

The Role of the Narrator in Selected First-Person Novels

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by

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## CONTENTS

Abstract

I Introduction

II (i) Preface to the selected works of H. G. Wells  
 (ii) The Time Machine  
 (iii) The Island of Dr. Moreau  
 (iv) Tono-Bungay  
 (v) The New Machiavelli

III (i) Preface to the selected Conrad novels  
 (ii) Heart of Darkness  
 (iii) Lord Jim  
 (iv) Chance

IV A. (i) Introduction to the Art Trilogy: *Joyce Cary*  
 (ii) Herself Surprised  
 (iii) To Be a Pilgrim  
 (iv) The Horse's Mouth

B. (i) Introduction to the Political Trilogy: *Joyce Cary*  
 (ii) Prisoner of Grace  
 (iii) Except the Lord  
 (iv) Not Honour More

V (i) Preface to The Alexandria Quartet: *Lawrence Durrell*  
 (ii) The Alexandria Quartet

VI (i) Preface to the selected Fowles's novels  
 (ii) The Collector  
 (iii) The Magus  
 (iv) Daniel Martin

VII Conclusion

Bibliography

## ABSTRACT

The introduction to this thesis discusses and evaluates first-person narration in the context of point of view generally. As part of the critical background to the study, attention is drawn to the Critical Prefaces of Henry James and the experiments he made with point of view in specific novels. Reference is made to the commentary by Joseph Beach on the issues James raises. Technical terms relating to first-person narration - for example, primary and secondary narrators, the reliable narrator, the frame narrator, composite narration and the Chinese box device - are defined. Norman Friedman's classification of point of view is also discussed. An important distinction between the narrator as witness and the narrator as protagonist is considered but the thesis argues against simplistically categorizing the narrator in this way. Finally, Percy Lubbock's key objections to first-person narration are considered and the advantages and disadvantages of first-person narration are discussed.

Selected novels by H. G. Wells, Joseph Conrad, Joyce Cary, Lawrence Durrell and John Fowles are used to illustrate different aspects of first-person narration. Chapter Two deals with Wells's scientific romances, The Time Machine and The Island of Dr. Moreau, which use first person to achieve plausibility in fantastic situations, and his realistic novels, Tono-Bungay and The New Machiavelli which show contrasting uses of the narrator. Tono-Bungay is a successful memoir novel in which the narrator functions primarily as observer to give a panoramic survey of his society; The New Machiavelli fails and its failure stems largely from Wells's use of first person. Its narrator attempts to portray both his age and himself objectively. The confused and uncritical portrayal is exacerbated by Wells's identification with the narrator.

Chapter Three deals with three of Conrad's novels: Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim and Chance. The first two demonstrate that one cannot always distinguish between the narrator as observer and as protagonist for in both novels, Marlow may be seen to perform a dual function. In Chance, however, Marlow is simply an observing narrator whose role is to show how fictions may be created. While the Conrad novels only accidentally form a trilogy, Cary's use of the trilogy format is deliberate. Chapter Four examines his art and political trilogies. Although the point of view is consistent within each novel, one can observe the changes in point of view from one volume to another. Each volume of a given trilogy presents a different perspective. In the chapter on Cary, I will therefore discuss ambiguity and the problematical nature of truth which look forward to issues raised by Durrell and Fowles.

None of Cary's narrators develop but in The Alexandria Quartet, the subject of Chapter Five, Durrell uses a developing narrator to explore the problem of achieving truth. Different subjective realities are presented in relation to the psychologist, Georg Groddeck. As in Chance, the creation of fiction is an important theme, but Durrell approaches it differently.

John Fowles's novels, The Collector, The Magus and Daniel Martin are discussed in Chapter Six. The Collector is chosen to explore the balanced use of antiphonal narration using contrasting narrators. The Magus relates to The Alexandria Quartet for both use developing characters as narrators and both are about the creation of fictions. Durrell, however, expresses this theme in terms of a narrator who is the subject of his own narrative while Fowles expresses it in terms of the relationship of the reader to the novel. The theme of Daniel Martin is again the creation of fictions. This time, Fowles alternates between first and third-person narration to draw attention to the relationship between the author and the novel.

## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

I. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the role of the narrator in selected first-person novels. These consist of The Time Machine, The Island of Dr. Moreau, Tono-Bungay and The New Machiavelli by H. G. Wells; Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim and Chance by Joseph Conrad; Herself Surprised, The Horse's Mouth, To Be A Pilgrim, Prisoner of Grace, Except the Lord and Not Honour More by Joyce Cary; The Alexandria Quartet by Lawrence Durrell; and The Collector, The Magus and Daniel Martin by John Fowles. Some excellent work has already been done on the technical aspects of first-person narration, most notably by Bertil Romberg in Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel.<sup>1</sup> His work includes succinct definitions of key concepts, (first-person novel, the composite novel and the Chinese box device) and provides an historical survey of different types of first-person novel - the memoir novel, the diary novel and the epistolary novel - tracing their roots back to the oral epic tradition and analyzing in depth four novels from as many centuries to show the function of the devices and forms discussed. My own approach differs from Romberg's because while technical considerations are inevitable they are used to facilitate an appreciation of the narrator's role; Romberg, in contrast, gives greater priority to technique and its illustration in appropriate works.

First-person narration is subsumed in the larger topic, point of

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1. Bertil Romberg, Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel (Lund, Sweden: Hakan Ohlssons Boktryckeri, 1962).

view. Therefore, a consideration of this technical issue and its history provides a relevant and useful preamble. The phrase, "point of view", first appeared in the British Quarterly Review of July 1866<sup>2</sup> but the concept received scant attention until Henry James discussed it in his Critical Prefaces.<sup>3</sup> J. W. Beach in The Method of Henry James explains this term:

I use the term "point of view" to designate what is sometimes called the "angle of vision" from which the scene is surveyed in a given chapter of a book, - whether that of an omniscient author ready to enter into the minds of all the characters at once as well as to describe them objectively, or, on the contrary, that of some person in the story who sees whatever is to be seen by him, and interprets all that he sees by the light of his own mind and vision. The limitation of the point of view to the vision of one person is thus a "mechanical" device for securing certain sorts of effects sought by the author.<sup>4</sup>

In writing his novels, one of James's prime structural considerations was point of view. In The Prefaces of Henry James, Leon Edel indicates the high priority James assigns it:

The first stage in the construction of a novel, for James, was always the determination of the point of view. Who is to tell the story, or see it? From what angle is the subject to be approached? How are its "values" to be realized? In whose consciousness are we to follow the incidents? Who is to be the "Centre"?<sup>5</sup>

James was the first critic to argue the necessity of a consistent point of view. At the same time, he was very critical of first-person narration. In his preface to The Ambassadors, he said: "the first

2. R. Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England 1850-1870, (London: 1959), p. 107. (Stang finds the earliest use of the term "point of view" in a review of July, 1866 in British Quarterly Review XIV, pp. 43-44. The increasing use of technical handbooks early in the twentieth century helped popularize the concept of point of view, and make it an important new term in the critical vocabulary).
3. Henry James, The Art of the Novel (Critical Prefaces), (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, Ltd., 1934). (James uses the term "point of view" in his preface to The Wings of the Dove but the idea of point of view permeates his prefaces: see especially the prefaces to The Princess Casimassima, The Ambassadors and The Golden Bowl).
4. J. W. Beach, The Method of Henry James (Philadelphia: Albert Sailer: Publisher, 1954), pp. xiv-xv.
5. Leon Edel, The Prefaces of Henry James (Paris: Jouve & Cie, Editeurs, 1931), p. 71.

person, in the long piece, is a form foredoomed to looseness", and a little later, he criticizes "the terrible fluidity of self-revelation".<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, he did, at the beginning of his writing career sometimes employ first-person narration himself. Some examples of James's first-person stories are: "A Passionate Pilgrim", "The Madonna of the Future", "The Pension Beaurepas", "The Aspern Papers" and "The Death of the Lion". In those stories, he preferred a narrator who is an observer, not a protagonist - one who is only slightly concerned with the story and whose function is merely to narrate and interpret. Often, James uses "an unnamed, un-introduced and (save by right of intrinsic wit) unwarranted participant, the impersonal author's concrete deputy or delegate".<sup>7</sup> As Beach observes, this choice yields two advantages: an objective pictorial presentation and an increased authenticity of factual material.<sup>8</sup>

James's preferred method was the use of the direct or single point of view. By his concentration upon a single narrating centre, he achieves artistic unity. He selects a particular consciousness as the centre and what happens to other characters is presented to us, filtered through the intelligence and personality of this "centre". The reader depends upon the central consciousness for his perception of the story and its values. The method is one of limitation, for, generally, we are confined to the point of view, vision, conception and interpretation of the central consciousness. In his preface to The Princess Casimassima, James explains this use of a narrating centre:

I never see the leading interest of any human hazard but in a consciousness (on the part of the moved and moving creature) subject to fine intensification and wide enlargement. It is as mirrored in that consciousness that the gross fools, the head-long fools, the fatal fools play their part for us - they have much less to show us in themselves...This means, exactly, that the person capable of feeling in the given case more than another of what is to be felt for it, and so serving in the highest

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6. Henry James, The Art of the Novel, pp. 320-21.

7. Henry James, The New York Edition of the Novels and Tales, Vol. XXIII, p. v.

8. J. W. Beach, The Method of Henry James, p. 68.

degree to record it dramatically and objectively, is the only sort of person on whom we can count not to betray, to cheapen or, as we say, give away, the value and beauty of the thing. By so much as the affair matters for some individual, by so much do we get the best there is of it, and by so much as it falls within the scope of a denser and duller, a more vulgar and more shallow capacity, do we get a picture dim and meagre.<sup>9</sup>

In the same preface, he speaks of the best informing consciousness:

This in fact I have ever found rather terribly the point - that the figures in any picture, the agents in any drama, are interesting only in proportion as they feel their respective situations; since the consciousness, on their part, of the complication exhibited forms for us their link of connexion with it. But there are degrees of feeling - the muffled, the faint, the just sufficient, the barely intelligent, as we may say; and the acute, the intense, the complete, in a word - the power to be finely aware and richly responsible. It is those moved in this later fashion who "get most" out of all that happens to them and who in so doing enable us, as readers of their record, as participators by a fond attention, also to get most.<sup>10</sup>

The vessel of consciousness for James is typically a sensitive and intelligent observer,

capable of wide perception, of 'registering' in a satisfactory manner all that the author requires of him. To choose a commonplace mind is dangerous for the author has to ensure that 'the reader may not be as bored as the characters are boring'.<sup>11</sup>

Those characters whom he uses to reveal his subject - his "mirrors" - such as Isabel Archer, Merton Densher and Lambert Strether - are typically perceptive. His use of Maisie is slightly different: she is perceptive but her innocence makes her an "ironic center": she sheds a light beyond the reach even of her own comprehension.<sup>12</sup>

Although James demands an intelligent centre, he notes also that this intelligence should be "bewildered". Characters may lose their appeal if they know too much and feel too much: "the wary reader for the most part warns the novelist against making his characters too

9. Henry James, The Art of the Novel (Preface to The Princess Casimassa), p. 67.

10. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 62.

11. Leon Edel, The Prefaces of Henry James, p. 83.

12. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 78.

interpretative of the muddle of fate or...too divinely, too priggishly clever".<sup>13</sup> Bewilderment on the part of the central consciousness is necessary for without it, James contends, "there would be no question of an issue or of the fact of suspense, prime implications in any story".<sup>14</sup>

James's search for the most effective point of view for telling a given story stems from his aim of creating an illusion of reality, particularly of psychological reality, and from his concern with artistic "economy". Beach discusses these aspects of James's art:

Considering the sort of effect at which he aimed, he could not afford to risk the leakage of illusion (to use a favorite figure of his own); he could not afford to risk that blurring of effect caused by the arbitrary change of focus. He must take greater pains to conceal his art, and must never allow himself to be caught in the act of composing his stage effects. The realist, and above all the psychologist, in fiction has less margin of profit, as we may say in the language of the market, and is obliged to figure closer in regard to "overhead costs". He comes - at least Mr. James had come - to take great pride in his ingenuities of economy. In the choice and maintenance of a point of view, he is seeking a steady consistency of effect, the intensity and concentration that come of an exact centering of attention upon the chosen plot of consciousness.<sup>15</sup>

Beach finds support for his statements in James's preface to The Wings of the Dove:

There is no economy of treatment without an adopted, a related point of view, and though I understand, under certain degrees of pressure, a represented community of vision between several parties to the action when it makes for concentration, I understand no breaking up of the register, no sacrifice of the recording consistency, that doesn't rather scatter and weaken.<sup>16</sup>

One of James's solutions to the artistic problems created by consistent point of view was the use of confidantes with whom major characters may discuss the situation, compare notes and check up theories.<sup>17</sup> Far

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13. Henry James, The Art of the Novel (Preface to The Princess Casimissa), p. 64.

14. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 64.

15. J. W. Beach, The Method of Henry James, pp. 60-61.

16. Henry James, The Art of the Novel (Preface to The Wings of the Dove), p. 300.

17. J. W. Beach, The Method of Henry James, p. 71.

from confusing the point of view, the use of confidantes, in Beach's words:

serve [s] rather to strengthen the light thrown upon the situation from the mind of the chief observer. They are his confederates, acting and above all making observations in his interest. They give information and suggestion without which he could hardly arrive at a proper understanding of the case. They set him right when he goes astray. Above all, as sympathetic and intelligent listeners, they encourage him to express in words his view of the case he is observing and of his own position in relation to it. They are thus serving him and the author at the same time. They serve to transfer the record from the mind to the tongue of the observer, to dramatize the point of view, as it were, realizing it, or objectifying it in speech, and so rendering it fit for the purposes of fiction.<sup>18</sup>

The advantage to the reader of James's consistent point of view is that he is able to identify with the characters' thoughts and feelings "in all their intensity, in all their delicate shift and play"<sup>19</sup> and participate in their experience.

II. Bertil Romberg examines a number of critical definitions of point of view which critics have made. From the various views, he isolates the common factor:

All the time, the problem has to do with where the author chooses his stand-point, his starting point, his point of observation from which he surveys the fictitious events, the world that he hoped to make real and vivid for the reader. From this stand-point of the author, there then opens out a field of vision, a view of these events. And it will be from this point of view that the reader for his part can look in on the world of fiction.<sup>20</sup>

Percy Lubbock, a systematizer of James's theory, deals extensively with the term in his work, The Craft of Fiction, defining it as "the question of the relation in which the narrator stands to the story".<sup>21</sup>

Norman Friedman, in his essay "Point of View in Fiction: The

18. J. W. Beach, The Method of Henry James, p. 71.

19. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 61.

20. Bertil Romberg, p. 22.

21. Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction (London: Jonathan Cape, 1926), p. 251.

Development of a Critical Concept"<sup>22</sup>, analyses the concept of point of view, traces the development of the concept in critical writings and offers eight different examples of point of view ranging from unlimited authorial involvement in the case of editorial omniscience to the "ultimate in authorial exclusion"<sup>23</sup> in the Camera Device. Victorian writers tended to narrate and summarize more while modern writers prefer an immediate presentation. The author, in Victorian fiction, was often an intrusive presence in his work while today's writers frequently strive to make the story appear to tell itself. Friedman summarizes the major modes of transmitting a story, arranging his examples so that the emphasis shifts from "telling" to "showing":

1. Editorial Omniscience: The author intrudes into his work and varies the point of view entirely at will. He presents the opinion of his characters and his own ideas and emotions as well. Examples: Fielding, Tom Jones; Tolstoy, War and Peace; Hardy, Tess of the D'Ubervilles.
2. Neutral Omniscience: The author does not personally intrude into the story but describes a scene as he sees it, rather than as the character sees it. Examples: Huxley, Point Counter Point; (Friedman re-writes sections from Tess of the D'Ubervilles to demonstrate how simple it is to change Hardy's "telling" to "showing" and effectively silence the author's voice.)
3. "I" as a Witness: The narrator hands over the task of narration to a character within the story. He is not the main character but is involved in the story. His task is to observe and describe from the periphery of the action. Examples: Conrad's Marlow, Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway and Butler's Overton.
4. "I" as a Protagonist: The narrator is the main character and is limited mainly to his own "thoughts, feelings, and perceptions". (1176) Example: Dickens's Great Expectations.
5. Multiple Selective Omniscience: The story appears to have no narrator but comes through the characters' minds. This method differs from the authorial mode of presentation because the author would summarize and explain after the events have occurred while this method is scenic, rendering

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22. Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," PMLA, 1955, pp. 1160-1184.

23. \_\_\_\_\_, pp. 1178-1179.

"thoughts, perceptions and feelings as they occur consecutively". (1176) Example: Virginia Woolf, To the Lighthouse.

6. Selective Omniscience: The reader "is limited to the mind of only one of the characters". He is denied "a composite of viewing angles" and is at the "fixed center". (1177) Example: Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.
7. The Dramatic Mode: This method of presentation eliminates author, narrator and mental states. Information is limited mainly to what characters do and say; however, mental states may be inferred from words and actions. This type of narration closely resembles a stage play. Examples: Hemingway, Hills Like White Elephants; James's The Awkward Age.
8. The Camera: Friedman includes for the sake of symmetry this point of view which "seems the ultimate in authorial exclusion". Here, he interjects his opinion that the extinction of the author may lead to the extinction of fiction: Why should we "go to a novel for a slice of life when we can go to the nearest street corner for a much more vivid one which we can experience at first hand?" (1179) Example: Isherwood: Goodbye to Berlin.<sup>24</sup>

I would like to consider one of these categories - selective omniscience - and discuss James's handling of it before I move on to first-person narration. In "The Spoils of Poynton", for example, he chooses an articulate and conscious interpreter or centre and strictly limits dialogue to key issues. The work demonstrates his break with the discursive tradition in the English novel: he banishes all extraneous material and requires that variety and interest come only from the theme itself. What Maisie Knew shows the transfer of this narrative technique to a full-length work. The novel is remarkable for its limited and consistent point of view, that of a young girl - observant, perceptive and intelligent - whose insights amaze her elders. Yet the fascination of the book is the delicate balance between what Maisie knows and what she does not know. In his preface to What Maisie Knew, James comments:

She is not only the extraordinary "ironic centre"...she has the wonderful importance of shedding a light far beyond any reach of her comprehension; of lending to poorer persons and things, by the mere fact of their being involved with her and by the special scale she creates for them, a precious element of dignity.

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24. Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," pp. 1169-1179.

I lose myself, truly, in appreciation of my theme in noting what she does by her "freshness" for appearances in themselves vulgar and empty enough. They become, as she deals with them, the stuff of poetry and tragedy and art<sup>25</sup>

The technical challenge for James is to restrict the point of view so that we participate in the play of Maisie's mind as it encounters "vulgar" and difficult adult relationships and interprets them in a manner which reflects her inner beauty and innocence. Beach feels that the work is limited by James's choice of Maisie as his "register" or central consciousness. His choice allows him to demonstrate his technical cleverness but prevents any "adequately interpretative record of events as they affect the principal - the grown-up - participants".<sup>26</sup> One may answer Beach's objection with a question James asks of the grown-ups: "How would they repay at all the favour of our attention?"<sup>27</sup> Beach himself is misreading the novel because Maisie, not the grown-ups, is the principal participant. The interest is in the events of her consciousness rather than in the liaisons of the adults.

In The Ambassadors, the book which James most admires, he again uses the method of selective omniscience. James's intention is to reveal the subtle changes that take place in Strether's attitude during his visit to Paris to fetch home Mrs. Newsome's son. The scenic method, a purely dramatic mode, would not serve, as almost nothing of Strether's complex thoughts and emotional experiences can be "scenically" shown. One perhaps wonders why James might not consider first-person narration, but apart from his stated disapproval of the method, he would have to forfeit the dramatic revelation of Strether's failure to participate fully in life and his realization that his insight comes too late. Lubbock, in

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25. Henry James, The Art of the Novel (Preface to What Maisie Knew), p. 147.

26. J. W. Beach, The Method of Henry James, p. 239.

27. Henry James, The Art of the Novel (Preface to What Maisie Knew), p. 147.

"The Point of View - The Ambassadors", speculates in some detail how first-person narration would weaken James's portrayal of Strether:

The quality of the scene becomes clear if we imagine the story to be told by Strether himself, narrating in the first person. Of the damage that this would entail for the picture of his brooding mind I have spoken already; but suppose the book to have taken the form of autobiography, and suppose that Strether has brought the story up to this point, where he sits beside little Bilham in Gloriani's garden. He describes the deep and agitating effect of the scene upon him, calling to him of the world he has missed; he tells what he thought and felt; and then, he says, I broke out with the following tirade to little Bilham - and we have the energetic outburst which Henry James has put into his mouth. But is it not clear how the incident would be weakened, so rendered? That speech, word for word as we have it, would lose its unexpected and dramatic quality, because Strether, arriving at it by narration, could not suddenly spring away from himself and give the impression of the worn, intelligent, clear-sighted man sitting there in the evening sun, strangely moved to unwonted eloquence. His narration must have discounted the effect of his outburst, leading us up to the very edge of it, describing how it arose, explaining where it came from. He would be subjective, and committed to remain so all the time.<sup>28</sup>

The work is remarkable, not primarily for its portrayal of Strether, but for the subtle and suspenseful manner in which his character is revealed. The Ambassadors demonstrates how James makes the most of "vivid dramatic moments", how he resolutely refrains from being present in his novels but, instead, lets his "Characters themselves conduct the narrative" and, even more interesting, he makes the story out of Strether's finding his way about an issue that needs to be clarified".<sup>29</sup>

The body of James's work suggests his preference for the objective rendering of a story, and in notebooks discussing "The Friends of the Friends", he says: "when I want something...I always do want it - intensely objective".<sup>30</sup> Objectivity in literature, this century, is

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28. Percy Lubbock, "The Point of View - The Ambassadors," in Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Leon Edel (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), pp. 44-45.

29. J. W. Beach, The Method of Henry James, p. lxxx.

30. Henry James, The Notebooks of Henry James, ed. Matthiessen and Murdock (New York: 1947) (Page references to the notes on any story can readily be found in the index under "James, Henry, writings of".)

generally admired. And yet, too much objectivity can result in ambiguity, a complication Wayne Booth discusses in "The Price of Impersonal Narration - Confusion of Distance"<sup>31</sup> with reference to James's "The Turn of the Screw". Booth criticizes this story and sees it as a failure, but James is exploiting this type of narration as a way of creating ambiguity: he wishes to achieve the ambiguous status of the narrative. Thus critics have found themselves divided about whether the governess is the victim of supernatural events or repressed and neurotic. For each interpretation, its defenders turn to the text for support and verification. This critical division points to James's achievement in The Turn of the Screw - the perfectly ambiguous narrative. The problem raised by "The Turn of the Screw" is that of the unreliable narrator<sup>\*</sup>: a writer may deliberately employ an unreliable narrator so that part of the fascination is the mystery of the narrator. This is something I will return to in relation to first-person narration.

III. In The Craft of Fiction, Percy Lubbock examines the advantages of first-person narration; he thinks of first-person as the first step towards the dramatization of a story. First-person narration is

the readiest means of dramatically heightening a reported impression, this device of telling the story in the first person, in the person of somebody in the book; and large in our fiction the first person accordingly bulks. The characterized "I" is substituted for the loose and general "I" of the author; the loss of freedom is more than repaid by the more salient effect of the picture. Precision, individuality is given to it by this pair of eyes, known and named, through which the reader sees it; instead of drifting in space above the spectacle he keeps his allotted station and contemplates a delimited field of

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31. Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (London: The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., 1961), p. 311.

\* Wayne Booth calls a narrator reliable "when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms (which is to say, the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not."<sup>32</sup> My use throughout this thesis, however, is slightly different.

32. Wayne C. Booth, pp. 158-159.

vision. There is much benefit in the sense that the picture has now a definite edge; its value is brought out to the best advantage when its bounding line is thus emphasized. Moreover, it is not only the field of vision that is determined by the use of the first person, it is also the quality of the tone.<sup>33</sup>

Lubbock also implies that an author uses first-person as an "easy" method of composition:

The use of the first person, no doubt, is a source of relief to a novelist in the matter of composition. It composes of its own accord, or so he may feel; for the hero gives the story an indefeasible unity by the mere act of telling it. His career may not seem to hang together logically, artistically; but every part of it is at least united with every part by the coincidence of its all belonging to one man. When he tells it himself, that fact is serviceably to the fore; the first person will draw a rambling, fragmentary tale together and stamp it after a fashion as a single whole. Does anybody dare to suggest that this is a reason for the marked popularity of the method among our novelists? Autobiography - it is a regular literary form, and yet it is one which refuses the recognized principles of literary form; its natural right is to seem wayward and inconsequent; its charm is in the fidelity with which it follows the winding course of the writer's thought, as he muses upon the past, and the writer is not expected to guide his thought in an orderly design, but to let it wander free. Formlessness becomes actually the mark of right form in literature of this class; and a novel presented as fictitious autobiography gets the same advantage.<sup>34</sup>

Lubbock, after considering general advantages of first-person narration, makes a strong distinction between its two forms: "I" as protagonist and "I" as observer. (These terms clearly overlap with Friedman's terms, "I" as protagonist and "I" as witness.) Lubbock raises severe doubts about the efficacy of the former method:

when the man in the book is expected to make a picture of himself, a searching and elaborate portrait, then the limit of his capacity is touched and passed; or rather there is a better method, one of finer capacity, then ready to the author's hand, and there is no reason to be content with the hero's mere report.<sup>35</sup>

He uses Meredith's Harry Richmond to illustrate and finds that Harry, the narrator, has been assigned too onerous a task. He cannot simply lend his eyes because the view is inward, not outward:

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33. Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, pp. 127-128.

