is more the exception than the rule -- an appalling situation, since in Conrad's view (as Fredric Masback among others has stressed)²⁶ man's only hope lies in faithful solidarity with his fellows.

In Lord Jim Marlow feels that 'the real significance of crime is in its being a breach of faith with the community of mankind' (14:121), a sentiment Emilia Gould in Nostromo would readily have endorsed, given her compassion for one's fellow beings-in-the-world so prized by Kierkegaard.

With her 'simplicity and charm' she 'was highly gifted in the art of human intercourse'. The men of the surveying camp, 'from the youngest of the young men to their mature chief' (1:5:70), spoke frequently of her, and 'the ladies of Sulaco adored' her (1:6:87). Mindful of others, 'she was able to appreciate the great worth of the people' (1:7:103) and concerned herself with their welfare. As Decoud observed, 'She thinks of her schools, of her hospitals, of the mothers with the young babies, of every sick old man' (2:5:179). Her Kierkegaardian 'civic self' (Either/Or, 2:220) was clearly engaged by "'those poor people'" (2:6:205).

Marlow's interest in Jim, however, went beyond this broad sense of communal concern: it deepened into personal solicitude (though, as Watt remarks,²⁷ reciprocity between them was sometimes difficult). By the time of Jim's departure for Patusan there had developed between them a 'real and profound intimacy' (23:183). The growth of this solicitude was triggered in part by Marlow's response to Jim's physical appearance; the body, after all, is to the existentialist man's only means to intercourse with others and the world (with all its codes, mores and pressures). Marlow constantly recalls Jim's 'broad shoulders and his head outlined in the light' (6:57), 'the red of his fair sunburnt complexion . . . the clear blue of his eyes' (6:61), 'the down on his cheek, . . . the smooth skin of his face' (13:119), the 'capable shoulders, the open bronzed forehead with a white line under the roots of clustering fair hair, this appearance appealing at sight to all my sympathies' (7:64).

Yet despite this pleasing bodily presence there was to start with little depth of communication between them. During the trial Jim found 'that speech was of no use to him' (4:31), and he was predisposed to misconstrue Marlow's tentative conversation. But at a certain crucial

point when Marlow faltered trying to explain his interest in him, Jim responded with warmth. 'I said hurriedly that I couldn't think of leaving him under a false impression of my -- of my -- I stammered. The stupidity of the phrase appalled me while I was trying to finish it, but the power of sentences has nothing to do with their sense or the logic of their construction. My idiotic mumble seemed to please him' (6:62), and it provided a new openness in their acquaintance. They came under each other's Sartran 'look' -- 'all the time I had before me these blue, boyish eyes looking straight into mine' -- and there was also the physical touch of intimacy when Jim 'darted his arm across the tablecloth, and clutching my hand by the side of my plate, glared fixidly' in a 'display of speechless feeling' that 'caused two well-groomed male globe-trotters at a neighbouring table to look up in alarm from their iced pudding' (7:64). Marlow's listening ear enabled Jim to look into himself in an attempt to articulate his inner disturbance to another, and so to himself. "'You are an awful good sort to listen like this," he said. "It does me good. You don't know what it is to me. You don't . . ." words seemed to fail him' (11:100).

The balm of open friendship is stressed also by Decoud in Nostromo, for whom Antonia was 'the one exception' to his mistrust of interpersonal relationships, to his 'absolute rule' that 'no friendship was possible between man and woman', unless they were brother and sister. This, to his credit, was because of the high existential value Decoud placed on the meaning of the word friendship, understanding by it 'the frank unreserve, as before another human being, of thoughts and sensations; all the objectless and necessary sincerity of one's innermost life trying to react

upon the profound sympathies of another existence' (2:7:205) with Marcellian availability, in a desire to be a full presence to the other that allows for the sense of betweenness that Buber emphasises. Decoud felt that 'no one could understand him so well as his sister', and his letter to her was marked by 'intimacy of . . . intercourse', by communication that enabled him to express openly his 'feelings of a great solitude' (2:7:210). In Under Western Eyes too we find Razumov pointing to the value he found in Natalia's '"having talked with me -- opening your heart"' (4:4:333).

Marlow's solicitous friendship with Jim did not mean that he shouldered Jim's problems for him. Rather, he helped him to identify his burden and work it through himself. This calls to mind Heidegger's distinction in Being and Time (158-9) between the 'two extreme possibilities' in which personal solicitude manifests itself in 'its positive modes'. In one case we 'leap in' for the other person; 'this kind of solicitude takes over for the Other that with which he is to concern himself. The Other is thus thrown out of his own position; he steps back so that afterwards, when the matter has been attended to, he can either take it over as something finished and at his disposal, or disburden himself of it completely'. The second mode is that in which we 'leap ahead' of the other person, 'not in order to take away his "care" but rather to give it back to him authentically as such for the first time'. One helps open up for the other his own possibilities of being, 'helps the Other to become transparent to himself in his career and to become free for it'. In this framework, Marlow did not take over Jim's Heideggerian Sorge but produced a situation whereby Jim appropriated it fully himself and thus discovered what his true imperatives were. Jim

'got to the heart of it at last' (7:68), wrestling with it in a way that helped him 'become free' for authentic being.

Marlow also provided catharsis in letting Jim relate the Patna episode aloud while the members of conventional humanity sat by with their 'pale blotches of faces' (8:80), the nameless others from whom Jim felt as isolated as he had from the pilgrims, to whom he had appeared 'too hopelessly separated from themselves to be worth an appealing word, a glance, or a sign' (9:83). The gulf between Jim and his fellow beings-in-the-world was bridged only by his kinship with Marlow -- a fellowship that later found even fuller form in his love for Jewel. In Patna Jim created a rich (if ultimately incomplete) life for himself, not only in his intimate togetherness with Jewel but also in a wider social sense. The solidarity he felt with the populace was a far cry from his desertion of his fellow beings aboard the Patna, and this Kierkegaardian 'civic self' was a considerable part of his 'achievement'. In his ease with himself Jim developed a mode of relation to others that allowed him to stand out in freedom and responsibility, able to become the unique individual he had wished to make of himself.

Of course, as Marlow says again and again in a sentiment Sartre would uphold, he and Jim did not get to know each other completely through their friendship. But though Jim remained enigmatic to the end, their togetherness did elicit glimpses, as when Jim recounted his desire to swim from the lifeboat to the foundering Patna so as to assuage 'the created terror of his imagination'. His words provided 'one of those bizarre and exciting glimpses through the fog. It was an extraordinary disclosure' (10:90). Jim's torment at having forsaken the ship was revealed in an

uncontrolled contracting of 'the muscles around his lips . . . into an unconscious grimace that tore through the mask of his usual expression -- something violent, short-lived, and illuminating like a twist of lightning that admits the eye for an instant into the secret convolutions of a cloud' (10:94). Marlow's closeness to Jim allowed such self-revelation and, more important, self-recognition; as Sartre contends, 'Each Other finds his being in the Other' (Nothingness 252).

Such was the case too with Natalia and Razumov in Under Western Eyes. "'The possibility of being loved by that admirable girl'" (4:5:347) brought him the "'discovery'" that nothing could "'cover up the ignominy of the existence before him'" (4:5:347-8). As Heidegger would put it, Natalia had 'become the "conscience" of the other' (Time 344). Her Marcellian presence impelled Razumov towards the 'momentous resolution' (4:3:325) to unburden himself of his alienating secret, to put an end to the 'desolation' of having 'no one to go to' (4:3:327).

Although Razumov's 'atrocious confession' initially left Natalia devastated -- her 'heart . . . like ice' (4:3:329) -- he himself felt (4:4:330) 'washed clean', his feelings magnified. It was through her that he discovered an inner knowledge of what was best for him to do: to make a clean breast to himself and others of his role in the Haldin affair. He was 'baffled by the novelty and the mysteriousness of that side of our emotional life to which his solitary existence had been a stranger' prior to his meeting Natalia, who cast 'the sovereign . . . power of her person over his imagination' (4:4:330), thereby freeing him for himself -- for the self-knowledge that permitted him to live at peace with himself. As Christopher Cooper remarks,²⁸ Razumov's moral wholeness and thus redemption came as a direct result of his falling in love with Natalia.

Addressing her in his journal, Razumov asserted: "'You were appointed to undo the evil by making me betray myself back into truth and peace"' (4:4:331).

This is very much what the 'beautiful' (2:3:150) Antonia Avellanos with her gleaming 'blue eyes' (2:3:151) in Nostramo did for Decoud by offering him an avenue to overcoming his 'barren indifferentism' (2:3:152), his impersonal view of his fellow Costaguaneros as participants in some 'opéra bouffe'. She had castigated him for 'the aimlessness of his life' (2:3:154), and it was her physical presence, the 'frank' pressure of her hand and the 'approving warmth' of her voice, that induced him to remain in his 'native country' and be of service to others (2:3:155). Through her he felt 'a marked change' in himself (2:3:156), a new sense of expanded selfhood. Antonia had in Heidegger's terms become Decoud's means to 'freeing' himself 'for his own possibilities' for committed engagement; she had become his 'conscience' (Time 344).

Similarly, Natalia and Razumov enhanced each other through their Marcellian availability in openness and solicitude. "'For days"', Razumov confessed in his journal, "'you have talked with me -- opening your heart. . . . It was as if your pure brow bore a light which fell on me, searched my heart and saved me from ignominy, from ultimate undoing. And it saved you too. . . . I felt that I must tell you that I had ended by loving you. And to tell you that I must first confess. . . . Now I have done it; and as I write here, I am in the depths of anguish, but there is air to breathe at last -- air!'" (4:4:333).

The entire episode indeed "'saved"' Natalia as well. She was left 'matured by her open and secret experiences', giving the professor 'a new

view of herself . . . the perfection of collected independence. The strength of her nature had come to surface because the obscure depths had been stirred' (4:5:342). Through her relationship with Razumov she had embraced a new sense of hope for the future, become 'wedded to an invincible belief in the advent of loving concord' that would heal the anguish of men's hearts (4:5:345). Such is the power of love that in Conrad's view can spring from Heideggerian solicitude.

Natalia, Razumov remarked, was the first person to have expected 'tenderness' from him -- an expectation of solicitude he initially felt he could not rise to: she had 'come too late'. But to the professor, 'the silent spectator, they looked like two people becoming conscious of a spell which had been lying on them ever since they first set eyes on each other', parties to 'some hidden sentiment they shared together' (4:3:320). Wrestling with his guilt, Razumov suddenly looked as if 'he had stabbed himself', eliciting a cry of 'tenderness' from Natalia, at which 'he only stared at her in that complete surrender of all his faculties which in a happy lover would have had the name of ecstasy' (4:3:325).