34. \_\_\_\_\_, pp. 131-132.

35. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 140.

It is not merely a matter of seeing his personal aspect and address; these are readily given by implication. When we have watched for a while the behaviour of the people round him, and have heard something of his experience and of the way in which he fared in the world, we shall very well know what he was like to meet, what others saw in him. There is no difficulty here. But Harry needs a great deal more substance than this, if his story is to be rightly understood. What it was like to be Harry, with all that action and reaction of character and fortune proceeding within him - that is the question, the chief question; and since it is the most important affair in the book, it should obviously be rendered as solidly as possible, by the most emphatic method that the author can command. But Harry, speaking of himself, can only report; he can only recall the past and tell us what he was, only describe his emotion; and he may describe very vividly, and he does, but it would necessarily be more convincing if we could get behind his description and judge for ourselves.<sup>36</sup>

Despite the criticism of Henry James and Percy Lubbock of first-person narration, the form has continued to be used, sometimes with great success. Some advantages of this point of view are its intimacy and immediacy. The author is distanced; authorial intrusion and sermonizing are avoided. An illusion of reality is created adding plausibility to a story of unusual happenings:

In a story of unusual happenings, the reports of eye-witnesses lend an air of plausibilities, and in a mystery or crime story suspense may be created and sustained thereby.<sup>37</sup>

As Grabo suggests, action and psychological stories are told effectively in first person:

Action stories, in which interest derives chiefly from incident and in which character, background, and idea are of minor importance may be very well told by the hero.<sup>38</sup>

The adventures of the hero as told by himself are completely absorbing; they create the perfect illusion of life.<sup>39</sup>

Psychological stories may be successfully narrated in first person because in them, narrators may confide in us their most secret thoughts

36. Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, pp. 139-140.

37. C. H. Grabo, The Technique of the Novel (New York: Gordian Press Inc., 1964), p. 41.

38. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 77.

39. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 40.

and feelings; they may, indeed, reveal more than they realize or would wish. In a novel such as The Collector, our awareness of the narrator's psychotic state increases suspense and horror.

I would like now to turn to first-person narration and discuss in more detail numbers three and four of Freidman's classification, namely, "I" as a witness and "I" as protagonist because this distinction is relevant to my thesis. I would like to discuss "I" as Protagonist first because its technique is simpler and this type of narration is the more common and the older; in it, the main character narrates all or part of his life story. The author often identifies himself with the main character and, because the narrator is the main character, attention is focussed upon him from both psychological and narrative angles. Two disadvantages are associated with this narrative method: although the narrator can describe what he sees, he cannot see himself or present himself objectively. If the author desires a satirical effect, however, he can call attention to the gap between the narrator's self-image and the impression he makes upon others. (For example, Cary achieves humorous effects from this gap in Herself Surprised.) A second disadvantage is that while the narrator may describe others, he does not (unlike the omniscient narrator) have access to their private thoughts.\*

If we now consider "I" as a Witness,\*\* this type of first-person novel has as its narrator a character who is not the main character but one who is at the periphery of the action and interest. The author must supply a plausible reason for the narrator's involvement with characters and their story, and a reason why he communicates it. In Chance, for example, the narrator is clearly a witness. Marlow's involvement stems from his hobby of psychological analysis and his chance encounters with

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\* See my discussion of The New Machiavelli below.

\*\* This narrative technique has been successfully used in crime and detective stories: one thinks especially of Edgar Allen Poe's narrators and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's delightful Dr. Watson.

some minor and one major character. Of the two subdivisions of first-person narration, this type, with its separation of narrator and main character, circumvents the problem of having a character narrate the story and simultaneously describe himself as the main character. Instead, we can see the main character highlighted from the outside. Although the narrator cannot command the detailed insights of an omniscient narrator, his limited insights into the main character's thoughts and motives may be supplemented by means of letters, diaries, conversations with the main characters and confidences so that nothing of significance need be omitted. Conrad, however, makes innovative use of this method in Chance by depriving Marlow of access to key characters and information. This novel is more concerned with showing how fiction is created than in offering a finished or "closed" fiction. Generally, however, this mode which combines many advantages of third-person with the intimacy of first-person narration is used to create a convincing illusion of reality.

While a neat division of first-person narration into the narrator as either witness or protagonist provides a convenient means of categorizing most first-person novels, yet sometimes this division proves inadequate. The narrator, although not the main character, does stand at the centre of the work simply because he is the narrator. We are very much aware of him, and in the process of revealing the main character, the witness narrator often unconsciously reveals himself, a development which the author may exploit in various ways. Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim are examples of problematic cases where one is uncertain whether to assign Kurtz and Jim respectively the role of main character or whether the role of main character in each novel ought instead to be assigned to Marlow with Kurtz and Jim serving as part of Marlow's experience. This problem will be discussed more fully later.

In addition, a number of works which I have chosen for analysis are not narrowly or strictly first-person in the sense that only one

narrator is involved, but may, more precisely, be described as composite novels in which more than one character acts as narrator or where a mode other than first-person is also used. Of the novels included for analysis, the following are composite: Wells's The Time Machine and The Island of Dr. Moreau; Conrad's Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim and Chance; Durrell's The Alexandria Quartet and Fowles's The Collector and Daniel Martin.

The difficulty of adhering to a narrow, rigid definition of first-person narration becomes apparent when one recalls that Romberg himself chooses to consider The Alexandria Quartet as an example of first-person narration while fully aware that the Mountolive section is an example of the neutral omniscient mode and that, in the narrated sections, the narrator supplements his recollections with letters, diaries and memoirs; when he quotes from these, his own task of narrating is obviously interrupted. Yet Darley is unquestionably the most important narrator and, since the burden of most of the narration falls upon him the over-all impression left by Durrell's novel is that it is first-person narration. Another example of a composite novel, The Collector, uses two narrators who make roughly equal contributions; in dealing with this work, it is interesting to consider the individual reactions of two contrasted personalities, the captor and the captive, to the given situation. The Alexandria Quartet and The Collector fall within the larger classification of first-person novels so that what is true of first-person narration is, with minor emendations, true of these composite works.

The Island of Dr. Moreau illustrates another issue. The first page of this story is narrated by an insignificant character who is not involved in the main body of the narrative but whose appearance serves only to authenticate the rest of the story which is related by another narrator. At this point, a distinction between primary and secondary narrator is appropriate: the primary narrator is simply the first to narrate; whether he plays a key or insignificant role is irrelevant;

hence, to refer back to The Island of Dr. Moreau, the first speaker, although unimportant in himself, is the primary narrator while the narrator who relates all but the first page of the story is denoted the secondary narrator. The terms refer to the order in which the narrators appear and not to their relative importance as narrators.

Frequently, the introduction of an extra narrator stems from the custom of employing a frame situation with a frame narrator so that the main body of the work is separated from the frame just as a picture is separated from its frame. Both Wells and Conrad make use of frame narration and indeed, Heart of Darkness is enhanced by Conrad's brilliant use of a frame: the inner story and characters reflect upon the outer characters adding meaning and greater coherence to the entire work. In a similar, if not quite as effective manner, Wells employs a frame structure with its division of inner and outer narratives in The Time Machine.

A device which in its simplest form is akin to the frame structure is the Chinese box. Like the frame story, it involves a primary narrator, who introduces the story and then passes the narrative reins over to a secondary narrator who may, in turn, give way to a tertiary narrator. Theoretically, this may continue. Romberg cites the instance of The English Rogue by Richard Head and Francis Kirkman to demonstrate how the technique serves only to confuse and exasperate the reader as he cannot always sort out who is speaking at a given moment: various views tend to fuse and, at times, even the author may appear confused. Yet the device has been used to produce virtuoso effects. For example, in Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights, the romantic inner story of Catherine and Heathcliff's passion is highlighted and also made convincing by its presentation through the homely Nellie Dean and the ordinary Mr. Lockwood.

Of the novels selected for discussion, only Conrad's Chance makes use of the Chinese box device. In it, an unnamed primary narrator, who

appears in the frame story and intermittently throughout the body of the work, hands over the task of narration to a secondary narrator, Powell, whose conversation, in turn, leads Marlow, as tertiary narrator, to narrate the central story. Marlow relies heavily upon conversations with the Fynes and Flora De Barral. These are often presented as if they were recalled verbatim. Technically, however, the Fynes and Flora's contributions to the story do not qualify them as narrators for what they say is subsumed in Marlow's narration. The significance of Conrad's use of this technique is examined in a later chapter.

## CHAPTER TWO

## (i) Preface to the selected works of H. G. Wells

The works of H. G. Wells I have chosen for analysis consist of two scientific romances, The Time Machine and The Island of Dr. Moreau and two realistic novels, Tono-Bungay and The New Machiavelli. In both scientific romances, Wells primarily uses the narrator to suspend disbelief and achieve plausibility in stories which contain fantastic events. In Tono-Bungay, the first of the two realistic novels to be analyzed, Wells makes excellent use of first-person narration. His narrator acts as both protagonist and witness to provide a panoramic survey of society while revealing enough about his own character to indicate his relationship to his society. The New Machiavelli, however, does not succeed. The reasons for its failure, I will argue, stem from Wells's ineffective use of first-person narration.

(ii) The Time Machine

The Time Machine is an example of composite narration; it consists of a frame narrative, set in the present, and an insert tale. The frame narrative introduces the Time Traveller. The insert tale describes the Time Traveller's journey into the future and his meeting two strange peoples - the Eloi and Morlocks. Both frame narrative and insert tale are first-person narratives. The primary narrator is the anonymous narrator of the frame narrative: the secondary narrator is the Time Traveller himself.

In The Time Machine, Wells uses this frame narrative to provide "a solid ground of realism".<sup>1</sup> He deliberately creates an initial impression of "contemporary life at its most ordinary and pedestrian".<sup>2</sup> The story opens at the Time Traveller's Richmond home where he is giving a dinner-party for his friends: they converse about science and technology - specifically, about the possibility of time travel - in an atmosphere of ease and luxury.

We know little about the primary narrator. What he does for a living is not specified. His personality is of no importance: he is a neutral observer who knows just enough to serve as eyewitness for the present-time portion of the tale. His style of presentation helps authenticate the Time Traveller's narrative. He is no credulous fool but is well aware of the strain his tale makes upon the rational mind.

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1. Stephen Gill, Scientific Romances of H. G. Wells (A Critical Study) (Cornwall, Ontario: Vesta Publications, 1975), p. 34.

2. Bernard Bergonzi, "The Time Machine: An Ironic Myth" in H. G. Wells - Twentieth Century Views: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976), p. 41.

\* Bernard Bergonzi contrasts Wells's choice of a realistic beginning with the preference of Arthur Machen and M. P. Shiel, fantasy writers contemporary with Wells, for bizarre openings. The dramatic power of Wells's strange world is enhanced while theirs, Bergonzi feels, is diminished.<sup>3</sup>

3. Bernard Bergonzi, The Early H. G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romances (Manchester: The University Press, 1961), p. 44.

Urbanely and diffidently, he tells about the Time Traveller's strange story; he admits it is fantastic but cannot offer any alternative explanation: "And now I must be explicit, for that (sic) follows - unless his explanation is to be accepted - is an absolutely unaccountable thing." (The Time Machine, p. 22) Had he wholeheartedly accepted the story, he would challenge the reader's sense of reality and thus compel him to reject the narrative. Because he finds the story fantastic and yet feels it perhaps contains a truth, the reader, influenced by him, is led, also, to speculate about its truth. His function is to give plausibility to a story of unusual happenings.

The reaction of most members of the fictive audience has a similar function. Generally, they doubt and deride the Time Traveller's story or are indifferent to it: the Medical Man, although curious about the oddness of the little white flowers, wonders where they really came from and the Editor dismisses the tale as a "gaudy lie". Only the primary narrator is unable to come to a conclusion; disturbed by the discrepancy between the fantastic story and its sober narration, he lies awake most of the night thinking about it. (72)

The primary narrator, whom we meet in the frame, introduces the Time Traveller who is the major character and also the secondary narrator. William Bellamy approves Wells's choice of two narrators; telling stories of both the present and future in the first person enables him to set "one kind of subjectivity against another".<sup>4</sup> One immediate effect is that two impressions of the Time Traveller are juxtaposed. The primary narrator regards him with awe and uncertainty as a man of science superior to ordinary men; he describes him as "too clever to be believed... Things that would have made the fame of a less clever man seemed tricks in his hands". (24-25) Although much of his rhetoric is subtly aimed at suspending our disbelief, it also elevates the Time Traveller above

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4. William Bellamy, The Novels of Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy: 1890-1910 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 52.

his bourgeois friends. From the Time Traveller's own account of his experiences emerges a portrait of an uprooted, anxious man struggling to survive in a strange environment and understand it. He is far less in control than we are first led to believe. His intellect cannot quell his fear - of the unknown; of being stranded in the future; of pain and death. As we observe his intensely human responses to his strange environment - "his sense of alienation, his irrational fears, his sudden moods of unmotivated anger, his sense of dislocation and dispossession"<sup>5</sup> - our sense of awe dissipates. With his emotional responses - affection for Weena, sympathy with the Eloi, feelings of revulsion towards the Morlocks - he ceases to be seen as a superior person, and becomes instead a kind of Everyman.

Nevertheless, the Time Traveller specifically represents the intellectual as scientist; the first impression we receive of him suggests Wells's early fascination with science and his enthusiastic response to its potential for realizing mankind's dream. Wells, for a time, had a reputation for being naïvely uncritical of science. George Sampson's comment epitomizes a once prevalent attitude towards him: "Wells embodies the persistent fallacy that Science, which has done so much for man, can be made to do everything."<sup>6</sup> This opinion is simplistic as many of today's critics have come to recognize,<sup>\*</sup> and an ambivalent attitude towards science is clearly reflected in The Time Machine. In the first place, the Time Traveller's approach follows the scientific method: he makes hypotheses and either accepts, discards or revises them because of his experience of the world. However, where science aims at mastering the environment, the Time Traveller, far from mastering this new world,

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5. William Bellamy, The Novels of Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy: 1890-1910, p. 55.

6. George Sampson, "Introduction" in the Heinemann Edition of the Scientific Romances (London: William Heinemann Limited, 1977), first page of introduction.

\* See page 28

makes tentative statements which are repeatedly shown to be false. His story may be seen as a "cognitive process"<sup>8</sup>: the Time Traveller's view of the world changes repeatedly as he encounters new data. Furthermore, the whole idea of man's mastery of the world is called into question in terms of its effects upon man - by the degeneration of the Eloi. Ultimately, science offers him no panacea; the worlds he explores are relentlessly bleak.

The Time Traveller is the prototype of what became a science-fiction tradition: the flat character, possessing only a rudimentary personality, whose task is to observe and record. Science fiction typically concerns itself not with character, but with actions and idea. The narrator is little more than a figure with whom we can identify to enable us to experience vicariously the horror of a dark,\* forbidding world, and the Time Traveller is used precisely in this way: as a representative of his species. He is actively engaged in conflicts but we do not see him undergo any psychological development.

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\* See for example: Bernard Bergonzi, The Early H. G. Wells: A Study of the Scientific Romances, (Manchester: The University Press, 1961); Robert M. Philmus, "Revisions of the Future: 'The Time Machine'," Journal of General Education, 28; and Jack Williamson, H. G. Wells: Critic of Progress (Baltimore: The Mirage Press, 1973).

One exception among contemporary critics is Peter Kemp, who in his introduction to H. G. Wells and the Culminating Ape fails to acknowledge the ambivalence of Wells's attitude towards science: "A scientific education saved Wells's life: he assumed it would do the same for the world...he came to believe that science was... 'the light and redemption of the world'. For over fifty years he cast himself as the evangelist and messiah of this gospel."<sup>7</sup>

7. Peter Kemp, H. G. Wells and the Culminating Ape, Biological Themes and Imaginative Obsessions (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), p. 1.
8. William Bellamy, The Novels of Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy: 1890-1910, p. 54.

\* Other examples of science fiction which deal with flat characters in strange and threatening environments include: Piers Anthony, Split Infinity (New York: Ballantine Books, 1980); Stephen R. Donaldson, Lord Foul's Bane, Book I of The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever (New York: Ballantine Books, 1977); C. S. Lewis, Out of the Silent Planet (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1952).

The Time Traveller is primarily used as a vehicle for ideas. He is both witness and participant in the story but we are more interested in what happens, what he observes, and how he interprets what he sees than in learning how events affect him on a personal level.\* The Time Traveller is not so much interesting in himself as interesting because of the ideas associated with him. He is used to demonstrate, personally and dramatically, the scientific method; more important, he is used to explore and criticise the ideas of both his contemporaries and his fictional audience and to make us consider implications of evolutionary theory and the class system.

The Time Traveller, as scientist in an alien world, formulates hypotheses based upon given data and discards or refines these hypotheses as he learns more. As Patrick Parrinder suggests, the "narrative is shaped to the demands of scientific method; the development of his experiences is integrated with the forming and testing of social hypotheses".<sup>9</sup> The mood of the story moves from optimism to pessimism, from illusion to truth, as he uncovers the true significance of the data of this new world. Parrinder summarizes the Time Traveller's four theories about the nature of the future world:

1. At first, before the Time Traveller knows of the Morlocks, he sees the Eloi as the decadent descendants of a civilization which attained complete control of the natural environment. In such conditions, the struggle for existence would lapse, and qualities of refinement and taste would be valued above intelligence, physical strength, and mechanical and conceptual skill, so that the race would pass the summit of progress and fall into inevitable decline.
2. The second theory extends this Darwinian reasoning to cover the Morlocks. The two races are the descendants of Capital and Labour respectively. The working classes have been confined underground; the

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\* Wells, later in his career, turns away from fiction preferring to concentrate upon ideas to the exclusion of character. Examples of such works are A Modern Utopia and The Open Conspiracy. This tendency is foreshadowed, however, in The Time Machine, his earliest and best story.

9. Patrick Parrinder, H. G. Wells (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1970), p. 19.

process was already beginning in the subterranean workshops, the basements and the dark slums of nineteenth-century cities. The Morlocks...are the products of half a million years of servility.

3. But the Eloi find their inferiors so repugnant that the Time Traveller changes his views again. The Morlocks are the more vital race, condemned to remain underground until evolutionary modifications permit them to return and conquer the surface.
4. Finally there comes a gruesome realization which overturns all the previous theories. The Morlocks are engineers and meat-eaters; the leisured and ineffectual Eloi are vegetarian. The Time Traveller at last understands that the people to whom he is naturally drawn are simply the Morlocks' cattle.<sup>10</sup>

As this suggests, a large part of the futuristic story is about the Time Traveller's attempts to solve the mystery of the Eloi and Morlocks. The solution is a parody of the contemporary class-system: the frail, aristocratic Eloi have evolved from the upper classes; the brutal, subterranean Morlocks are descendants from the lower. This parodic presentation of class-relations (in particular, the way in which the Morlocks are presented) can be seen to express the contemporary bourgeois fear of the working class.

The Time Traveller is also used to convey Wells's apocalyptic vision - the death of the solar system and all life forms. The Eloi-Morlock episode, highlighting the physical, moral and intellectual decline of humanity, may be seen as a prelude to this final oblivion. Devolution finds its ultimate expression in cosmic destruction. The Time Traveller describes the world he sees thirty million years into the future: the only signs of life are green slime on the rocks and a round, black, tentacled creature about the size of a football. He observes that "the huge red-hot dome of the sun had come to obscure nearly a tenth part of the darkling heavens". (The Time Machine, p. 68) As he stares about him, he notices the beginning of an eclipse:

"Either the moon or the planet Mercury was passing across the sun's disc. Naturally, at first I took it to be the moon, but

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10. Patrick Parrinder, H. G. Wells (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1970), p. 19-20.

there is much to incline me to believe that what I really saw was the transit of an inner planet passing very near to the earth." (The Time Machine, p. 69)

The Time Traveller's experience is based upon the idea prominent in Wells's time that the final collapse of the solar system and planets would take place within a few million years. As Patrick Parrinder said, "This chilling scene is a superb embodiment of the desolate and nihilistic intuitions of the age."<sup>11\*</sup>

Analysis of The Time Machine shows Wells to be more interested in society than in the individual, more interested in the world of ideas than in personal attitudes. But through his use of the Time Traveller, he is able to humanize his exploration of ideas by relating them to the Time Traveller's personal experience. And through his use of a frame story, he is able to relate more closely his vision of the future to its causes in the present. Through the frame-story, the roots of future evil and degeneration are depicted in the present, not only in the fictive audience, but also in the person of the Time Traveller as a typical Victorian gentleman. The presence of a servant in his dining-room is an indication that he, too, has contributed to the Eloi-Morlock situation. His deplorable table manners and appetite for meat are similarly suggestive. His excuse of needing "peptone" in his arteries cannot conceal his biological bond with the carnivorous Morlocks. These examples illustrate as well an ironic distance between Wells and his character. The

11. Patrick Parrinder, H. G. Wells, p. 18.

\* In Wells's science fiction, many factors warn of man's eventual annihilation. Robert Philmus summarizes four of these: one threat might lie "hidden in the dark potentialities of the human species itself" and another might spring from some other species "as yet undiscovered or overlooked in the 'abysses' of this or other worlds". A third possibility is that man, by his actions would "bring about conditions where the laws of nature would dictate his extinction"; finally, man might be "transformed beyond recognition in the course of evolutionary change".<sup>12</sup> In The Time Machine, all but the second of these factors play a role.

12. Robert M. Philmus, "Revisions of the Future: The Time Machine," Journal of General Education, 28, pp. 27-28.

reader, because of Wells's inclusion of these details, is able to draw conclusions presumably different from the secondary narrator who does not make any value judgements about himself.

(iii) The Island of Dr. Moreau

The "frame" in The Time Machine is an integral part of the work; in The Island of Dr. Moreau, however, it is a brief but pertinent adjunct to the main narrative. The primary narrator, Charles Prendick, nephew and heir to the secondary narrator, explains how he discovered among his uncle's papers the story of Dr. Moreau and his island. Believing it to be his uncle's wish, he publishes the document. In a diffident manner, reminiscent of the primary narrator's in The Time Machine, he refuses to endorse the narrative. Yet, his documentary style and succinct, factual corroboration of some details - latitude, longitude, dates, place and names - have the same function as the more elaborate frame-device of The Time Machine: they serve to authenticate a fantastic fiction.

When the secondary narrator, Edward Prendick, begins his story, we have already been pre-conditioned by the primary narrator to accept it. He tells of his shipwreck, ordeal in a life-boat, rescue, abandonment, his second rescue by Montgomery and Dr. Moreau, his strange adventures on their island, escape, and return to "civilization". His tale contains much that is bizarre but only one impossibility - the transformation of beasts into quasi-humans - and that, typical of Wells, is given an elaborate pseudo-scientific explanation.

J. P. Vernier draws attention to a simple underlying pattern in the scientific romances to which both The Time Machine and The Island of Dr. Moreau conform. The secondary narrator, a "flat" character representative of the species, has values the reader can understand. He is unexpectedly placed in a strange milieu where violence is prevalent and finds himself personally involved in the conflict. The first-person device is used to promote reader-identification with the secondary narrator, whose position is one of "constant instability", as a result of

which tension and suspense are increased.<sup>13</sup> The Time Machine exemplifies this pattern: the Time Traveller, an intruder into the world of the future, becomes embroiled in the Eloi-Morlock conflict; similarly, Prendick is thrust into the world of the Beast Folk and involved in the conflict between them and the scientists.

Both the Time Traveller and Prendick are involved in a cognitive process: initially, they are ignorant of their environment but, heuristically, learn the truth.<sup>14</sup> Both narrators have scientific backgrounds and use the methods of science to make hypotheses about the creatures and conditions they find. The cognitive process in The Island of Dr. Moreau is simpler than in The Time Machine. The Time Traveller makes three erroneous assumptions before uncovering the truth; Prendick makes but one. His observations lead him to deduce that Dr. Moreau is engaged in changing humans into animals and, in terror, he flees from him to escape that fate. Montgomery and Moreau overtake him as he is wading out in the ocean, having chosen death by drowning over torture, and Moreau explains that he is, in fact, changing animals into humans.