Such solicitous tenderness also marked Dr Monygham's attitude to Emilia Gould in Nostromo. The doctor 'settled . . . on Mrs Gould's head' the whole of the 'great fund of loyalty in [his] nature. . . . He believed her worthy of every devotion' (3:4:320) -- including his risky mission to Sotillo, on which he embarked with the added impulse of her having 'pressed both his hands' (3:7:346). He was appalled at how San Tomé had deprived Emilia of her husband's love. "Was it for this that her life had been robbed of all the intimate felicities of daily affection which her tenderness needed as the human body needs air to breathe?' (3:11:423-4). Her happiness rather than his own mattered most to him in his response to

her as the transcendental Sartrean object of his desire. He was a remarkable instance of a man existentially going beyond himself in the service of another without any unrealistic expectation of being requited. He was 'exalted by a spiritual detachment from the usual sanctions of hope and reward', 'all his scruples vanishing in the proud feeling that his devotion was the only thing that stood between an admirable woman and a frightful disaster' (3:8:362). When during their meeting in the Custom House Nostromo charged off heedless of Monygham's attempts to have him help in his plans for the mine, the doctor 'threw himself recklessly into the pursuit. At the bottom of the charred stairs he had a fall, pitching forward on his face with a force that would have stunned a spirit less intent upon a task of love and devotion. He was up in a moment, . . . possessed by the exaltation of self-sacrifice' (3:9:385), in an echo of Lena's response to Heyst in Victory.

Marlow's solicitude for Jim is not presented with this degree of intensity, but it was none the less a cardinal element in Jim's achieving fuller selfhood -- just as Jim in turn enhanced Marlow's existence. He was 'of the sort whose appearance claims the fellowship of these illusions you had thought gone out, extinct, cold, and which, as if rekindled at the approach of another flame, give a flutter deep, deep down somewhere, give a flutter of light . . . of heat!' (11:100). Marlow's words here put one in mind of Marcel's contention that 'when somebody's presence does really make itself felt, it can refresh my inner being; it reveals me to myself, it makes me more fully myself than I should be if I were not exposed to its impact' (Mystery 1:205). This Jewel too did for Jim, whom Marlow found 'fresh' during his visit to Patusan (27:204). Similarly, Monygham's

'withered soul had been refreshed after many arid years' by Emilia Gould (3:4:315).

In their mutual solicitude Jim and Marlow also eventually achieved a measure of that Buberian dialogue which connotes true togetherness. Even though Jim's self-revelatory talk unsettled Marlow, it invigorated him as well -- unlike the blague of the French lieutenant, which left him and Marlow facing 'each other mutely, like two china dogs on a matelpeece. . . . The blight of futility that lies in wait for men's speeches', Marlow comments, 'had fallen upon our conversation, and made it a thing of empty sounds' (13:115). The Frenchman spoke with the 'passionless and definite phraseology a machine would use, if machines could speak' (14:123), offering no genuine communication. As we recall Jaspers remarking in Man in the Modern Age (119), 'When language is used without true significance, it loses its purpose as a means of communication and becomes an end in itself . . . it is verbosity in place of reality' -- like 'the absurd chatter of the half-caste' ship's master 'derived from a dictionary compiled by a lunatic' when Jim took leave of Marlow for Patusan (23:183, 182). Their own talk, in contrast, had by this stage reached true communication. As Marlow recalls, 'The sort of formality that had been always present in our intercourse vanished from our speech; I believe I called him "dear boy", and he tacked on the words "old man" to some half-uttered expression of gratitude' (23:183). Later, Jim found similar depth of communication in even the most ordinary of verbal exchanges with Jewel: "'Hallo, girl!" he cried cheerfully. "Hallo, boy!" she answered at once. . . .

'This was their usual greeting to each other, and the bit of swagger she would put into her rather high but sweet voice was very droll, pretty,

and childlike. It delighted Jim greatly' (34:242).

Antonia and Decoud's conversation in Nostromo had a yet more intoxicating quality. 'He drank the tones of her even voice, and watched the agitated life of her throat, as if waves of emotion had run from her heart to pass out into the air in her reasonable words' (2:5:175). 'The precious sense of intimacy, the slight contact of their arms, affected him softly; for now and then a tender inflection crept into the flow of his ironic murmurs' (2:5:179). 'With a touch of penetrating tenderness in his voice he assured her that his only aspiration was to a felicity so high that it seemed almost unrealizable on this earth' (2:5:181).

This tenderness also marked the conversation of the Goulds in the early days of their love, when even the mine had been a subject for animated talk, since 'the sentiment of love can enter into any subject and live ardently in remote phrases', making 'these discussions . . . precious to Mrs Gould in her engaged state' (1:6:82). As we recall Jaspers asserting, love is the 'font' of true communication (Philosophy 2:64). Others discussing San Tomé rendered Emilia 'impatient and uneasy, whereas she could talk of the mine by the hour with her husband with unwearied interest and satisfaction' (1:6:89). But as the years passed and Charles Gould increasingly gave himself to 'material interest' rather than interpersonal intimacy, their lives withered and grew empty of mutually sustaining communication -- the loss of which, as Marcel stresses, promotes a diminution of being and an increase in despair. "'Why don't you tell me something?" she almost wailed' in the midst of the deepening political crisis and her growing isolation from her husband, who 'seemed to dwell alone within a circumvallation of precious metal, leaving her

outside' (2:6:193, 205).

There was a similar lack of enhancing communication between husband and wife in The Secret Agent; 'silence' was 'nothing startlingly unusual in [the Verlocs'] household' (2:71). When after Stevie's death Verloc finally did attempt 'openness of statement' in words that 'went far beyond anything that had ever been said in this home', 'Mrs Verloc made no reply' (11:231). Such muteness existed also between him and Stevie. Verloc found that he 'positively . . . did not know how to speak to' Winnie's brother (3:83).

He never overcame this lack of communication -- unlike Jim, who for so long had appalled Marlow by imposing on himself a 'sentence of exile' from fuller fellowship with other people (14:123). Which was why Marlow responded with such pleasure to Jim's finding both personal love and a sustaining kinship with the community in Patusan, where he 'captured much honour and an Arcadian happiness' (16:135) through the Marcellian betweenness that marked his relationship with the populace. 'The land, the people, the friendship, the love, were like the jealous guardians of his body' (26:199). Immediately on producing Stein's ring he had been 'received, in a manner of speaking, into the heart of the community' (25:196), and he quickly grew close to Dain Waris, later describing him to Marlow as '"the best friend (barring you) I ever had. What Mr Stein would call a 'war comrade'"' (26:198). 'Dain Waris', Marlow recounts, 'the distinguished youth, was the first to believe in him; theirs was one of those strange, profound, rare friendships between brown and white, in which the very difference of race seems to draw two human beings closer by some mystic element of sympathy. . . . He not only trusted Jim, he understood him' (26:198-9).

Jim and the people of Patusan related to each other as co-existents, not as objects to be dominated. He provided them with tender leadership, and they in turn afforded him the means to Kierkegaard's 'higher form' of selfhood, 'not merely a personal self but a social, a civic self' (Either/Or 2:220), through which he transformed 'every relationship . . . into a relationship of conscience and thereby also a relationship of love' within his society (Love 138). Jim did not misuse the power his victory in war gave him in the community; the 'moral effect' of his accomplishment, Marlow says, 'was in truth immense. It had led him from strife to peace, and through death into the innermost life of the people'. His relationship with them invigorated Jim: Marlow found it 'extraordinary how very few signs of wear he showed' (27:204).

Though Marlow speaks of Jim as having been in 'total and utter isolation[,] . . . the unsuspected qualities of his nature had brought him in such close touch with his surroundings that his isolation seemed only the effect of his power' (27:206). Certainly he had not forfeited that 'isolation, alone of his own superior kind' (16:135) which Nietzsche admires and which Buber deems essential in even the closest of relationships. But Jim's newfound sense of communion with his fellow beings-in-the-world left him 'in complete accord with his surroundings -- with the life of the forests and with the life of men'. It was a great 'success' on his part (16:136), particularly in a world that Marlow, like Sartre, looked on as precluding any ultimate authentic being-with-others. 'It is as if loneliness were a hard and absolute condition of existence; the envelope of flesh and blood on which our eyes are fixed melts before the outstretched hand, and there remains only the capricious, unconsolable,

(18:143-4). Jim's next employer, Mr Denver, also 'liked' him and 'slipped his hand' under his arm; Jim in turn, Denver reported, "'was familiar with me'" too (18:145).

But these men (who spoke of Jim as they would have of a girl) did not provide the sort of relationship that made them solicitous confidants. Not even Stein developed a truly close relationship with him. Yet, being 'benevolently ready to lend you his ear', Stein did appear to Marlow 'an eminently suitable person to receive my confidences about Jim's difficulties as well as my own' (19:155). And through Stein's concern for him Jim was left free for the experience of Patusan, for the fuller life that came through personal love and through fidelity to the wider world of men. 'We exist only in so far as we hang together', Marlow remarks (2:170), anticipating E. M. Forster's imperative that we 'only connect'.

Jim's reponsiveness towards Marlow left his mentor 'almost alarmed by this display of feeling, through which pierced a strange elation' (17:141). Marlow lent Jim 'confidence' (17:142), that 'resolve' which Heidegger considers necessary to enable oneself to 'be summoned out of one's lostness in the "they"', becoming the 'conscience' of others and making it 'possible to let the Others . . . "be" in their ownmost potentiality-for-Being, and to co-disclose this potentiality in the solicitude which leaps forth and liberates' (Time 345, 344). As Schrag elucidates,²⁹ resolve brings the self to a personal concern -- solicitude -- for others, which makes the authentic self the conscience of the other and frees each for his own unique possibilities. Accordingly, Marlow gave Jim the resoluteness to remake himself: "'I'll show yet. . . . I always thought that if a fellow could begin with a clean slate'", Jim effused, taking his leave with 'the

unhesitating tread of a man walking in broad daylight' (17:142). Marlow of course comments wryly that no one can ever start with a wholly 'clean slate', implying that the past selves which have influenced one's character can never utterly be ignored. And character determines fate; it is 'the initial word of each our destiny . . . graven in imperishable characters upon the face of a rock' (17:143). What is crucial to the existentialist -- as we saw in the preceding chapters -- is to take charge of one's future and assume full responsibility for it.

This Marlow's solicitude gave Jim the courage to do. But not by taking over Jim's troubles for him. 'It's giving you what you had made for yourself,' Marlow insisted when Jim protested at Stein's letting him have the 'house and the stock of trading goods, on certain easy conditions' (24:188). It was ultimately Jim's own conquest of his inauthenticity, facilitated by Marlow's solicitude, that endowed him with his sense of plenitude as 'he looked with an owner's eye at . . . the life of the old mankind, at the secrets of the land, at the pride of his own heart' (24:188-9) in the fulness of his love for Jewel.

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In piercing contrast to these depictions of love's plenitude, Conrad gives constant evidence of the existential emphasis on how impoverished existence is when it lacks authentic relationships with one's fellow beings. Hence in Nostramo the Goulds, pinning their faith to 'material interest' (1:6:100) rather than interpersonal bonds, led a barren life together. Emilia, bereft of any deeply personal attachment to give her life a sense of worth, failed to embrace Dr Monygham's offered affection, consigning herself instead to the 'great wave of loneliness that swept over her head' and the apprehension 'that no one would ever ask her with solicitude what she was thinking of. No one. No one, but perhaps the man [Monygham] who had just gone away. No; no one who could be answered with careless sincerity in the ideal perfection of confidence' (3:11:431). Her life, in Kierkegaard's familiar words, was 'an isolation and hence imperfect' (Either/Or 2:220). By accepting rather than surmounting this condition, she denied herself the Buberian I-Thou relationship that lay open to her.