Moreau is the protagonist and Prendick acts as witness-narrator. The focus is primarily on his observations and interpretations. First, he is grateful to the scientists for saving his life after the red-haired Captain of the Ipecacuanha casts him off in a leaky dinghy. Later, his gratitude gives way to suspicion of Montgomery and Moreau. Their grotesque creatures, Moreau's confession of secret experiments, the locked door, the off-bounds enclosure, the shrill cries - all combine to make Prendick distrustful of them. His false hypothesis turns suspicion to fear. But, as in The Time Machine, the secondary narrator

13. J. P. Vernier, "Evolution as a Literary Theme in H. G. Wells's Science Fiction," in H. G. Wells and Modern Science Fiction, eds. Darko Suvin and Robert M. Philmus, (London: Associated University Presses Inc., 1977), pp. 75-76.

14. David Y. Hughes, "The Garden in Wells's Early Science Fiction," in H. G. Wells and Modern Science Fiction, p. 67.

is more than merely a witness: his emotional and physical involvement in conflicts make him a participating, as well as observing, narrator.

The secondary narrator, in some aspects, resembles the Time Traveller. Both ultimately reject the fellowship of their kind. The Time Traveller, depicted by the primary narrator as gregarious, is, it becomes apparent, a *déraciné* character, not only isolated from the beings of the future but also from his fellow men. Despite the spurious conviviality of the social gathering in his home, he is very much alone. His good friends do not believe him; he cannot communicate with them or convince them of the truth of his experience. Without any deep concern about his absence from his dinner-party, they decide to eat without him. Later, his final journey emphasizes his total separation from his contemporaries. He is very much an individual, a man alone against the cosmos. Through accident and a vindictive captain's decision, Prendick's alienation from the world of men begins, a process which is completed by the time the book ends. Prendick's arrival on the island disrupts the "precarious equilibrium"<sup>15</sup> of Dr. Moreau's rule, bringing about his death, and the subsequent reversion of the Beast Folk. Prendick, in mistaken kindness, overestimates the humanity of the Beast Folk. Because he wrongly assumes that Moreau's victims are "moral creatures with better natures"<sup>16</sup> he is responsible for bringing about catastrophe. To his horror, he finds that they are, underneath, brutes living only to satisfy their gross appetites.<sup>17</sup> His words and actions cause them to become aware of Moreau's vulnerability; respect for his authority diminishes, and they begin to disobey his injunctions. When the puma escapes

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15. Bernard Bergonzi, The Early H. G. Wells (Manchester: The University Press, 1961), p. 108.

16. Anthony West, "H. G. Wells," in H. G. Wells - Twentieth-Century Views: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Bernard Bergonzi, p. 14.

17. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 14.

and kills its creator, the beasts no longer heed his laws; they lose their power of speech and rapidly revert to their animal forms and habits. With the best of intentions, Prendick thus brings about the Beast Folk's moral and physical collapse and shatters Moreau's microcosm. After Moreau's and Montgomery's deaths and the reversion of the Beast Folk, Prendick's own humanity dwindles under their influence. Fearful both for his life and of becoming one of them, he attempts to escape: the chance arrival of a life boat from the Ipecacuanha enables him to leave the island. Upon returning to his own country, he suffers the same fate as did the Time Traveller - no one believes him. He experiences a loss of faith in humanity and a desire to live apart. His comments about the people he meets draw attention to the theme of Wells's story:

I look about me at my fellow men. And I go in fear. I see faces keen and bright, others dull or dangerous, others unsteady, insincere; none that have the calm authority of a reasonable soul. I feel as though the animal was surging up through them; that presently the degradation of the Islanders will be played over again on a larger scale. I know this is an illusion, that these seeming men and women about me are indeed men and women, men and women for ever, perfectly reasonable creatures, full of human desires and tender solicitude; emancipated from instinct, and the slaves of no fantastic Law - beings altogether different from the Beast Folk. Yet I shrink from them, from their curious glances, their inquiries and assistance, and long to be away from them and alone. (The Island of Dr. Moreau, p. 158)

Wells was convinced of man's bestial aspect. His motive for writing the book is to expose man "with all his limitations and vast potential for good and evil".<sup>18</sup> He explained its central idea in an article in The Fortnightly Review: "humanity is but animal and roughhewn to a reasonable shape and in perpetual internal conflict between instinct and injunction".<sup>19</sup> We might compare this with Charles Darwin's conclusion to The Descent of Man: "with all his noble qualities...with all these exalted powers - man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp

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18. J. R. Hammond, An H. G. Wells Companion (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1979), p. 87.

19. The Fortnightly Review, 60 (October, 1895), p. 592.

of his lowly origin".<sup>20</sup> The Island of Dr. Moreau dramatizes this idea.\*

Most critics of the time did not understand The Island of Dr. Moreau; according to Wells, only the Guardian critic got it right. He felt it satirized and rebuked the presumption of science; parodied the work of the Creator of the human race and cast contempt upon God's dealings with his creatures;<sup>21</sup> indeed, Wells had originally proposed as its subtitle "A Satire" or "A Satirical Grotesque".<sup>22</sup> In exposing man's animal nature, Wells draws attention to the futility of human institutions: learning ("big thinks", says the Monkey Man), Law, and Religion are reduced to absurdity. The Victorian belief in progress and faith that civilization can eliminate mankind's animal nature is shown to be wildly optimistic. Scientific reason, the agent of progress, is shown overpowered by primitive emotion.<sup>23</sup>

Moreau is more than a character: he is a complex symbol. His literary progenitor is Frankenstein: both are scientists, creators of life. Dr. Moreau is used to explore the moral and social consequences of divorcing intellect from ethics. He declares: "To this day I have never troubled about the ethics of the matter". (The Island of Dr. Moreau, p. 123) This attitude, responsible for turning an idyllic atoll into a hell, is central to Wells's theme. Science cannot be left to

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20. Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man in The Darwin Reader, eds. Marston Bates and Philip S. Humphrey (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1957), p. 365.

\* Wells's choice of island setting suggests various models - Utopia, The Tempest and Gulliver's Travels. Swift's book most closely resembles The Island of Dr. Moreau because of its use of animals, its satirical tone, and its ending. Upon returning home, both Gulliver and Prendick feel disillusioned with their fellowmen. Wells's story also looks forward to William Golding's Lord of the Flies: when Simon sees the pig's head on the stick, he can articulate his previously subliminal knowledge that the "beast" is within.

21. Guardian, (3 June, 1896), p. 871.

22. J. R. Hammond, p. 85.

23. Jack Williamson, H. G. Wells: Critic of Progress (Baltimore: The Mirage Press, 1973), p. 82.

express itself uncontrolled: human considerations must supersede scientific programs. But Wells goes further than this: as a creator, Moreau inculcates Law and Religion as systems of control: they enhance his authority and ensure his creatures' good behaviour. His role, however, is somewhat ambivalent, for although the Beast Folk revere him as a god, he seems, at times, satanic. Part of Prendick's task is to evaluate Moreau - to determine to what extent he is diabolic or divine. This kind of ambivalent portrayal will recur in texts to be discussed later, namely, Heart of Darkness and The Magus.

In The Island of Dr. Moreau, Wells again makes functional use of character; ideas seem to interest him more than individuals. J. P. Vernier draws attention to this tendency of Wells to make individual characters "subservient to the species".<sup>24</sup> One may notice, for example, the frequent description of Prendick as "The Man", in The Island of Dr. Moreau, which stresses the representative quality of the character and the opposition with the Beast Folk.\*

Wells's scientific romances are the fantastic expressions of truths. The means of achieving our acceptance is first-person narration: as we identify with a narrator such as Prendick, wonder as he wonders, fear as he fears, our rational disbelief fades and we become emotionally involved. Wells shapes Prendick's personality to suit his theme: in Pritchett's words - Wells successfully uses him to "domesticate the sensational".<sup>25</sup>

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\* Titles of chapters also give the same effect: "The Man who was going Nowhere," "The Man who had Nowhere to go," "The Crying of the Man," "The Hunting of the Man," "The Man Alone".

24. J. P. Vernier, p. 73.

25. V. S. Pritchett, "The Scientific Romances" in H. G. Wells - Twentieth Century Views: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Bernard Bergonzi, p. 36.

(iv) Tono-Bungay

Tono-Bungay may be described as a memoir novel; it has much in common with Dicken's Great Expectations and Thackeray's Henry Esmond, both of which are also narrated in the first-person. All three memoir novels describe social conditions, with Henry Esmond giving the most detailed historical account. Pip's and George Ponderevo's stories are narrower, more personal, in scope but their private experiences, too, reflect their age. All three, as boys, are impressed by the wealthy and aristocratic. They fall in love as children and remain faithful, when grown up, to their childhood sweethearts: their choice of loves reveals their common aspiration to belong to the upper class. Their girls consistently prefer other men; Beatrix, in particular, wants the highest title she can attract while Estella simply wants somebody rich. Indeed, Beatrix, Estella and Beatrice are almost interchangeable in beauty, status and marital aspirations. While the novels are distinctive in tone and style, they resemble each other in form and themes.

Romberg links the memoir novel to the picaresque.<sup>26</sup> Tono-Bungay does have some elements associated with the picaresque genre: it is episodic and, through the life of its aspiring narrator, gives impressions of different social echelons. In his introductory remarks, George says what the social range will be:

Yes, I've seen a curious variety of people and ways of living altogether. Odd people they all are, great and small, very much alike at bottom and curiously different on their surfaces. I wish I had ranged just a little further both up and down, seeing I have ranged so far. Royalty must be worth knowing and very great fun. But my contacts with princes have been limited to quite public occasions, nor at the other end of the scale have I had what I should call an inside acquaintance with that dusty but attractive class of people who go about on the high roads drunk but en famille...Navvies, farm-labourers, sailormen, and stokers, all such as sit in 1834 beer-houses, are beyond me also (Tono-Bungay, p. 20)

But by the "Accident of Birth", George has achieved a "remarkable social

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26. Bertil Romberg, p. 39.

range" and been exposed to an "extensive cross-section of the British social organism". (Tono-Bungay, p. 20)

George Ponderevo, the narrator of Tono-Bungay, does not seek to reproduce his whole life but he does describe impressionistically a large and important part of it - from boyhood to the fictional present. At the time of writing, he is forty-five years old. George's relatively advanced age gives him the distance needed to trace his personal development and survey, in proper perspective, its various stages. The man who narrates the story is not identical with the youthful self he describes but his portrayal indicates how his mature self emerged from the younger. His task is one of recollection and he refers occasionally to memory, "how inconsecutive and irrational" it can be. "One recalls acts and cannot recall motives; one recalls quite vividly moments that stand out inexplicably - things adrift, joining on to nothing." (41) The narrator of Ford Madox Ford's The Good Soldier faces the same problem as he consults his memory for the story of Edward Ashburnham's many loves. For him, much that happened is initially beyond his comprehension and much remains obscure to him for he is uncertain how to judge the emotional involvements and tangled loyalties of his story. Ford, however, arranges his events in a complex and subtle pattern whereas Wells's story is told chronologically and more simply.

In his introductory remarks, George presents himself as a self-conscious narrator: he draws attention to himself as author and to the kind of story he proposes to write. Before starting the narrative proper, he warns that his book "is going to be something of an agglomeration". (21) He realizes he gives the impression that he is going "to make simply a hotch-potch of anecdote and experiences"; (21) he apologizes for his lack of technique but explains that unless he "sprawl and flounder, comment and theorize" (22), he will not be able to say what he intends. As David Lodge suggests, George's comments serve as "a rhetorical device to prepare the reader for the kind of novel Tono-Bungay is -

a case of artlessness concealing art".<sup>27</sup>

The apparent lack of unity in Tono-Bungay has been the subject of critical discussion. Walter Allen, Arnold Kettle and Mark Schorer feel the work lacks artistic unity. Allen, in particular, complains that Wells is "too impatient of art" and hence "Tono-Bungay is a novel of excellent interludes in an embarrassing muddle".<sup>28</sup> The quap expedition, he says, is "plainly an afterthought".<sup>29</sup> Kenneth Newell, David Lodge and Bernard Bergonzi,<sup>\*</sup> however, argue that Tono-Bungay has an underlying unity. Newell acknowledges that the book "seems to lack a definitive organization" but notes that "several ideas recurrent throughout the novel do appear related to one another"<sup>30</sup> and act as "structure". Newell maintains that the structure of Tono-Bungay is based on "the idea of Change and its several manifestations".<sup>31</sup> Lodge finds unity on the linguistic level: "Running through the whole novel there is a strain of disease and decay imagery which establishes its theme and draws the episodic narrative into a coherent design".<sup>32</sup> The novel emphasizes the diseased state of English society. Words such as disease, decay, disintegration, rotting, cancerous, destroying pepper the text. "These verbal inter-relationships with the total fabric of the novel enforce

27. David Lodge, "Tono-Bungay and the Condition of England," in H. G. Wells: Twentieth-Century Views: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Bernard Bergonzi, p. 117.