And so she deepened her isolation, with its concomitant sense of a meaningless future. 'An immense desolation, the dread of her own continued life, descended upon the first lady of Sulaco. With a prophetic vision she saw herself surviving alone the degradation of her young ideal life, of love, of work -- all alone in the Treasure House of the World' (3:11:431). Though she was 'wealthy beyond great dreams of wealth, considered, loved, respected, honoured', in her lack of any close personal relationship she remained 'as solitary as any human being had ever been, perhaps, on this earth' (3:13:457).

Such intense isolation was also the hallmark of The Secret Agent's Winnie Verloc in her sterile marriage with its lack of any I-Thou

dimension. Her husband looked on her chiefly as a provider of sex, and she on him as a provider of material needs. Being 'sensible', she had cast off her beloved 'son of a butcher . . . with whom [she] had been walking out with obvious gusto' (1:72), betraying their love for the sake of the quotidian comforts Verloc could supply. There was plainly no Buberian mutuality, no true dialogue, in the Verlocs' life whereby they sustained each other against the world's buffetings and gave each other a Sartrean sense of personal justification. At one point Verloc did consider 'making a clean breast of it all to his wife', but their estrangement prevented him; she was not a true partner in his life, merely his 'chief possession' (8:174). He did not accord full humanity to her or to Stevie, towards whom he 'extended as much recognition . . . as a man not particularly fond of animals may give to his wife's beloved cat; and this recognition, benevolent and perfunctory, was essentially of the same quality' (1:72). The 'brutal treatment' Stevie had received from his father was at least passionately motivated by 'sufferings' that 'were perfectly genuine' as a result of his having had 'a very peculiar boy for a son' (1:72). To Verloc, Stevie and his mother with her 'motionless being' (1:48) were objects of tedious care rather than of personal solicitude -- mere Heideggerian 'Ones' he had 'to provide for' (3:83).

Winnie's prime matrimonial function was to service Verloc with 'her charms', rather than to stimulate any wider mutual enhancement. She did not even expect from him 'in the daily intercourse of their married life a ceremonious amenity of address and courtliness of manner' (9:182). When she later felt her sexual usefulness slipping, she suddenly apprehended the sheer emptiness of her conjugal state. The 'abode of her married life

and elusive spirit that no eye can follow' (16:138).

Yet even though this existential sentiment suggests that no one is ever wholly knowable by another, Jim went a long way to overcoming his individual alienation. And Marlow's role in that achievement was not insignificant, thanks to his attempts to make himself available to him in a Marcellian way, offering his solicitude, his help, his desire to be 'unreservedly responsible' for him. Jim was not unresponsive: "'Jove!" he gasped out. "It is noble of you!" . . . His eyes shone. . . . He became another man altogether' (17:141), such is the power of a Buberian I-Thou relationship whereby 'the person who is at my disposal', as Marcel puts it, 'is capable of being with me with the whole of himself when I am in need' (Existence 26) -- just as Jim later was to Jewel. He 'lifted her up. . . . Strong arms, a tender voice, a stalwart shoulder to rest her poor lonely little head upon. The need -- the infinite need -- of all this for the aching heart, for the bewildered mind' (33:235). Natalia and Razumov were similarly present to each other in Under Western Eyes: he 'had discovered that he needed her -- and she was moved by the same feeling' (4:3:322).

Once beyond Marlow's presence, Jim had no one -- until Patusan -- to offer him solicitude, though such personal concern might well have flowed from Marlow's 'middle-aged bachelor' friend with whom Jim had gone to live, had Jim not abruptly left (18:143). The friend had described himself as 'not having been able so far to find more in my heart than a resigned toleration for any individual of my kind', but it seemed to Marlow 'that there were the beginnings of active liking' in him for Jim, whose crossing a room to open a door for him had left Marlow's friend feeling 'more in touch with mankind than [he] had been for years'

appeared to her as lonely and unsafe as though it had been situated in the midst of a forest' (9:189).

But what brought home most vividly the shallowness of Winnie's feelings for Verloc was his news of Stevie's death. In Stevie she had 'found an object of quasi-maternal affection' (1:49), even if he was to her also 'an object of care and fears' (3:86), just as he was to his mother, whose 'heroic . . . love for both her children' drove her to consign herself to charity 'as an act of devotion' in order to 'settl[e] her son permanently in life' (8:161, 162). However, her relationship with her children was one of 'maternal anxiety' (8:163) that had no mutually supportive quality, unlike the bond between brother and sister. Winnie provided for Stevie 'a heaven of consoling peace' in 'the black, black misery of [his] soul' (8:165), and he in turn 'was connected with what there was of the salt of passion in her tasteless life' with Verloc, whose 'taciturnity . . . had been lying heavily upon her' since Vladimir's demands on him (8:170, 173).

Accordingly, Winnie felt Stevie's absence keenly during his supposed holiday with Michaelis. 'Her devoted affection missed' him; 'her only real concern was Stevie's welfare' (9:185). She had grown 'to love him with a militant love' (11:223), and her bond with him was far closer than that with her husband, as Paul Wohlfarth stresses.³⁰ Thus Verloc himself sensed, with 'the greatest shock', that Stevie's death would destroy Winnie's 'marital affection'. 'He needed all her assistance and her loyalty' more than ever (11:212), but, negligible before, these supportive qualities were now utterly absent. Instead, as Sartre would not find surprising, the sight of Verloc filled Winnie with hate, which the insensitive man sought to overcome by attempting to 'press her to his breast' with a mixture of

sexual 'impatience and compassion' (11:213). So little knowledge of each other had their vapid connection given them that Verloc actually 'imagined himself loved by that woman' (11:216) -- whereas their life had in fact simply been a bland arrangement, 'congenial to Mrs Verloc's incuriosity and to Mr Verloc's habits of mind, which were indolent and secret'. There was 'a certain element of vagueness [in] their intimacy. . . . Mr Verloc presumed that his wife had understood him but he would have been glad to hear her say what she thought' (11:222).

It was this bland lack of communication that was deadening, rather than any passionate maliciousness in either of them. Indeed, Conrad -- with his usual appreciation of the ironic -- terms Verloc 'a humane man' (11:213 with 'a fund of loyalty in him' (11:217), though loyalty of a sort that merely perpetuated the inauthenticity of both his own existence and his wife's. Despite his desire not to trouble Winnie with his problems and despite his 'sincere concern' for her in the wake of Stevie's death (11:223), Verloc had no passionate commitment to her. For seven years he had merely been there, as Heidegger would put it, rather than a full Marcellian presence, 'carelessly generous' 'in his affairs of the heart.

. . . He had grown older, fatter, heavier, in the belief that he lacked no fascination for being loved for his own sake' (11:226). However unattractive he may have been, Verloc was a pathetic figure in this belief: it was his 'one single amiable weakness' (12:252).

Winnie in turn truly loved only her brother -- and 'it was Mr Verloc who [had taken] Stevie from her' in a betrayal of her trust (11:223). Verloc's account of Stevie's death, in what was his 'first really confidential discourse to his wife' (11:225), revealed how little her

husband actually meant to her. She had simply been tied to him, and she now felt her 'contract' with him 'at an end. She was a free woman' (11:226), and she used her freedom to murder the man whom she realised she in truth hated. Verloc, she later told Ossipon, "'cheated me out of seven years of life'", seven years spent providing sexual services during which "'he loved me till I sometimes wished myself ---- '" (12:244). 'Dead' is presumably the word left unuttered, as Seymour-Smith suggests.³¹ She had given only what was required of "'a good wife"'; she did not "'love him'" (12:243). Indeed, Ossipon 'even began to wonder whether the hidden causes of that Greenwich Park affair did not lie deep in the unhappy circumstances of the Verlocs' married life' (12:245).

Having for so long been 'at the mercy of mere trifles, of casual contacts' (11:229), Winnie finally discovered a depth of passion in her that had been anaesthetised for so long by their tepid life together, with its 'accord of prudent reserve without superfluous words, and sparing of signs, which had been the foundation of their respectable home life . . . undisturbed by unseemly shrieks and other misplaced sincerities of conduct' (11:235). But her passionate moment of self-assertion in murdering Verloc left Winnie even more hopelessly without personal interconnectedness. 'Murderers had friends, relatives, helpers . . . she had nothing. She was the most lonely of murderers that had ever struck a mortal blow' (12:240).

The victim of a similarly barren marriage, Emilia Gould's only means to an authentic life lay in extricating herself from the husband who had become thoroughly 'blighted' by the mine (1:6:79), his devotion to which eventually desiccated his relationship with all his fellow beings-in-the-world. Initially, 'theirs was a successful match'; as Gould told his wife, "'The best of my feelings are in your keeping, my dear" . . . and there

was so much truth in that obscure phrase that he experienced towards her at the moment a great increase of gratitude and tenderness' (1:6:91). But their mutually enhancing love ultimately degenerated into an I-It situation. 'The silver mine, which had killed his father, had decoyed him further than he meant to go; and . . . he felt that the worthiness of his life was bound up with success' of a material kind rather than success in personal relationships (1:6:101). He expended his passion on an overriding material object, not on people -- holding to his mine (in Decoud's phrase) '"as some men hold to the idea of love or revenge"' (2:7:218).

To Decoud the later Gould deferred to Emilia primarily because '"he wished to make up for some subtle wrong, for that sentimental unfaithfulness which surrender[ed] her happiness, her life, to the seduction of an idea"' (2:7:219). The narrator continues this strain of presenting Gould's devotion to the mine in terms that show transference of consideration from the personal to the impersonal: San Tomé had ensnared Gould's affections, and his concern for it replaced his solicitude for his wife, who 'discovered that he [lived] for the mine rather than for her' and who sought 'to save him from the effects of that cold and overmastering passion, which she [dreaded] more than if it were an infatuation for another woman' (2:7:219).

The mine's supplanting of Emilia in her husband's affections is stressed again in Gould's determination to blow up San Tomé mountain rather than let it fall into his enemies' hands. 'This resolution expressed . . . the remorse of that subtle conjugal infidelity through which his wife was no longer the sole mistress of his thoughts' (3:4:312). The mine had

dehumanised him, just as it had the labourers, whose 'confidence and belief' it had appropriated. They had pinned all their faith to it, investing it with 'a protecting and invincible virtue as though it were a fetish' (3:6:336). San Tomé held them as firmly as it did Gould, whom it had in 'a grip as deadly as ever it had laid upon his father' (3:6:338). By the end it had made him a 'stony fiend of a man' who -- having clearly ceased to view others as full co-existents -- spoke in 'a cold-blooded manner which made one shudder' (3:6:341). Thus Conrad, with his penetrating insights into the dehumanising character of industrial and commercial I-It responses, tends to use the mine in what Northrop Frye would likely regard as a metonymic way, letting it stand allegorically and emblematically for an inauthentic mode of life.

Gould's lack of true concern for others spawned by a sense of isolation manifested itself also in Monygham, Decoud and Nostromo himself prior to their redemption by love. The Capataz's apprehension of his isolation was particularly pronounced after his return to Sulaco and his devastating realisation that he had no true I-Thou bond with anyone. Though his reputation was that of a successful lover, he had been altogether cavalier in his treatment of women until his genuinely loving commitment to Giselle. 'Magnificent and carelessly public in his amours', he had openly kissed and teased the 'pretty Morenita' who halted his horse in the street (1:8:134); as Dr Monygham slyly reminded him, "'You . . . never say 'no' to a pretty face'" (2:7:229). Even Decoud remarked to him, "'Everybody knows of your good luck with women'" (2:7:235). This Nostromo accurately put down to simple hearsay: "'As to those girls that boast of having opened their doors to my knock, you know I wouldn't look at any one of them twice except for what the people would say'" (2:8:258).

Before meeting Giselle he had cared for no one, and no one had truly cared for him.

Thus, likable though he was, Gian' Battista had no self-surpassing bond with anyone to lend a sense of authenticity to all his attractive attributes -- and his death cut short the authentic being-with-others promised by his incipient love relationship with Giselle. There was certainly a tie between him and Teresa Viola, who had had high hopes of Nostromo as 'a friend and defender' for her daughters. But theirs was 'an intimacy of antagonism', devoid of openness and mutual enrichment, even though it was 'as close in its way as the intimacy of accord and affection' (2:7:224). Indeed, Mongyham observed that "'she was in a way . . . in love with him. . . . No, no, I am not absurd. I may have given a wrong name to some strong sentiment for him on her part, to an unreasonable and simple attitude a woman is apt to take up emotionally towards a man. . . . He was something important in her life"'. Not surprisingly, Nostromo's desertion of her drove her "'into despair"' (3:1:276).

However, even Teresa (like almost everyone else) saw Nostromo in terms of his usefulness, 'fixing' him, as Sartre would say, into an external instrument through her desire to 'annex that apparently quiet and steady young man, affectionate and pliable', for the benefit of the Viola family (2:7:224). And this exasperated him. "'Did you think you could put a collar and chain on me as if I were one of the watchdogs they keep over there in the railway yards?'" (2:7:227).

Though Teresa looked on Nostromo's having fetched 'the English doctor' for her as 'a proof of his friendship' (2:7:235, 225), she ultimately meant very little to him, so that the lure of the fame he would earn as

saviour of the silver was stronger than her request for a priest. Like Charles Gould, Nostromo put 'material interest' above concern for a fellow existent. 'She felt a despairing indignation. The supreme test had failed' (2:7:226). Her ensuing sense of abandonment indubitably hastened her death, which plunged her husband 'into the open abyss of desolation amongst the shattered vestiges of his past'. In marked contrast to the cavalier Nostromo, Giorgio discovered in 'the deep, passionate sense of his bereavement . . . all the extent of his dependence upon the silenced voice of that woman. . . . And the old man . . . sat through the day in immobility and solitude' (3:9:390)

Yet even as Nostromo refused to fetch a priest for Teresa he had 'felt oppressed for a moment' (2:7:226)--had felt, as he told Decoud aboard the lighter, "'this cursed silver growing heavy upon my back"' (2:7:235). Even as he deserted her he had an apprehension of the powerful claims of the personal that Heidegger illustrates in the Roman myth of Care, by which every man exists in an inescapable relation with others, who lay claim to his concern. Nostromo could not bring himself to hurl Hirsch overboard, despite the fact that the stowaway posed a threat to their very lives were he to fall into the wrong hands, as indeed he did. Decoud, in his usual impersonal manner, considered Hirsch as merely being 'in the way, like an inanimate and useless object -- like a block of wood' (2:8:240). Nostromo, however, responded humanely towards Hirsch, feeling that he could not take his life after having seen Decoud "'holding up the can to his lips as though he were your brother. . . . Your compassion saved him"' (2:8:248), revealing that man's existential bond with his fellow beings-in-the-world constantly asserts itself.

Yet the tie between Nostromo and Decoud was chiefly one as between two

Sartrean contingent existents; no greater value informed their relationship. During their struggle to keep the lighter afloat following their collision with the steamer, 'each of them was as if utterly alone with his task. It did not occur to them to speak. There was nothing in common between them but the knowledge that the damaged lighter must be slowly but surely sinking. . . . There was no bond of conviction, of common idea' (2:8:257). Thrown together in a venture that was inimical to the achievement of authentic being, they lacked the mutual solicitude Heidegger deems fundamental to self-fulfilment, without which men are 'lost' in the bondage of inauthenticity (Time 166).

The perception that his life was empty by virtue of the very fact that he had no vital connection with any other living soul struck Nostromo more forcefully than ever as he returned in stealth to Sulaco harbour. Decoud, abandoned on the Great Isabel, 'was the only one who cared whether he fell into the hands of the Monterists or not, the Capataz reflected bitterly. And that merely would be an anxiety for his own sake. As to the rest, they neither knew nor cared' (3:8:349), leaving him without any Heideggerian solicitude from anyone that might have given him a Sartrean sense of justification for his life.

In this apprehension Nostromo 'beheld all his world without faith and courage' amid its 'silence and solitude' (3:8:351, 354). 'No one waited for him; no one thought of him; no one expected or wished his return. . . . No one cared' (3:8:355). In a Marcellian world overshadowed by the 'menace of betrayal' (Existence 22), Nostromo's tone during his unexpected encounter with Monygham was one of wounded cynicism, born specifically of the Capataz's emotional isolation. A 'sense of betrayal and ruin floated

upon his sombre indifference as upon a sluggish sea of pitch' (3:8:358) in his resentment at what he considered to be the lack of concern exhibited by the doctor and his circle for his personal safety. "'You did not care -- none of you caballeros on the wharf -- once you got off a man of flesh and blood like yourselves on a fool's business that could not end well'" (3:8:361). "'You fine people are all alike. . . . All betrayers of the poor who are your dogs'" (3:8:379). "'I say that you do not care for those that serve you'" (3:9:380).

And in truth Monygham did think of Nostromo primarily as a useful object, in terms of how 'he would be of the greatest use in the work of saving the San Tomé mine' (3:8:362). 'Nostromo's return was providential. He did not think of him humanely, as of a fellow-creature just escaped from the jaws of death' (3:8:362). Though 'he esteemed highly the intrepidity of that man, he valued [him] but little' (3:8:363). Aware of being regarded as an object rather than a full co-existent, Nostromo 'felt himself of as little account as the indistinct, motionless shape of the dead [Hirsch] whom he saw upright on the beam, . . . disregarded, forgotten, like a terrible example of neglect' (3:8:365). Hirsch had indeed been treated savagely by Sotillo, as if he were a mere piece of meat. 'For many hours he remained apparently forgotten, stretched lifelessly on the floor. From that solitude, full of despair and terror, he was torn out brutally, with kicks and blows, passive, sunk in hebetude' (3:9:374), to be tortured before the coup de grâce from Sotillo's revolver. 'The body of the late Señor Hirsch dwelt alone . . . in the dismal solitude of the unfinished building' (3:9:378).

Again Conrad gives a graphic instance of the absence of that personal solicitude which Heidegger considers crucial to uplifting man's existence

in its inescapable condition of 'Being with Others' (Time 162). In the presence of the dangling corpse Nostromo saw anew his lack of human connection, sharing Marcel's view that 'I have no reason to set any store by myself, except in so far as I know I am loved by other beings who are loved by me' (Mystery 2:8). "'I am nothing! . . . '", Nostromo lamented. "'Nothing to anyone'" (3:9:380).

This sense of nullity through lack of human solicitude afflicted Razumov just as strongly in Under Western Eyes, where (as in The Secret Agent) Conrad offers a devastating dissection of how political intrigue militates against I-Thou relationships and authenticity, much as industrial activity does in Nostromo (though there are of course distinctions in the ways they do so). Kirylo Sidorovitch Razumov, we are told by the professor of languages, 'was as lonely in the world as a man swimming in the deep sea. The word Razumov was the mere label of a solitary individuality' (1:1:61). And so it remained, until his love for Natalia Haldin brought the promise of redemption from his inauthentic existence in yet another Marcellian world that contained 'the menace of betrayal' (Existence 22).

Redemption might have come much earlier, but Razumov let slip his initial opportunity for a self-affirming relationship when he betrayed Victor Haldin, who had come to him in openness and utter trust, confiding his murder of de P---- in the hope of finding human solicitude and support. Instead, Razumov chose to abuse this 'confidence' (1:1:67). Indeed, he feared intimate ties with anyone: people 'endangered' 'the safety of his lonely existence', which he entrusted to 'the present institutions' of society. But the existentialist would demand that the individual defy

established values as a first step towards mutually fulfilling relationships with others, which have the potential to free him for authentic selfhood. Razumov, however, elected to side with 'the very officials' who if he ran foul of them would in their lack of solicitude for anyone have sentenced him 'some morning', only to 'forget his existence before sunset. . . . Others had fathers, mothers, brothers, relations, connections . . . he had no one' (1:1:69). An orphan, like Nostromo, his single confidant was not a flesh-and-blood human being but his 'written journal', 'the pitiful resource of a young man who had near him no trusted intimacy, no natural affection to turn to' (4:1:293). Again like Nostromo, he had no caring relationship with anyone -- and in this mode of being, Heidegger reminds us, 'neither the Self of one's own Dasein nor the Self of the Other has yet found itself' and is 'lost' (Time 166).

Razumov 'hated the man' (1:1:69) who had offered him that open trust so valued by Marcel. 'A terrible fury -- the blind rage of self-preservation -- possessed Razumov' (1:2:76) as he went looking for Ziemianitch to help Haldin 'vanish' (1:1:68), and he treated the drunken sledge-driver as if were merely some 'inert' object (1:1:76) rather than a full co-existent, savagely kicking and beating him -- much as Ricardo treated Pedro and Sotillo treated Hirsch. 'Locked' in Eliotian 'selfhood' Razumov at this stage had no compassionate consideration for any living soul, and he returned to his abode with 'lowered head, making room for no one' (1:2:80). Reasoning that he had no 'moral bond . . . of common faith' with Haldin, he resolved to "'give him up'" (1:2:82); he had not, after all, "'provoked his confidence'" or "'accepted his trust'" (1:2:82).

Yet, like other men, he had a great longing "'to be understood.'" The universal aspiration with all its profound and melancholy meaning assailed

heavily Razumov, who, amongst eighty millions of his kith and kin, had no heart to which he could open himself'. For a moment he entertained an existential vision of 'flinging himself on his knees beside Haldin' and pouring out 'a full confession in passionate words that would stir the whole being of that man to its innermost depths; that would end in embraces and tears; in an incredible fellowship of souls' (1:2:83). But he could not bring himself to such Marcellian availability, whereby someone 'is capable of being with me with the whole of himself when I am in need' (Existence 26). Instead, Razumov's subservience to the values that condemned him to inauthentic being overcame this vision of union, and he turned to Prince K---- and General T----, whom he loathed (1:2:87), and eventually to Councillor Mikulin, his 'mistrust' of whom was 'acute' (1:3:120). They of course saw him simply as an instrument of 'usefulness' (4:1:292) -- just as the revolutionary circle in Geneva would later wish to use him for their ends.