28. Walter Allen, The English Novel (London: The Whitefriars Press Ltd., 1954), p. 317.

29. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 317.

\* See Bernard Bergonzi's introduction to the Riverside edition of Tono-Bungay.

30. Kenneth Newell, "The Structure of H. G. Wells's Tono-Bungay," in English Fiction in Transition, 4 (1961), p. 1.

31. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 1.

32. David Lodge, p. 116.

and confirm the explicit connection George makes between the quap and condition of England."<sup>33</sup> Conditions and attitudes have existed so long that they are out-dated and irrelevant. The analogy to quap suggests that English social structures are sound only in appearance. The radioactive quap has destructive potential; in fact, it destroys the ship which carries it; so, too, the English ship of state is being eroded by the Bladesover tradition. The analogy is both humorous and apt. As David Lodge points out: "It is difficult therefore to sustain the charge that the episode is an irrelevance".<sup>34</sup>

No frame structure is employed in Tono-Bungay. George introduces himself at the beginning of the story and retains control of the narrative throughout. Everything is seen from his point of view:

I suppose what I'm really trying to render is nothing more nor less than Life - as one man has found it. I want to tell - my self, and my impressions of the thing as a whole (Tono-Bungay, pp. 21-22)

His comment implies that he does not intend to reveal himself through psychological probing and analysis. Primarily, George functions as observer and witness. We are not so much interested in him personally as in the world he moves through. Although his account reveals how his progress through different levels of society affects him, our attention is directed towards the outer world, the England George knew. His role is manipulated to suit Wells's preference for ideas over psychological depiction. Wells uses George to observe and criticize society. George is very much a creature of his society - a cell in the British social organism - and his development is influenced by his time. In dealing with the narrator in Tono-Bungay, I intend, therefore, to consider his development as an exploration of the age in which he lived.

George begins his story with a description of Bladesover and its

33. David Lodge, p. 135.

34. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 135.

impact upon his youth. A fictional equivalent of Up Park where Wells's mother was engaged as housekeeper to the gentry, Bladesover consists of a mansion set on a magnificent estate. At first, he unquestioningly accepts the place and all it represents: "when I was a little boy I took the place with the entirest faith as a complete authentic micro-cosm". (Tono-Bungay, p. 22) But, gradually, because of "innate scepticism" and "a certain inaptitude for sympathetic assimilation", (32) he comes to question and criticize it. It is really a feudal state - an obsolete model of society. Nevertheless, it has "determined the shape of English society as a whole". (17) As David Lodge says:

That the architecture and layout of Bladesover can continue to dominate the surrounding country long after the social order on which it was built has become obsolete, eloquently represents the failure of society to come to terms with the changes it has experienced. The social fabric of England is undergoing a process of change and decay, a process of which the inhabitants are ironically and fatally unaware.<sup>35</sup>

George, however, is one inhabitant who perceives that Bladesover dominance is approaching its end. He likens its condition to

an early day in a fine October. The hand of change rests on it all, unfelt, unseen, resting for awhile, as it were half reluctantly, before it grips and ends the thing forever. One frost and the whole face of things will be bare, links snap, patience ends, our fine foliage of pretences lie glowing in the mire.  
(24)

While Bladesover represents the past, George is a child of the future, an alien force that threatens this world. His atypical aversion to Bladesover stems from his personal experiences there. It perhaps begins when he is constrained to participate in the annual servants' tea where the superannuated ladies sit grandly sipping and unconsciously imitating their betters. Latent resentment against Bladesover becomes overt when, at fourteen, he is ostracized for fighting Archie Garvell, and betrayed by Archie's half-sister, Beatrice Normandy. His relationship with Beatrice brings home to him his inferior status. The fight scene between George and Archie echoes the fight between Pip and

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35. David Lodge, p. 119.

Herbert Pocket in Great Expectations. Archie and Herbert are both relatives to the narrator's loves, and both lose. Pip, however, is neither disgraced nor banished but, instead, is surprised to find how easy it is to defeat Herbert. His fighting consists of show, but no substance, a point which Dickens perhaps intends to reflect upon his class. George's victory, on the other hand, brings no rewards. Like the Time Traveller and Edward Prendick, George Ponderevo is dispossessed and dislocated.<sup>36</sup> Lady Drew requests that George apologize to Archie. George's refusal precipitates his exile - to Chatham - to his cousin, Nicodemus Frapp. There, George finds himself in an alien world.

Lodge suggests that Chatham represents "an uglier, more sinister aspect of English life than that represented by Bladesover".<sup>37</sup> George learns to despise "the servile tradition" he finds there. The life style and attitudes of the people of Chatham may be seen exemplified in Frapp, "a Good Hard-Working Man". (Tono-Bungay, p. 49) Frapp is acutely conscious of his place: the "likes of him" (49) did not have to be either tidy or clean. His sense of honour and worth derived from hard work and regular Church attendance. Sunday service taught him that submission led to Glory whereas "all that was fair and free in life, all that struggled, all that planned and made, all pride and beauty and honour, all fine and enjoyable things, were irrevocably damned to everlasting torments". (50) His sense of knowing his place is an extension of Bladesover. Although he is moved geographically from the Bladesover world, his life style of servility is determined by it.

George's rebellion against servitude and self-denial and the religion which fostered these attitudes alarm his relatives so much that they make him the subject of a Sunday service. Because wrestling for his soul threatens to become a weekly ritual, George decides to escape

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36. William Bellamy, p. 55.

37. David Lodge, p. 122.

back to Bladesover and his mother, but neither welcomes the returning prodigal. Instead, George is entrusted to the care of yet another relative. The third stage of George's progress finds him at Wimblehurst where he serves as an apprentice chemist to his Uncle Edward Ponderevo. In his uncle, George finds "the first real breach" in Bladesover. (Tono-Bungay, p. 69) Teddy Ponderevo, in his rejection of a definite place, suggests to George the possibility of an alternative to Bladesover. Teddy refuses to know his place and acquiesce to his betters: he cannot even find them. His attitude casts contempt on the entire Bladesover system. Instead of being servile and impressed by those around him, he complains that the men he sees are fast asleep; they do their business out of habit, in a sort of dream. Teddy, on the contrary, wants things to happen: "This place...wants Waking Up! Things must be happening somewhere, George". (70) Teddy has an eye for a scheme - any scheme that will make things "woosh" and "hum"; his fertile brain suggests inventions "to shove"; he considers the possibilities of cover gambling, wheat, steel, drugs; he dreams of becoming part of the "Romance of Commerce".

After George's experiences in the stagnant world of Bladesover and the servile world at Chatham, one might expect him to welcome Teddy's ambitions but he has yet to throw off the influence of his past. Critical of his uncle, he sees that Teddy's dreams have no basis in fact. On the contrary, Teddy's investments fail and he is forced to sell out and re-locate, this time in London. George remains at Wimblehurst to finish his apprenticeship, and in his spare time, acquire some formal education. Upon winning a scholarship to study in London, he rejoins his uncle. The city itself is a major influence on George but he perceives it at first as an extension of Bladesover. Estate parks near a palace remind him of his childhood home as do roads and back ways of Mayfair. There, the two social divisions are represented: "Olympians" and their attendant valets, butlers and footmen go to and fro. (96)

For George, the Natural History Museum seems to correspond to the "assemblage of cases of stuffed birds and animals upon the Bladesover staircase" and he draws a similar parallel between objects in the Art Museum and the curios and porcelains of Bladesover; the Museum contains, too, a little reading-room reminding him of the Bladesover library. But George's study of "social comparative anatomy" (Tono-Bungay, p. 96) teaches him that London's growth is diseased and cancerous - unorganized, unstructured - bursting out, protruding itself. (98)

George later modifies this first impression of London and discovers in it a "new world of infinite possibilities and inconceivable degradation".<sup>38</sup> One of the new possibilities, he learns from his friend Ewart, is socialism. Ewart believes that socialism is the answer to society's graver ills but is prepared to do nothing about it, other than talk. Nevertheless, he does inspire George to become for a time "an enthusiastic socialist". (107) George is irritated by Ewart's detachment and his lack of initiative in reforming the world. He does prod Ewart into attending a Fabian meeting but is disappointed with the socialists he meets. George recognizes that this unprepossessing minority is unlikely to overthrow "a capitalistic system gigantic and invincible" (109) that proclaims its presence in "the tall façades of the banks, the business places, the projecting clock and towers of the Law Courts, the advertisements, the luminous signs". (109) The first sign that George's socialistic tendencies are capable of corruption comes when he falls in love with Marion and courts her dressed in a new morning coat and silk hat which, incidentally, evince from her a first admiring glance. The temptations of wealth, the glamour of success which his uncle holds out in his bottles of Tono-Bungay make George decide that "perhaps...Socialism to which I had been drawn was only a foolish dream". (129) Accepting his uncle's offer to grow rich with Tono-Bungay, he abandons

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38. Patrick Parrinder, H. G. Wells, p. 71.

socialism for capitalism.

George finds in London another dream, this time of love. As part of George's search for identity, "being and location",<sup>39</sup> he marries Marion Ramboat. But the reader is aware from George's reactions to her family and their "suffocating respectability"<sup>40</sup> that the union is foredoomed. For Marion represents all George has left behind. The Ramboats' way of life belongs to the past George detests: as Poston says, they "perpetuate the atmosphere of pre-industrial England".<sup>41</sup> This can be seen in their traditional wedding which George sees as a meaningless remnant of a past age:

Under the stress of tradition we were all of us trying in the fermenting chaos of London to carry out the marriage ceremonies of a Bladesover tenant or one of the chubby middling sort of people in some dependent country town. (Tono-Bungay, p. 166)

George's involvement with them represents a retrogressive step.

If Marion is the wrong start in George's private life, then Tono-Bungay is his wrong start in public life. The two are associated for George allows himself to be drawn into his uncle's corrupt enterprise partly to finance his marriage. While Marion represents to George a dream of private happiness, Tono-Bungay offers the public a dream of health. Society is diseased and people in their desperate longing to be cured turn to Tono-Bungay as a medicine, a cure. But its promise of health is fraudulent. What it really represents is quite different - a new force in society: the spirit of commercialism and profiteering.<sup>42</sup> The new social direction embodies change but not improvement. Signs of the new commercial world are proliferating around London, George observes, as he walks along the Embankment puzzling over whether to accept

39. Laurence Poston, "Tono-Bungay: Wells's Unconstructed Tale," in College English, 26 (1965), p. 436.

40. Patrick Parrinder, H. G. Wells, p. 76.

41. Laurence Poston, p. 436.

42. Patrick Parrinder, H. G. Wells, p. 69.

his uncle's offer to join the new élite. Billboards advertising Tono-Bungay look quite at home among the great buildings of the city. The signs convince George that society's ruling force is trade, or rather wealth made possible by trade. To have status and prestige, one needs to be part of the monied class. That truth is brought home to George as he dodges to escape a carriage in which a "stout, common-looking woman, very magnificently dressed, regarded him...from the carriage with a scornful eye. "No doubt," thought I, 'a pill-vender's wife'". (Tono-Bungay, p. 129) George's decision to join the new establishment brings him "wealth, influence, respect, the confidence of endless people".

(136) Tono-Bungay brings him "freedoms and powers that no life of scientific research, no passionate service of humanity could ever have given". (136) George even finds an opportunity to be creative in practical ways as he invents new, more efficient methods of packaging his product. But George has no respect for the Tono-Bungay enterprise and feels within him a need to devote himself to something he can believe in. He turns to science, idealizing it as a means of personal salvation and something to which he can devote himself. Although technically still associated with his uncle, George does a lot of independent work. He enjoys the freedom from "exasperating conflict with [his]...fellow-creatures" (249) while engaged in research and finds in scientific truth the only reality in the

strange disorder of existence...Things grow under your hands when you serve her, things that are permanent as nothing else is permanent in the whole life of man. That, I think, is the peculiar satisfaction of science and its enduring reward (249)

After George has found his real vocation in life, Beatrice Normandy re-enters his life and threatens its stability. In terms of George's quest for development, his relationship with Beatrice has negative consequences. Victoria Sanna mentions how she interferes with his work: "the desire to appear heroic in her eyes tempted him to turn from honest,

scientific 'grind' to showy experiment".<sup>43</sup> George's attraction to Beatrice suggests that his attitude towards Bladesover is ambivalent for had he completely rejected the past, he could not now turn to her, for Beatrice belongs to Bladesover and the past. Their relationship confirms George's "sense of displacement and loss of identity".<sup>44</sup> His rational mind had criticized and condemned much of what Bladesover represented but, emotionally, it still sways him: As he says, he is never entirely free from the past, from Beatrice: "But the pain I felt then I have felt a hundred times; it is with me as I write. It haunts this book, I see, that is what haunts this book, from end to end". (Tono-Bungay, p. 338) But there is a sense in which he is free and in which their parting signals the end of the Bladesover spell upon George.

The final section, "Night and the Open Sea", is a poetic recapitulation of earlier themes in the novel - tradition, decay, and change. The implications of the conclusion are the subject of critical debate. The Mackenzies in their biography of Wells perceive the ending as a "final nod towards some vague scientific order" which cannot counteract the "cumulative effect of all the epithets of chaos and decline".<sup>45</sup> Costa, on the other hand, admires this last chapter: it "evokes symbolically and poetically the entire spirit of the novel...Wells portrays the inexorable and explosive quality of the coming age in the wake of the vessel".<sup>46</sup> Vincent Brome, too, perceives the ending as vaguely optimistic:

There is, towards the end, a sense of man placed not only in the sordid hovel of his own irrational making, but in the stream of

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43. Victoria Sanna, "Tono-Bungay: 1909," Times Literary Supplement, (28 August, 1953), p. 25.

44. Patrick Parrinder, H. G. Wells, p. 76.

45. Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, The Time Traveller: The Life of H. G. Wells (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 244.

46. Richard Hauer Costa, "H. G. Wells's Tono-Bungay," English Literature in Transition, 10, No. 2 (1967), p. 82.

life, and the sweep of disillusion eventually carries him over into a new, groping awareness of a level of consciousness beyond the edge of life.<sup>47</sup>

Van Wyck Brooks also views the ending positively:

Out of the wreckage the constructive purpose emerges, in the person of George Ponderevo. It shapes itself as a steel destroyer, the work of an engineer's brain, a destroyer which England has refused and which plunges down the Thames to the open sea, the symbol of man's intentions, without illusions and without the hope of personal gain, the disinterested spirit of science and truth.<sup>48</sup>

Mark Schorer, however, raises the question of whether there is irony in the symbol of the destroyer. He suggests that Wells sums up science, power, and knowledge in a destroyer without perceiving the irony.

Therefore, Wells contradicts his intention of ending on a visionary note and instead presents a "nihilistic vision quite opposite from everything that he meant to represent".<sup>49</sup> Both Patrick Parrinder and David Lodge react against Schorer's assertion that Wells was unaware of the irony.

Parrinder argues:

It can hardly be claimed...that he had no intimations of this particular irony. He knew that you have to destroy in order to rebuild, and in all his imaginative prophecies it is through catastrophe that men are brought to their senses. The destroyer symbolises the paradoxes inherent in the two main twentieth-century ideologies of progress - revolutionary theory and scientific humanism. To attempt to control the environment is to risk defeat, and to have reached a scientific analysis of people and society, as George's life shows, is to have cut oneself off from their sources of nourishment. The question remains to what extent Tono-Bungay embodies the ironies it raises. All the elements of failure and uncertainty are there in the novel, but they are subdued beside the exhilaration of the sense of change itself.<sup>50</sup>

David Lodge, too, challenges Schorer:

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47. Vincent Brome, H. G. Wells: A Biography (London: Longmans Green and Co., 1951), p. 232.
48. Van Wyck Brooks, The World of H. G. Wells (London: T. Fisher Unwin Ltd., 1915), p. 60.
49. Mark Schorer, "Technique as Discovery" in Forms of Modern Fiction, ed. William Van O'Connor (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1948), p. 17.
50. Patrick Parrinder, H. G. Wells, p. 77.

But is it true that Wells intends no irony? Certainly, in so far as the destroyer is an achievement of engineering, it represents a kind of scientific equivalent of that impersonal fulfillment and unity of being which romantic and post-romantic poets have embodied in images of organic life or of perfectly achieved art. But Wells is fully aware of the irony of making this achievement a destroyer...The very name of the destroyer, "X2", recalls the name of the unidentified ingredient in quap, "Xk". By choosing a destroyer as his symbol, Wells indicates that in a social order given over to decay and death, even the impersonal achievements of science will be ironically double-edged; that they will hasten and confirm, rather than alleviate, the incurable condition of England. How then, does the introduction of the destroyer defeat Wells's social analysis in Tono-Bungay, which has been all along ironic and pessimistic?<sup>51</sup>

The ending needs to be evaluated in relation to George himself for all aspects of the work are subsumed in him. Patrick Parrinder recognizes his importance in the work: "the whole novel embodies a displacement of sociological discourse to express the drama of radical individualism in the hero's consciousness".<sup>52</sup> Throughout the novel, George is seen to need some ideal, or arbiter, some value to live by. Having found Bladesover and business unsatisfactory, he, nevertheless, continues his search. As captain of his own destroyer, he participates in a major movement of civilization, one allied with science and technology. Euphorically, he longs for the open sea and all it represents - change, hope, the seemingly infinite possibilities for human expression and attainment. However, as George and his destroyer "tear out to the unknown" (Tono-Bungay, p. 344), he makes the following observation:

Light after light goes down. England and the Kingdom, Britain and the Empire, the old prides and the old devotions, glide a-beam, astern, sink down upon the horizon, pass - pass. The river passes, London passes, England passes (344)

This passage summarizes what the novel has been detailing at length. Three large movements have been explored - the feudal tradition as highlighted in Bladesover, the commercial world symbolized by Tono-Bungay and the world of science and technology by George in his air-balloon,

51. David Lodge, p. 139.

52. Patrick Parrinder, "Imagining the Future: Wells and Zamyatin," in H. G. Wells and Modern Science Fiction, eds. Suvin Darko and Robert M. Philmus, p. 134.

glider and destroyer. All systems, institutions, countries are characterized by change - it is the one constant. Thus, shortly thereafter, he makes his concluding remark:

I have come to see myself from the outside, my country from the outside - without illusions. We make and pass. We are all things that make and pass, striving upon a hidden mission, out to the open sea. (Tono-Bungay, p. 346)

The former quotation refers to the macrocosm, the latter to the microcosm - to George, the individual. His many experiences have enlarged his vision so that instead of being a victim caught up inside structures and relationships that he cannot understand or cope with - the boy at Bladesover and Chatham - the young man in love with, and later married to, Marion; the apprentice, serving his uncle in his enterprise - he can now, objectively, see himself and the England that shaped him. George, although aware of change and disintegration, is not despairing for he senses a purpose underlying change and appreciates the lure of the open sea - the challenges of the unknown future.

(v) The New Machiavelli

In referring to the relationship between George Ponderevo and Beatrice in Tono-Bungay, Hough says: "The conflict between the passions and the social order is elaborately staged - but just when it is about to begin the passions are found to be missing".<sup>53</sup> This conflict between the passions and the social order is the central theme in The New Machiavelli.

The New Machiavelli, like Tono-Bungay, is an autobiographical memoir. Its narrator, Richard Remington, resembles in some respects George Ponderevo of the earlier novel. They are close in age: George is forty-five at the time of writing; Remington is forty-two. Both narrators trace their development from childhood to the present. But Bladesover, which played so prominent a role in Tono-Bungay, differs from the Bromstead of The New Machiavelli although both places derive from the Up Park of Wells's own childhood. Bladesover is a model for feudal society persisting into the nineteenth century whereas Bromstead is used to represent the muddle of individualism; it is used as an image of capitalism and the ideals of capitalist society rather than feudalism. The narrators are upwardly mobile and attracted to upper-class women. Both suffer because of love: George, because he is denied in love, turns to work for self-fulfillment whereas Remington sacrifices work for love. Neither is satisfied with his choice. Wells suggests that one needs both love and meaningful work. George's involvement with his uncle's business is a prominent feature of Tono-Bungay; Remington's uncle, again a capitalist, invites him to join his firm but Remington is not interested and their relationship is reduced to a minor episode. Both narrators are ambitious; Remington feels destined for politics whereas part

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53. G. Hough, "Social landscape during the earlier part of the century, as represented in Tono-Bungay," New Statesmen and Nation, 53, No. 34 (July, 1947), p. 53.

of George's quest for selfhood is finding his career. Themes overlap: George is disturbed by waste and disorder and Remington intends to use politics to impose order upon men's lives.

Although the books share these similarities, they differ in tone. Much of Tono-Bungay is humourous and satirical; The New Machiavelli, on the other hand, is a cold and humourless book. At the same time, it contains scarcely any memorable characters. The Staffordshire uncle cannot bear comparison with Uncle Teddy and most characters do not have an independent existence but are shown only as they relate to Remington: these include his friends, Willersley and Britten, numerous lay figures introduced in a political or social context, and his women.

In his autobiography, Wells confesses that "the story of Remington and Margaret and Isabel is essentially a dramatized wish. I relieved my tension vicariously as Remington".<sup>54</sup> Raknem, after an exhaustive comparison of the book with Wells and his world, concludes that "Remington has Wells's idiosyncrasies, and the book is the most autobiographical, the most revealing, of his novels".<sup>55</sup> The Mackenzies feel that faults in the book stem partly from Wells's choice of autobiographical form and partly from his identification with the hero:

With all his talent and application he seemed unable to get far beyond what James regarded as his obsession with himself as hero. The autobiographical theme was used as a substitute for self-revelation, rather than as a means to it. Wells indulged himself in his past, relying on his power of vivid description and good story-telling to obscure the fact that he was unable to use his experience at the emotional level required to transmute life into art. He drew upon his own life for plot and detail like a reporter rather than a novelist, setting the scene brilliantly but failing to people it with characters that were anything more than comic caricatures, puppets for his ideas, or projections of himself. At each point where his larger designs required him to transcend the obvious to explore behind the self-image of which he made such free use in his fiction, some emotional inhibition

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54. H. G. Wells, Experiment in Autobiography, Vol. II (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd. and The Cresset Press Ltd., 1934), p. 739.

55. Ingvald Raknem, H. G. Wells and His Critics (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1962), p. 117.

frustrated him.<sup>56</sup>

The New Machiavelli marks a turning point in Wells's writing. The Mackenzies consider it the first of Wells's novels to exhibit his didactic intentions, his mission to write for "the salvation of mankind":<sup>57</sup>

He had now determined that all his books must serve what had become his overriding purpose, the presentation of his notions of reconstructing the world. That had become the urgent task, and the drive to teach and preach grew stronger every year. His fiction became simply a vehicle for his evangelism, and his imagination began to wither in the pulpit.<sup>58</sup>

Brome feels that doctrinal emphasis weakens the novel:

a member of his Sumurai, his own élite ruling class, told half-biographically what was wrong with the world, and how he strained at the bonds which prevented him from putting it right ...[The book lacks] emotional drive for the simple reason that doctrines do not make good heroes<sup>59</sup>

Richard Costa notes that Wells "sought to stretch the novel to cover almost anything that could be made interesting in the form of fiction."

Costa feels, somewhat cynically, however, that behind Wells's arguments that novels could do more than James decreed was his awareness

as a professional writer that in Edwardian England it was extremely difficult to publish and get people to read anything unless it could be classified as a novel and go on the six-shilling shelf, subject to a discount of one and six-pence<sup>60</sup>

Wells offers more exalted reasons to account for the attitude which made possible The New Machiavelli and his later works in which he assigns the novel a role which satisfied him, but neither his critics nor his readers:

And this being my view you will be prepared for the demand I am now about to make for an absolutely free hand for the novelist in his choice of topic and incident and in his method of

56. Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, pp. 279-280.

57. Norman and Jeanne Mackenzie, The Time Traveller: The Life of H. G. Wells, p. 280.

58. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 279.