That Razumov none the less had the potential for a Buberian I-Thou relationship was clear in the torment of his emotions at betraying the fellow being whose eyes 'gazed upwards at [him] with wistful gratitude for this manifestation of feeling' that he divined when Razumov's 'hand fell lightly on Haldin's shoulder' (1:2:98, 97). Razumov, however, ignored his own emotions and desperately reasoned that his fealty belonged to the state rather than to any individual human self. "'You might have gone to a man with affections and family ties'", he told Haldin, blaming his upbringing for his lack of personal consideration in a way Sartre would not excuse, since it is incumbent on one to fight the external forces that mangle one's better imperatives. "'You know I have been brought up in an

educational institute where they did not give us enough to eat. To talk of affection in such a connection. . . . As to ties, the only ties I have in the world are social" (1:2:100).

Haldin's response to this impersonal rationalisation was to consider his "person . . . loathsome" to Razumov, ^(1:2:101) with that sense of alienation from himself which existentialists identify with one's reducing oneself to an object for another person. And Sartre would insist that Haldin alone was responsible for this view of himself. It may be, he argues, that 'I am a Jew, an Aryan, handsome or ugly . . . for the Other . . . with no hope of changing it. . . . I am something which I have not chosen to be'. But 'a Jew is not a Jew first in order to be subsequently ashamed or proud; it is his pride of being a Jew, his shame, or his indifference which will reveal to him his being-a-Jew; and this being-a-Jew is nothing outside the free manner of adopting it. . . . Whether in fury, hate, pride, shame, disheartened refusal or joyous demand, it is necessary for me to choose to be what I am' (Nothingness 523-4, 529). All hinges on how one responds to one's unchangeable aspects; by considering himself unappealing to Razumov, Haldin freely chose this attitude and thereby obstructed intimacy. 'Looking up for a moment' in the hope of connection, he swiftly turned 'his gaze on the floor', 'evidently waiting for a word. Razumov remained silent' (1:2:101), consigning them both to isolation.

This lack of an interpersonal bond left Razumov too with a self-alienating sense of insignificance. He experienced his body as 'an unrelated organism . . . walking, breathing, wearing these clothes'; it 'was of no importance to any one, unless maybe the landlady'. His 'existence . . . seemed no longer his own' (1:3:113). His fellow student 'Madcap Kostia' had a like apprehension. 'What was his life?

Insignificant; no good to any one' (1:3:115). Kostia, however, resolved to alter that by some sort of 'sacrifice' through aiding Razumov in his supposed need to escape abroad. And such resolve, we recall Heidegger contending, is a potential means to authentic being -- both for the agent and the other person. 'Only by authentically Being-their-Selves in resoluteness can people authentically be with one another -- not by ambiguous and jealous stipulations and talkative fraternizing in the "they"', but through resolve that makes them the 'conscience' of others (Time 344).

Yet Razumov perpetuated his self-alienating isolation by rejecting Kostia's offer with 'disdain' and 'contempt' (1:3:117), spurning his attempt at forming a relationship of solicitude that Kostia felt would have enhanced his own self, hitherto 'a mere festivity' (1:3:115). Razumov may have acknowledged that "'to cut oneself entirely from one's kind is impossible. To live in a desert one must be a saint'". Yet he still found human intimacy in general unpalatable, akin to "'a drunken man [who] runs out of the grog-shop, falls on your neck and kisses you because something about your appearance has taken his fancy'" (1:3:128).

Or so Razumov thought until he met Natalia Haldin. The professor of languages tells us that he himself had been aware from the first 'how attractive physically her personality could be to a man capable of appreciating in a woman something else than the mere grace of femininity. Her glance was as direct and trustful as that of a young man yet unspoiled by the world's wise lessons. And it was intrepid. . . . She was . . . very capable of being aroused . . . by a person' (2:1:132-3). She was thus clearly open to human contact, now that her single close human

connection had ended with Victor's death, which had filled her with 'the anguish of irreparable loss . . . there is no life so lonely as to be safe against that experience' (2:1:140). Lacking a close human bond, she wondered what she had "'to look for in the future'" (2:1:141), while her bereft mother sat by in 'terrible immobility' (2:1:144), in her 'lifeless', 'indifferent' manner (2:4:191). Though Natalia's 'relations with her mother were of the tenderest and most open kind', Mrs Haldin 'maintained a heroic reserve' that precluded true Buberian dialogue, so that Natalia's 'was a solitary existence for a young girl'. In the wake of her brother's death 'she felt herself abandoned without explanation' (2:3:162). In Heidegger's terms, she was 'lost' (Time 166).

Thus, the only thing Natalia had "'to look for in the future'" was the possibility of a new attitude engendered by an authentic relationship with another human self that would end her isolation. The professor had hoped to provide that relationship himself, longing for her confidence, her request for advice; without them, he felt like 'a dumb helpless ghost, . . . an anxious immaterial thing that could only hover about without the power to protect or guide' (2:2:151). He, too, ached for deeper human connection, and was 'not ashamed of the warmth of [his] regard' for Natalia, which he (rather like Dr Monygham in Nostramo) considered to be 'an unselfish sentiment, being its own reward' (2:4:181).

Natalia elicited similar warmth of regard from Razumov, whose feelings for her were obviously complicated by his guilt over his part in her brother's death. There initially seemed little prospect of her freeing him for the resoluteness that would bring him authentic being, or of his helping her to overcome her despondency. He had 'even recoiled a pace' when she first offered him her hand, had 'positively reeled' on

discovering who she was (2:4:186, 187). But eventually, as we have seen, each "'saved"' (4:4:333) the other from what Kierkegaard considers the imperfection of the solitary self.

Even Sophia Antonovna had her humanity expanded by Razumov. At first 'the very spirit of ruthless revolution' (3:3:257), who put a cause above personal relationships, she eventually moved beyond her impersonal credo that "'in regard of that task nothing else matters"' (3:3:251) and compassionately forgave Razumov -- just as the other revolutionaries ultimately did, outraged as they were at Nikita's brutal treatment of him.

Nikita, 'nicknamed Necator', was 'the very pseudonym of murder' (3:4:260, 261), a walking example of the destructive outcome of man's eschewing solicitude. Utterly lacking reciprocal bonds with anyone, he indiscriminately killed members of 'both camps' (3:4:261). Though Nikita had 'a charming wife, devoted to the cause, and two young children' (3:4:261), the professor makes no mention of the assassin showing any affection for them. He was despised by his cohorts, as was Madame de S----, with whom Peter Ivanovitch lived simply 'for her money' (3:2:221). The revolutionaries, too, regarded her merely as someone with 'positive uses' (3:3:247), as did her relatives, who at her death looked on her as a pile of money to be fought over like 'vultures' (5:5:349).

In her lack of genuine human relationships, Madame de S---- treated others as ciphers, through which she herself became depersonalised. Razumov felt for her an 'abhorrence that may be caused by a wooden or plaster figure of a repulsive kind. She moved no more than if she were such a figure; even her eyes, whose unwinking stare plunged into his own, though shining, were lifeless, as though they were as artificial as her

teeth' (3:2:228). The acerbity of her life extended also to Peter Ivanovitch, 'that hairy and obscene brute' (3:2:224); only after her death did he again find true companionship, and thus salvation from a dehumanising life.

Salvation through adoration of another came also in the end to the once pitiful Tekla. Treated as a mere functionary, she was 'not consulted' on anything by the inhabitants of the Château Borel (2:4:167), who accorded her as much consideration as the furniture around her, so that she came to regard herself as unable 'to be anything' other than 'the blind instrument of higher ends' (2:4:168, 169). Her earlier life too had been thwarted, endurable thanks only to the solicitude of her 'old friend and teacher, the poor saintly apple-woman', without whom her 'spirit would have perished miserably' (2:4:170).

Like her employers, Razumov also initially looked on the 'forlorn creature' simply as an object of potential use to him: "'She may be worth cultivating'" (3:2:223), he had thought to himself in that mode of viewing others as exploitable commodities which prevailed in him before his love for Natalia stirred his authentic humanity. Tekla responded to what she termed Razumov's "'human manner. . . . I have been starving for, I won't say kindness, but just for a little civility, for I don't know how long'" (3:2:234). She was all too ready to become his object, so conditioned had she become by her inauthentic being-with-others at the ch^âteau. Considering herself no better than 'the tables and chairs' that Madame de S---- and Peter Ivanovitch spoke in front of, 'she . . . seemed to beg mutely to be . . . given a word of encouragement for her starving, grotesque, and pathetic devotion' (3:2:235). "'No one is told my name. No one cares. No one talks to me, no one writes to me. . . . I have no use for a name, and I

have almost forgotten it myself'" (3:2:236).

Tekla of course ultimately surmounted this condition by devoting herself to Razumov, an achievement never managed by anyone in The Secret Agent. We have already seen how the emptiness of the Verlocs' marriage drove Winnie to murder the husband who treated her as little more than a useful possession and who viewed mankind in general with disdain. His associates he 'scornfully' regarded as 'hopelessly futile' (3:81), and they in turn -- like everyone else Verloc had dealings with -- similarly 'fixed' people 'into objects' in the way we have seen Sartre deplore (Nothingness 266). Vladimir, for example, with his 'mocking, cynical watchfulness' (2:57, 58), considered Verloc as just a 'fat . . . animal' to be 'chucked' once his 'usefulness' was over (2:64). Karl Yundt shared this lack of personal concern for anyone, fanatical as he was in his dream of 'a band of men absolute in their resolve to disregard all scruples', with 'no pity for anything on earth' in their ruthless service of 'humanity' in the abstract (3:74). 'Nursed by a blear-eyed old woman, a woman he had years ago enticed away from a friend, and afterwards had tried more than once to shake off into the gutter' (3:81), Yundt brazenly made use of others for his own benefit, giving nothing in return.

Such too was the attitude of Chief Inspector Heat. Though disturbed by an 'unpleasant sensation in his throat' at the news of the 'heap of nameless fragments' to which Stevie had been reduced by the Greenwich bombing, he was a man whose 'trained faculties' impelled him to be impersonal (5:107). Working for 'a department', which the narrator considers 'a dispassionate organism' (5:109), Heat was a product of the same 'machine' (5:110) that produced 'the world of thieves', a world which

worked 'by routine' (5:111). It operated 'under perfectly comprehensible rules. There were no rules for dealing with anarchists' (5:114) -- and this was unsettling to his 'vulgar love of domination over [his] fellow creatures' (6:132-3). Nietzsche would swiftly categorise this 'average married citizen' (6:132) as a mechanical member of the 'herd', which defends itself both against those who (like criminals) are decadents from its ranks and those who rise superior to its mediocrity. 'Though what is called a man', Heat -- unlike Nietzsche's laughing Zarathustra -- 'was not a smiling animal' (6:133) but viewed his 'fellow citizens' with 'an attitude of doubt and suspicion' (9:194)

Neither he nor anyone else in the novel besides Winnie and Stevie even approached Kierkegaard's difficult injunction that one transform 'every relation between man and man into a relationship of conscience and thereby also into a relationship of love' (Love 138). To Heat, people had value only in so far as they were useful 'tools' (7:145). His superior, the nameless Assistant Commissioner, took a like view; those he encountered at his place of work he 'fed' on as 'human material' (6:129). He lived devoid of any close human connection. Although (like Winnie and Emilia) he had made a good marriage 'from a worldly point of view' (5:116), it was a cold enchainment to a woman whose 'delicacy of . . . nature . . . and tastes' had its 'limitations' (6:125). His only habitual acquaintances were those at his club, whom he never met 'except at the card-table' and with whom he approached his daily whist party 'in the spirit of co-sufferers' (5:118).

Michaelis too had no close bond with anyone. 'Annexed by his wealthy old lady' (3:81), he looked on mankind from a distance in 'his solitary reclusion' (3:75), speaking with bland equanimity of the 'cannibalistic' economic conditions that fostered human misery in the

abstract. His harsh mouthings left him wholly unperturbed. In Stevie, on the other hand, they produced an 'audible gulp' (3:80) through his horror at suffering; his compassion was easily 'wrought . . . to the pitch of frenzy' by 'tales of injustice and oppression' (1:50). Michaelis in contrast had no such feeling of personal involvement. 'He talked to himself, indifferent to the sympathy or hostility of his hearers, indifferent indeed to their presence' (3:75). Forsaking strong ties with others, he embraced instead the 'confined space, seclusion, and solitude' of his 'small four-roomed cottage. . . . It was like being in prison' (6:131).

Indeed, Conrad presents the majority of his characters as trapped in isolation cells of their own making, remorselessly pointing to the bleakness of inauthentic being-with-others, the Kierkegaardian danger inherent in one's choosing 'to isolate oneself too much' (Journals 28) rather than striving for 'a relationship of conscience and thereby also . . . of love' (Love 138). It is a bleakness Conrad makes even more deadening by depicting so lustrously the enhancing joy of Sartrean justification engendered by solicitous love that offers self-transcendence through the mutuality of full Marcellian presence. Thus, as we have seen, Conrad shares the existential conviction -- especially as articulated by Camus in The Rebel -- that man can pass beyond nihilism to fashion his own private sense of worth by virtue of his individual response to what, in itself, is an indifferent and absurd universe. Through his moral efforts to create his own unique in-itself amid his utter freedom of choice for action that entails responsibility both to himself and others, man has the potential to overcome the Sartrean weight of the world that induces

anxiety and alienation. Like Victory's Lena, man is able through his actions to achieve 'a sense of an inconceivable intensity of existence' (4:9:293).

Footnotes

Notes to the Preface

1. Albert Camus, Notebooks, 1935-1942 tr. Philip Thody (New York: Modern Library, 1965), p. 10.
2. Arturo B. Follico, Art and Existentialism (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 130.
3. There have been two lengthy studies of Conrad's existentialism, both limited primarily to Sartre and Camus. Joan Parsons Wang, 'Joseph Conrad, Proto-Existentialist: A Comparative Study of Conrad, Camus, and Sartre', unpub. diss., Indiana Univ., 1964 (see Dissertation Abstracts, 26 [1965]: 1051-2), focuses on aspects such as man's isolation in an indifferent universe that spawns angst and nausea yet leaves man free to choose, or to evade freedom through bad faith. R. J. Das, Joseph Conrad: A Study in Existential Vision (New Delhi: Associated Publishing, 1980), looks at existence and essence, politics, nothingness and rebellion. Other overtly existential treatments of Conrad include: Adam Gillon, 'Conrad and Sartre', Dalhousie Review, 40 (Spring 1960):61-71, and The Eternal Solitary: A Study of Joseph Conrad (New York: Bookman Associates, London: Burns and MacEachern, 1960); Paul Goetsch, 'Joseph Conrad: The Secret Agent', Die neueren Sprachen, new series, 12 (Mar. 1963):97-110; Eloise Knapp Hay, 'Conrad between Sartre and Socrates', Modern Language Quarterly, 34, no. 1

(Mar. 1973), which sweepingly suggests Conrad's likely existential dimensions; Lois A. Michel, 'The Absurd Predicament in Conrad's Political Novels', College English, 23 (Nov. 1961):131-6; Gerald Morgan, 'Conrad, Madach et Calderon', Etudes slaves et est-européennes, 6 (Autumn-Winter 1961):196-209; Carole Slade, 'La Chute and Lord Jim', Romance Notes, 24 (1983):95-9; J. Oates Smith, 'The Existential Comedy of Conrad's "Youth"', Renascence, 16 (Fall 1983):22-8; C. N. Stavrou, 'Conrad, Camus, and Sisyphus', Audience, 7 (Winter 1960):80-96; William Bysshe Stein, 'Conrad's East: Time, History, Action, and Maya', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 7 (Autumn 1965):265-83; Wit Tarnawski, 'Conrad and Sartre', Journal of the Joseph Conrad Society (United Kingdom), 5, no. 1 (1979):1-3.

4. Todd K. Bender, 'Conrad and Literary Impressionism', Conradiana, 10, no. 3 (1978):218, draws attention to Conrad's 'impressionist' method, which I think contributes to the Conradian presentation of perspectivism. Bender mentions Marlow's overhearing indistinct bits about Kurtz in the conversation between the station manager and his nephew early in chapter 2 of Heart of Darkness, where 'Conrad fragments his sentences, uses the eccentric center of consciousness so as to force the reader into the activity of constructing the meaning of the scene in the same manner that Marlow must grapple with these fragmentary clues'.

5. At the risk of giving offence, I retain the use of man as including both genders; similarly, given the absence of a gender-neutral pronoun in English where it is inappropriate, I for convenience' sake use the masculine pronoun when the feminine is equally applicable.

Notes to Chapter 1: Being in the World

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, Grossoktavausgabe, 2nd edn, vol. 12 (Leipzig: Kroner, 1901-13), p. 61, tr. George Allen Morgan, Jr., What Nietzsche Means (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1943), p. 289.
2. 'Joseph Conrad', Saturday Review (London), 138 (9 Aug. 1924):136.
3. See Ian Watt, 'Story and Idea in Conrad's The Shadow-Line', Critical Quarterly, 2 (Summer 1960):133-48; Thomas Hardy, Collected Poems (London: Macmillan, 1976), p. 75. Hardy sees the world as a Nietzschean clash of antitheses, necessitating 'a full look at the Worst' -- so that Swithin St Cleeve in Two on a Tower, like Conrad's Kurtz, 'feels impelled to search out and enter this heart of darkness, and Viviette, like Marlow, follows' (Virginia R. Hyman, Ethical Perspective in the Novels of Thomas Hardy [Port Washington, N.Y., and London: Kennikat Press, 1975], p. 95).
4. Marcel uses the metaphor of man as a commedia dell'arte actor thrown into a cosmic theatre (cf. Mystery 1:173). In broad terms, Morgan, 'Conrad, Madach et Calderon', p. 199, points to five areas in which Marcel and Conrad have similar affinities: 'Entre Conrad et Marcel il y a un rapport étroit d'idées. Ils s'accordent premièrement, sur la nécessité de s'évader de tout système catégorique du savoir ou du vivre; deuxièmement, sur la nécessité d'une fidélité sans borne, d'une fidélité créatrice; troisièmement, sur le mystère magique de l'univers sensible; quatrièmement, sur la nécessité d'agir d'une façon absolument individuelle, pour sauver le soi face à l'existence. Ils s'accordent, enfin, sur la nécessité d'échapper à une existence illusoire--disons baroque--par le moyen d'une Ignorance qui dévoile aux âmes réfléchies une via interior vers le coeur des ténèbres.'

But, 'pour Marcel, le mystère de l'existence exige un engagement total; pour Conrad, l'abnégation "dédaigneuse" du soi.'

5. See William Bysshe Stein, 'Conrad's East', pp. 265-83.
6. See Adam Gillon, 'Cosmopolitanism in Conrad's Work', Proceedings of the IVth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, vol. 1 (Fribourg, 1964), ed. Francois Jost (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), pp. 94-9.
7. See David Daiches, 'Joseph Conrad', The Novel and the Modern World (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 25-62.
8. See C. B. Cox, Joseph Conrad: The Modern Imagination (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, and Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974), p. 173.
9. See Hermann Stresan, 'Joseph Conrad: Tragische Figuren in Konflikt mit der Wirklichkeit', Deutsche Universitätszeitung, 8 (18 May 1953):7-10.
10. See generally Ruth M. Stauffer, Joseph Conrad: His Romantic-Realism (Boston: Four Seas, 1922).
11. See Cox, Joseph Conrad, p. 63.
12. See Albert J. Guerard, 'The Nigger of the "Narcissus"', Kenyon Review, 19 (Spring 1957):205-32.
13. See Wilfred Desan, The Tragic Finale, rev. edn (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), p. 114.
14. See John Macquarrie, Existentialism (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 189-92.
15. See generally Wilson Follet, Joseph Conrad: A Short Study (New York: Russell and Russell, 1966).
16. See Cox, Joseph Conrad, pp. 15-16.
17. Similarities between the urban worlds of Conrad and Dickens are

considered by, inter alia, Frederick R. Karl, 'Conrad's Debt to Dickens', Notes and Queries, new series, 4 (Sept. 1957):389-400), and 'Conrad's Waste Land: Moral Anarchy in The Secret Agent', Four Quartets, 9 (Jan. 1960): 29-36.

18. See Avrom Fleishman, Community and Anarchy in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), pp. 185-214.

19. See J. Hillis Miller, Poets of Reality: Six Twentieth-Century Writers (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 13-67.

20. See D. A. C. MacLennan, 'Conrad's Vision', English Studies in Africa (Johannesburg), 7 (Sept. 1964):195-201. Some of Conrad's absurdist dimensions are considered also in Michel, 'The Absurd Predicament in Conrad', pp. 131-6; Goetsch, 'Joseph Conrad: The Secret Agent', pp. 97-110; and Smith, 'The Existential Comedy of Conrad's "Youth"', pp. 22-8.

21. This theme is considered in J. M. Kertzer, '"The bitterness of our wisdom": Cynicism, Skepticism and Joseph Conrad', Novel, 16, no. 2 (Winter 1983):121-40.

22. See Ian Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), p. 152.

23. Miguel de Unamuno, The Tragic Sense of Life, tr. Crawford Fritch (London, 1921), pp. 17-18; see also pp. 130-1, 294.

24. See Jerome Thale, 'Marlow's Quest', University of Toronto Quarterly, 24 (July 1955):351-8. Murray Krieger, The Tragic Vision: The Confrontation of Extremity (New York: Holt-Rinehard and Winston, 1960), posits Kurtz, Jim and Heyst as non-rational tragic visionaries within a framework of Christian existentialism.

25. Nietzsche, Grossoktavausgabe, vol. 10, p. 191, tr. Morgan, Nietzsche, p. 99.
26. H. T. Webster, 'Joseph Conrad: A Reinterpretation of Five Novels', College English, 7 (Dec. 1945):125-34, contrasts Heyst's 'passive pessimism' with Jones's 'active cynicism'.
27. E. R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951), p. 254.
28. See Ted E. Boyle: Symbol and Meaning in the Fiction of Joseph Conrad (London, The Hague, Paris: Mouton, 1965), p. 215. Roderick Davis, 'Under Western Eyes: "The Most Deeply Meditated Novel"', Conradiana, 9, no. 1 (1977):69, discussing some of Conrad's deletions from what was a relatively clean manuscript, notes an excised passage in which Razumov 'rails against the absurdity of reason in this kind of world'. The passage from the holograph (in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University) reads: 'In such a bizarre exaggeration of sanity, Razumov wished himself mad -- as if that alone were the right pitch at which his harmony with his surroundings could be preserved. Lunatics had no conscience and no apprehensions. It was an enviable state and apparently not to be attained easily' (MS p. 275).
29. See Peter Ure, 'Character and Imagination in Conrad', Cambridge Journal, 3 (Sept. 1950):727-40.
30. See Bruce Johnson, Conrad's Models of Mind (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 71.
31. See Granville Hicks, 'Conrad after Five Years', New Republic, 61 (8 Jan. 1930):192-4.
32. Ian Watt, 'Joseph Conrad: Alienation and Commitment', in The English

Mind: Studies in the English Moralists Presented to Basil Willey, ed. Hugh Sykes Davies and George Watson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), pp. 257-78, suggests that Conrad's view of commitment (which is explored in chapter 4 below) has strong affinities both with existentialism and Marxism. The process of moral self-discovery leading to human commitment has an existential quality to it, and Conrad's consideration of solidarity as an eventual consequence of corporate activity draws him close to Marx's philosophical materialism.

33. Robert W. Stallman, 'The Structure and Symbolism of Conrad's Victory', Western Review, 13 (Spring 1949):146-57, sees Lena as symbolic of life, Heyst's embracing of which 'saves' him.

34. See Robert Morss Lovett and Helen Sard Hughes, The History of the Novel in England (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1932), pp. 401-11.

35. See H. Strawson, 'Joseph Conrad--Master Mariner and Master Novelist', Quarterly Review (London), 59 (July 1934):315-24.

36. Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 83.

37. Martin Seymour-Smith, introduction to Nostromo (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1986), pp. 11, 16.

38. See Nino Ern , 'Joseph Conrad und die Prosa der M nnlichen Einsamkeit', Geistige Welt, 3 (Dec. 1948):118-24.

39. Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 82, 46.

40. R. D. Laing, The Divided Self, 12th edn (London: Penguin, 1975), p. 17.

41. See Alan Reynolds Thompson, 'The Humanism of Joseph Conrad', Sewanee Review, 37 (April 1929):204-20. Henry Kreisel, 'Joseph Conrad and the Dilemma of the Uprooted Man', Tamarack Review, 7 (Spring 1958):78-85,

points out that Conrad's depiction of alienation strongly foreshadows the writers of the 'lost generation', and regards Alamyers Folly and An Outcast of the Islands as 'wasteland novels'. A more sustained consideration of isolation as a dominant motif in Conrad is provided in Adam Gillon, The Eternal Solitary. See also Robert Penn Warren, 'Nostromo', Sewanee Review, 59 (Summer 1951):363-91, and Walter Allen, The English Novel (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1954), p. 303: 'Like . . . André Malraux, who has much in common with him, . . . [Conrad's] theme is man against himself, the environment, . . . having a double function, to isolate the character from society, and the larger world of men, so that he can be put in extremis, and to act as the agent of his self-confrontation', which is a modern vision of life. Frederick R. Karl, A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), p. 98, relates Jim in the context of man's isolation to Graham Greene's priest in The Power and the Glory, which he terms an existential novel.

42. Quoted in Zdzislaw Najder, Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1983), p. 11.

43. See Robert Wooster Stallman, 'Time and The Secret Agent', Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 1 (Spring 1959):101-22.

44. Desan, The Tragic Finale, p. 121.

45. See Macquarrie, Existentialism, pp. 169, 168.

46. See Thomas Moulton, 'The Life and Work of Joseph Conrad', Yale Review, new series, 14 (Jan. 1925):259-308.

47. Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 17.

48. See John Wild, The Challenge of Existentialism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 81.

49. See Macquarrie, Existentialism, pp. 197-8, 218.
50. See Leonard Unger, 'Laforge, Conrad, and T. S. Eliot', The Man in the Name (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956, London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 190-242.
51. Peter J. Glassman considers this in Language and Being: Joseph Conrad and the Literature of Personality (New York and London: Columbia University Press), pp. 175-6.
52. Jocelyn Baines, Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), p. 373.
53. See John Cowper Powys, 'Joseph Conrad', Suspended Judgments: Essays on Books and Sensations (New York: G. Arnold Shaw, 1916), pp. 337-64.
54. See W. Y. Tindall, 'Apology for Marlow', From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad, ed. Robert C. Rathburn and Martin Steinmann, Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), pp. 274-85.
55. See Raoul Cadot, 'Les traits moraux de la mer dans l'oeuvre de Joseph Conrad', Revue de l'Enseignement des Langues Vivantes, 50 (1933):399-407.
56. See J. Hillis Miller, 'Joseph Conrad', Poets of Reality, pp. 13-67; also pp. 1-13.
57. See C. N. Stavrou, 'Conrad, Camus, and Sisyphus', pp. 80-96.
58. See Maurice David, Joseph Conrad: L'Homme et l'Oeuvre, Collection des célébrités étrangères, vol 1. (Paris: Editions de la Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1929), p. 3.
59. See H. L. Mencken, 'Joseph Conrad', A Book of Prefaces (New York: Knopf, 1917), pp. 11-64.

Notes to Chapter 2: The Quest for Selfhood

1. That the existentialists have not fully explained essential selfhood and the allied notions of authenticity, subjectivity, conscience and the unconscious is borne out by the way post-modernists have deeply problematised these existential positions (a study in itself, which Eve Bertelsen kindly broached with me). Lacan, for example, locates what Sartre terms bad faith in the inescapable oppression of language per se; Foucault in discursive formations, institutional power, and so on; Lyotard in reason (with his proposal of a totalising 'libidinal economy' as escape); Derrida in his assault on 'the metaphysics of presence' and his offer of the dispersion of the self and the compulsion of self-consciousness; Adorno and Habermas in considering historical and political moorings for the whole debate.

2. Paul Tillich, 'Existential Philosophy', Journal of the History of Ideas, 5 (1944):47; 'heraustreten' in German.

3. Morgan, Nietzsche, p. 203.

4. William Barrett, Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1962), p. 245. Edward W. Said, Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 102, comments that 'Conrad's letters . . . reveal him in a series of "unbearable" and "potential" situations with regard to his existential awareness'.

5. See Piero Rébora, 'James, Conrad, Mansfield', Letteratura inglese del novecento (Florence: Edizioni lingue estere, 1950), pp. 41, 49-53. Das,

Joseph Conrad, p. 52, sees a parallel between Jim and Camus's Patrice Meursault in A Happy Death: each 'is depicted as "an unsatisfied and strange being" who runs after himself and shifts from place to place, and when he is reminded of his past, he is nauseated'.

6. Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 74.

7. Nietzsche, Grossoktavausgabe, vol. 14, p. 262, tr. Morgan, Nietzsche, p. 358.

8. See Patricia F. Sanborn, Existentialism (New York: Pegasus, 1968), pp. 124-6.

9. See chap. 1, n. 4, above.

10. Barrett, Irrational Man, p. 219.

11. Laing, The Divided Self, p. 17.

12. 'Joseph Conrad', Saturday Review (London), 138 (9 Aug. 1924):136.

Osborn Andreas, Joseph Conrad: A Study in Non-Conformity (London: Vision Press, 1962), p. 194, considers Jim's leap as being 'curiously reminiscent of Joseph Conrad's desertion of his Polish compatriots', what Conrad himself termed his taking a 'standing jump out of his racial surroundings and associations' (A Personal Record 121). Das, Joseph Conrad, p. 51, suggests that Jim's irrational jump 'parallels Meursault's killing of the Arab in Camus' The Outsider' and 'cannot be justified by any reason or logic'; both Meursault and Jim are governed by their own 'self-law'.

13. For a consideration of Nietzschean echoes in Yeats, see my Yeats and Nietzsche (London: Macmillan, and Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1982).

14. Carole Slade, 'La Chute and Lord Jim', Romance Notes, 25:2 (Winter 1983):95-9.

15. Dominique Aury, 'Talk with Albert Camus', New York Times Book Review

(24 Feb. 1957):36. Said, Fiction of Autobiography, p. 130, considers the 'evasion' of the narrator in The Secret Sharer (19:119-20) in terms of 'what Sartre would call refuge from an unbearable situation' by foisting on objects the qualities one desires in them so as to eliminate any conflict or tension they might induce.

16. See Macquarrie, Existentialism, pp. 209-10.

17. George Price, The Narrow Pass: A Study of Kierkegaard's Concept of Man (New York: Mc Graw-Hill, 1963), p. 192.

18. See Calvin O. Schrag, Existence and Freedom (n.p.: Northwestern University Press, 1961), p. 154.

19. See Macquarrie, Existentialism, pp. 213-14.

20. Quoted in Simone de Beauvoir, Force of Circumstance, tr. Richard Howard (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), p. 199.

21. Personal values that defy convention can of course take a degraded form. As Das, Joseph Conrad, p. 44, points out, Willems in An Outcast of the Islands, like Camus's Clamence in The Fall, 'disregards the existing social laws and moral values and sticks to his personal code of liberty, gambling, and dishonesty'.

22. See Morton Dauwen Zabel, 'Conrad: The Secret Sharer', New Republic, 104 (21 April 1941):567-8, 570-4.

23. Morgan, 'Conrad, Madach et Calderon', p. 201: 'Son sort oblige tout homme autout de lui prendre conscience de soi, et d'affirmer une fidélité irrefléchié'.

24. See Sanborn, Existentialism, pp. 124-6.

25. Michel, 'The Absurd Predicament in Conrad', p. 131.

26. The ship has long been a metaphor for life; a clever modern instance

of its use in an existential vein is Tom Stoppard's for his Prufrockian 'attendant lords' Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who drift actionless like Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon, perpetually en attendant Godot and never taking purposeful action.

27. As Pierre Hourcade points out, such devotion to a dream can produce conflict with society's conventions and cause the hero's demise in a cruel world; cf. 'Les Hommes de Conrad', Cahiers du sud, 10 (Sept. 1933):481-8. Das, Joseph Conrad, p. 53, mentions that Meursault in A Happy Death is able, as Camus puts it, 'to gain a new support, a firmer hope' by sinking into the sea so as to 'lose himself in order to find himself again'.

28. See Stavrou, 'Conrad, Camus, and Sisyphus', pp. 80-96. Stavrou goes on to say that Jim and Meursault (in The Outsider) reveal in their words and deeds Sartre's conceptions of being and nothingness.

29. See 'The Quiet Captain', New York Times Saturday Review (20 Sept. 1902): 626.

30. See generally Neville H. Newhouse, Joseph Conrad (London: Evans Brothers, 1966, New York: Arco, 1969).

31. Johnson, Conrad's Models of Mind, p. 201, draws attention in a general way to the similarity between Jim's sense of ordination and Sartre's picture of his own life in The Words. The young Sartre's feeling that every incident in his life is, in a sense, already part of 'The Biography of Sartre, The Famous Writer', is in Johnson's view closer to Jim's state of mind than to that of any other fictional character.

32. Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 206.

33. See Johnson, Conrad's Models of Mind, pp. 91-2.

34. See *ibid.*, pp. 202-3.

35. Eliot quotes Novalis in The Mill on the Floss (chap. 6), appropriating his assertion in Heinrich von Ofterdingen that 'fate and character are the same conception [das Schicksal und Gemut namen eines Begriffes sind]'; Hardy does so in The Mayor of Casterbridge (chap. 17). Stauffer, Joseph Conrad, is among the earliest Conradians to stress Conrad's view that character is fate.

36. Boris Ford, introduction to Under Western Eyes (Harmondsworth: Penguin English Library, 1985), pp. 24, 28. Walter F. Wright, Romance and Tragedy in Joseph Conrad (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1949), also points out that Conrad depicts man's life as being ultimately a search, conscious or not, for his identity. Das, Joseph Conrad, pp. 66-90, suggests that Razumov is primarily an 'existentialist-revolutionist' (p. 84) and that Conrad imparts a 'prophetic vision of modern political existentialism' in his fiction (p. 90). This may be so in a broad sense, but it does not in my opinion stand up to scrutiny when the term political is understood more precisely as pertaining to policies, views or systems of government.

37. Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 206.

38. Ford Madox Hueffer, 'Joseph Conrad', English Review, 10 (Dec. 1911): 66-83.

39. Quoted in de Beauvoir, Force of Circumstance, p. 199.

40. See James Huneker, 'The Genius of Joseph Conrad', North American Review, 200 (Aug. 1914):270-9.

41. Tony Tanner, 'Nightmare and Complacency: Razumov and the Western Eye', Critical Quarterly, 4 (Autumn 1962):208.

42. See Martin Seymour-Smith, introduction to Nostromo, p. 17.
43. Goetsch, 'Joseph Conrad: The Secret Agent', p. 101: 'Ungemildert tritt sie dem Leser immer dann entgegen, wenn sich die Figuren verweifelt in einer ihnen plötzlich fremd geworden Welt einrichten wollen--wenn sie mit dem Absurden spielen. Die Begegnung mit dem Absurden ist mehr oder weniger die Grunderfahrung der beteiligten Hauptpersonen'.
44. The view of Arthur Gibson, The Faith of the Atheist (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 97.
45. Jocelyn Baines, Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), p. 325.
46. Said, Fiction of Autobiography, p. 153.
47. Michel, 'The Absurd Predicament in Conrad', p. 131.
48. For a discussion of archetypal animal imagery in Victory, see inter alia John A. Palmer, Joseph Conrad's Fiction: A Study in Literary Growth (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1968), pp. 174-9.
49. For a consideration of Jones's (and Heyst's) homosexuality, see Jeffrey Meyers, Homosexuality and Literature, 1890-1930 (London: Athlone Press, 1977), and Robert R. Hodges, 'Deep Fellowship: Homosexuality and Male Bonding in the Life and Fiction of Joseph Conrad', Journal of Homosexuality, 4:4 (Summer 1979):379-93.
50. See Seymour-Smith, introduction to Nostromo, p. 19.
51. See Johnson, Conrad's Models of Mind, p. 104.
52. Lionel Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 106, 108.
53. See Edmond Jaloux, 'Joseph Conrad et le roman d'aventure anglais',

Nouvelle revue française, 12 (1 Dec. 1927):713-19.

54. Ernest Jones records that Freud 'several times said of Nietzsche that he had a more penetrating knowledge of himself than any other man who ever lived or was ever likely to live'. The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud, vol. 2 (New York: Basic Books, 1955), p. 344.

55. Nietzsche, Grossoktavausgabe, vol. 10, p. 191, tr. Morgan, Nietzsche, p. 99.

56. Johnson, Conrad's Models of Mind, p. 99. Das, Joseph Conrad, p. 56, parallels Kurtz with his extraordinary self-absorption and Clarence in Camus's The Fall, who 'lives in the continuity of "I, I, I"' in the way Kurtz lives 'in the perpetual self-transcendence of "My, My, My"'.
 57. Nietzsche, Grossoktavausgabe, vol. 15, pp. 95-6, tr. Morgan, Nietzsche, p. 302.

58. Nietzsche, Grossoktavausgabe, vol. 10, p. 191, tr. Morgan, Nietzsche, p. 99.

Notes to Chapter 3: Condemned to Be Free

1. Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity, and Johnson, Conrad's Models of Mind, in particular stress the myth-making freedom of Kurtz.

2. Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 177.

3. See Ian Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century, p. 168.

4. Gillon, 'Conrad and Sartre', p. 61.

5. See Edwin M. Moseley, 'Christ as Tragic Hero: Conrad's Lord Jim', Pseudonyms of Christ in the Modern Novel (Pittsburgh: University of

Pittsburgh Press, 1962), pp. 15-35.

6. See Albert Camus, 'From a Writer's Notebook', tr. A. Hartley, Encounter, 17:44 (Oct. 1961):18.

7. Johnson, Conrad's Models of Mind, p. 165.

8. See John Macmurrary, The Self as Agent (New York: Harper, 1957), pp. 100-03.

9. See Macquarrie, Existentialism, pp. 176, 188.

10. Sanborn, Existentialism, p. 121.

11. Palmer, Joseph Conrad's Fiction, p. 166.

12. Michel, 'The Absurd Predicament in Conrad', p. 131.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

14. See Wild, The Challenge of Existentialism, pp. 38-9.

15. Barrett, Irrational Man, pp. 154-5.

16. Cox, Joseph Conrad, pp. 147-8.

17. Suresh Raval, 'Conrad's Victory: Skepticism and Experience', Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 34, no. 4 (Mar. 1980):420. Reprinted with revisions in Suresh Raval, The Art of Failure: Conrad's Fiction (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986).

18. See Michael Williams, 'Literature: XIII--Joseph Conrad', America (New York), 14 (13 Nov. 1915):113-14. Conrad is clearly an atheistic or humanist existentialist rather than a Christian one, and Phillips Temple is surely correct in asserting that Conrad should not be viewed as a Catholic writer -- see 'The Fatalism of Joseph Conrad', America (New York), 68 (28 Nov. 1942):213-14.

19. See Johnson, Conrad's Models of Mind, p. 104.

Notes to Chapter 4 Being with Others

1. See Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 121.
2. Nietzsche, Grossoktavausgabe, 11:244, tr. Morgan, Nietzsche, p. 205.
3. Nietzsche, Grossoktavausgabe, 12:47, tr. Morgan, Nietzsche, p. 205.
4. Paul L. Wiley, Conrad's Measure of Man (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1954), pp. 128-9.
5. See Newhouse, Joseph Conrad, pp. 136-7.
6. See Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 107.
7. H. M. Daleski, 'Victory and Patterns of Self-Division', in Conrad Revisited: Essays for the Eighties, ed. Ross C. Murfin (n.p.: University of Alabama Press, 1985), p. 120. Raval too comments that 'the very crux of the narrative turns upon the conflict generated by Heyst's divided loyalties. He is a man torn between . . . allegiance to the self of universal detachment . . . and his spontaneous adherence to the call of the human community' ('Conrad's Victory', p. 420).
8. See Macquarrie, Existentialism, pp. 108-10.
9. See Sanborn, Existentialism, pp. 75-7.
10. See Cox, Joseph Conrad, p. 132. Cox avers also (p. 135) that Conrad displays unconscious misogyny in Lena's desire to dominate Heyst. Thomas Moser takes a similar position in his fine study Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), whose negative assessment of Conrad's ability to write of women and love came as an antidote to favourable early appraisals like R. I. Megroz's in Conrad's Mind and Method: A Study of Personality in Art (London: Faber and Faber, 1931). Critics still remain divided on the issue, but what

matters for our purposes is the sheer fact that Conrad makes the attempt to depict love relationships, not whether his presentations of them are 'successful' by whatever yardstick. Rose Orlich, espousing psychologist Rollo May's Kierkegaardian approach to love, regards Conrad's treatment of the subject in Victory as being characterised by a thoroughly 'Christian existentialist sense' ('The Psychology of Love in Conrad's Victory', Conradiana, 8, no. 1 [1981]:65).

11. See Stern, Sartre, pp. 151-5.

12. See Mary Warnock, Existentialism (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 118.

13. See Sanborn, Existentialism, p. 92.

14. See Macquarrie, Existentialism, pp. 105, 116-17.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 161; cf. *ibid.*, p. 134.

16. See Glassman, Language and Being, pp. 111-13, 128-9.

17. See Hunt Hawkins, 'Conrad and the Psychology of Colonialism', in Conrad Revisited, ed. Murfin, p. 76.

18. See Macquarrie, Existentialism, p. 116.

19. See Stern, Sartre, p. 157.

20. See Moser, Joseph Conrad, esp. chap. 2.

21. Seymour L. Gross, 'The Devil in Samburan; Jones and Ricardo in Victory', Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 16 (June 1961):81-5.

22. See Palmer, Joseph Conrad's Fiction, p. 190.

23. See Michael Hamburger, 'A Craving for Hell', Encounter (Oct. 1962):33.

24. Martin Seymour-Smith, introduction to The Secret Agent (Harmondsworth: Penguin English Library, 1984), p. 29.

25. See Adam Gillon, 'Cosmopolitanism in Conrad's Work', pp. 94-9. The

interracial relationships Conrad depicts would of course have been frowned on by the colonial establishment of his day. G. J. Resink, 'Conradiaanse interracial vriendschappen', Forum der Letteren, 6 (Feb. 1965):35-44, makes the interesting point that Marlow's repeated depiction of Jim in feminine terms doubtless shows Conrad's awareness that institutionalised bisexuality played an important role in the cultures of Borneo and Celebes, which suggests that such cultures were free of the excesses and tragedies to which social taboos often drove Europeans like Jones in Victory and the lesbian Mrs Frye in Chance.

26. See Fredric J. Masback, 'Conrad's Jonahs', College English, 22 (Feb. 1961):328-33.

27. See Watt, Conrad in the Nineteenth Century, p. 316.

28. See Christopher Cooper, Conrad and the Human Dilemma (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 153.

29. See Schrag, Existence and Freedom, p. 49.

30. See Paul Wohlfarth, 'Der Gattenmord in Der Geheimagent von Joseph Conrad', Monatsschrift für Kriminalpsychologie, 26 (Feb. 1936):523-31.

31. See Seymour-Smith, introduction to Agent, p. 31.

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