59. Vincent Brome, p. 116.

60. Richard Hauer Costa, H. G. Wells (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1967), p. 101.

treatment...We are going to write, subject only to our limitations, about the whole of human life. We are going to deal with political questions and religious questions and social questions. We cannot present people unless we have this free hand, this unrestricted field...We mean to deal with these things, and it will need very much more than the disapproval of provincial librarians, the hostility of a few influential people in London...to stop the incoming tide of aggressive novel-writing. We are going to write about it all...Before we have done, we will have all life within the scope of the novel.<sup>61</sup>

James praised the first half of The New Machiavelli but, for the first time, attacked Wells for his use of "that accursed autobiographic form which puts a premium on the loose, the improvised, the cheap and easy".<sup>62</sup> James's fear of "the terrible fluidity of self-revelation"<sup>63</sup> proves justified when one reads The New Machiavelli. An examination of the novel reveals that many of its faults are caused by Wells's abuse of first-person narration. Excessive exposition is one such fault. Remington too often talks at the reader: his many discursive monologues are used for their own sake without any reference to character. Furthermore, as Brome complains, Wells's own political interests and opinions are intruded upon Remington and contribute to the excessive amount of unassimilated exposition:

with The New Machiavelli whole pages, indeed chapters, broke out of the story to indict the dog-fight of politics which should have been a great constructive process, and Remington was swamped again and again by the force of Wells's own opinions, as though he could no longer contain them in character but must burst into the book himself. It was the first ominous eruption of those magnificent moments of self-assertion that were to disintegrate the novelist in him.<sup>64</sup>

There is another fault associated with the first-person novel where the narrator is the main character. In Romberg's words:

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61. H. G. Wells, Vol. II of The Works of H. G. Wells (New York: Atlantic Edition, 1924-1927), pp. 379-380.
62. Leon Edel and others, eds., Henry James and H. G. Wells (Illinois: University of Illinois, 1958), p. 128.
63. Henry James, Preface to The Ambassadors, p. xix.
64. Vincent Brome, H. G. Wells: A Biography, p. 113.

the narrator of a first-person novel of this type focuses his gaze on the other characters from the outside; he can give life to their external appearance, but from their innermost thoughts he is excluded. The simple fact is that in this aspect his power of comprehension is extremely restricted in comparison with that of the omniscient author in a third-person novel.<sup>65</sup>

This fault is evidenced in The New Machiavelli and perhaps exacerbated because Wells frequently writes of disguised real-life characters. Some of his characters are so lightly sketched (for example, many members of the Pentagonam Circle) that they exist only as names or phrases for the reader. In this instance, we also see how a potential weakness of first-person narration is realized by Wells's tendency to make characters vehicles for his ideas. As Brooks suggests:

Conrad would have used these men [the politicians Remington meets in their clubs] to give us an understanding of life as it is, whereas Wells has used them simply to throw into relief his idea of what life ought to be.<sup>66</sup>

Romberg has suggested another weakness that arises when the narrator is the protagonist, and when

the author wants the reader to regard the main character as an extraordinarily noble and upright person, then the author will find it hard to avoid giving to his creation a flavour of the hypocritical and self-righteous, whether he informs the reader of his excellence directly (which, however, is unusual except for purposes of satire), or else makes this excellence plain indirectly, through the mouths of other characters.<sup>67</sup>

Romberg might have been speaking of Remington who, though not "extraordinarily noble" and "upright", is an intellectual and leader. He asserts his superiority and no authorial satire contradicts him. Indeed, other characters confirm him in his self-esteem: his uncle would make him his partner; the Baileys cultivate him, introduce him into high society and promote his marriage; Margaret devotes her money and herself to his political advancement; Isabel addresses him as Master, campaigns

65. Bertil Romberg, p. 60.

66. Van Wyck Brooks, The World of H. G. Wells, pp. 160-161.

67. Bertil Romberg, pp. 59-60.

for his election, and, upon graduation, desires only to work for him; his friends, Willersley and Britten, while warning him against sexual indulgence, acknowledge his potential greatness. The result is that a patina of self-pity and self-indulgence covers Remington's story and prevents him from seeing himself objectively. This lack does not automatically result from first-person narration but occurs in this particular novel because Wells identifies with Remington. Wells cannot judge him because he is an alter-ego, a mouthpiece for his own ideas. Lovatt Dickson supports this contention:

In all his books the narrator is always Wells, sometimes aggressively and demonstrably so, sometimes merely a man with his background who knows something of science. It was impossible to mistake Remington for anybody except H. G. Wells...

Remington comes from the same smoky, grimy world young Wells had known, and the memorable part of the book is the description of what life was like down there amongst the detritus. Remington's aim is to recondition the society that allows such things. The purpose becomes stronger than character or story. It is true that Wells did not go as far as Remington in preferring exile to existence without his mistress. But as we have already pointed out, Wells was prepared at this time to make a bolt for it, and was stopped, not by any scruples, but by the sacrifice made by the girl in the case.<sup>68</sup>

To judge Remington, Wells would have to judge himself. And this, it appears, he cannot do. Instead, he tries to justify and rationalize. Wells's portrayal of Remington is seriously weakened by his failure to employ irony. Identification with Remington negates critical evaluation and prevents a much-needed authorial distance. In contrast, Wells's portrayal of George Ponderevo in Tono-Bungay provided a sense of distance, irony and criticism.

When the story begins, Remington is in exile. He tells us his mind "has been full of confused protests and justifications". (The New Machiavelli, p. 3) He compares his position to that of Niccolo Machiavelli

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68. Lovat Dickson, H. G. Wells: His Turbulent Life and Times (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 191.

who fell out of politics at about the same age as Remington and wrote for a similar reason - "to engage the restlessness of his mind, very much as I have wanted to do". (The New Machiavelli, p. 3) Their themes are similar - the relation of political ambition to human weakness - the "play of instinctive passion and desire against too abstract a dream of statesmanship". (4) He also identifies with Machiavelli both as "a fallen brother" (6) and a writer. In one aspect, they differ - in their attitude towards women. In Machiavelli's time, women were a secondary sex: a vehicle for children and a toy for leisure hours. In Remington's time, they have attained higher status. His book explores two passions - the "red passion" of love and the "white passion" of statecraft. For him, they are tragically intertwined. Remington's changing attitude towards love is traced from his boyhood, through his student days at Cambridge, his first sexual experience, his marriage, and his great love. While on holiday, Remington seeks sexual gratification with a stranger. He is not interested in her personality; for him, she is a female creature - an object of desire and a means of asserting his manhood:

That evening I came down to dinner a monster of pride, for behold! I was a man. I felt myself the most wonderful and unprecedented of adventurers. It was hard to believe that any one in the world before had done as much. (p. 154)

Before they say good-bye, however, he recognizes her as a person and finds himself for the first time "liking her for the sake of her own personality". (155)

His marriage to Margaret is one of convenience. She wants to promote his career, to enjoy the status of being a successful politician's wife. She does not love him but sees in him what she wants to see. Remington also has an idealized image of her - he admires her purity, her daintiness - but does not acknowledge to himself her limitations: her lack of originality, her inability to think clearly and articulate her thoughts. In his proposal, he explains why he wishes to marry her:

You see...you make everything possible to me. You can give me help and sympathy, support, understanding. You know all that I might do in the world. I do so intensely want to do constructive things, big things perhaps, in this wild jumble (The New Machiavelli, p. 238)

He goes on to confess his love affairs but Margaret cuts short his explanation with: "I know." (239) leaving him convinced that she does not know. She simply dismisses those aspects of his personality that disturb her. Her ignorance is further revealed when she says: "All men - ...A woman does not understand these temptations." (239) Their failure to communicate continues into their marriage. Remington, for a while, conforms to Margaret's image of him. But, gradually, his real self emerges. When Remington changes his political allegiance, Margaret neither understands nor accepts his decision. Her locked door becomes a symbol of their estrangement. By contrast, the kind of love Remington and Isabel share is based upon mutual recognition and acceptance.

Remington achieves political success quite early but scant description is provided of his political life: for example, he tells us that he walks out of the House of Commons his first day there and he tells of one impressive speech but, generally, he merely soliloquizes about politics or tells of parties and visits to clubs patronized by fellow politicians. The key point Wells seems to make about Remington's political life is his failure to find order and meaning. He switches parties but that solves nothing. He finds, says Brooks,

no happy valley in the end, and...passes from party to party, penetrating inward from ideas to the better stuff of mankind, hoping to embody his 'white passion of statecraft', and in the end demonstrating to himself the futility of all groups and parties alike.<sup>69</sup>

His one political constant is the belief that politics is an instrument of order, a belief which reality refuses to confirm. He comes to acknowledge the distance between the real world of politics and his

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69. Van Wyck Brooks, The World of H. G. Wells, p. 128.

idealized version:

It seemed as though I had never seen before nor suspected the stupendous gap between the chaotic aims, the routine, the conventional acquiescences, the vulgarizations of the personal life, and that clearly conscious development and service of a collective thought and purpose at which my efforts aimed. I had thought them but a little way apart, and now I saw they were separated by all the distance between earth and heaven. I saw now in myself and every one around me, a concentration upon interests close at hand, an inability to detach oneself from the provocations, tendernesses, instinctive hates, dumb lusts and shy timidities that touched one at every point; and, save for rare exalted moments, a regardlessness of broader aims and remoter possibilities that made the white passion of statecraft seem as unearthly and irrelevant to human life as the story an astronomer will tell, half proven but altogether incredible, of habitable planets and answering intelligences, suns' distances uncounted across the deep. It seemed to me I had aspired too high and thought too far, had mocked my own littleness by presumption, had given the uttermost dear reality of life for a theorizer's dream. (The New Machiavelli, p. 499)

His insight leads him to renounce politics for love but although he removes himself from the political arena, he remains bound to it by emotion, memory and habit: "I have found myself with the teeming interests of the life I have abandoned still buzzing like a swarm of homeless bees in my head." (3) Scorning the politics of reality he, nevertheless, is haunted by the politics of his dreams. The bond with the past casts a shadow over the present: Remington, in exile, cannot find happiness and completion with Isabel. As a strong man, a success, he had love to give, but as a broken man, he offers sentiment. The end of the book finds him in both public and domestic life a disappointed man.

Of the four Wells's books discussed, The New Machiavelli is the only one without fantastic elements: this novel is set in the real world and presents it realistically. Roslynn Haynes has written of Wells's realism, noting how the careful enumeration of external details is an important part of it:

the clothing worn, the stance, the stature, the characteristic gestures or expressions, the normal background, a particular manner of speaking. This desire for the clearest and most accurate accounts of characters and their environments led Wells to stress the need for the utmost realism in presentation, and links him at this point not only with the English realist novel, but also with the French naturalist tradition...[Accumulation] of numerous background details was typical of many of Wells's

novels, particularly the early novels of character, and several contemporary critics who abhorred this method of amassing detail cited with derision the fact that so many of his novels began with a painstaking description of a room and its contents.

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So important did Wells consider the exact and truthful rendering of such details that he often conformed to the most stringent standard of fidelity, namely that of authorial experience.<sup>70</sup>

Wells's treatment of Remington, in terms of external description, is exceptional. We know a great deal about Remington's ideas and emotions but we have no idea what he looks like. He provides images of most characters: we remember Margaret in her furs and Isabel in her baggy blue smock but we see Remington only from the inside. Wells's detailed description of Remington's intellectual activity - his meditations, soliloquies, and inner debate - goes some way towards making him real for us. Haynes suggest that:

Wells was particularly concerned with the formative effect of problems on character, and those protagonists who do not debate within themselves or discuss with others, do not grow or develop - indeed, in Wells's opinion, they scarcely live.<sup>71</sup>

In those terms, Remington neither 'lives' nor develops. For long tedious stretches in the novel, we are unaware of him as a character. This novel may serve to warn of the dangers of abusing the first person mode. It certainly demonstrates Wells's divided nature - the journalist and the creative writer; when the latter is in the ascendancy as, for example, in the sections dealing with Remington's boyhood and in the account of his emotional dilemma at the end of the book, the novel is well-paced and absorbing. Many of the intervening expository sections, however, are static. Unfortunately, Wells allowed the journalist to usurp the artist.

70. Roslynn Haynes, H. G. Wells: Discoverer of the Future (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1980), p. 169.

71. Roslynn Haynes, p. 192.

## CHAPTER THREE

## (i) Preface to the selected Conrad novels

The three Conrad novels discussed are all narrated by Marlow. Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim are problematic instances of first-person narration, for while Marlow is an effective witness, analysis suggests he may also be considered the protagonist. In Chance, Marlow is clearly an observing narrator - neither emotionally involved nor personally affected by his narrative; however, his task is complicated because he does not have access to the full story. What is novel in Chance is the process of showing how a narrator creates a fiction.

(ii) Heart of Darkness

Heart of Darkness exposes the inadequacy of Lubbock's and Romberg's stark distinction between the narrator as protagonist and narrator as observer. For Marlow's position is intermediary - somewhere between that of a protagonist and an observer. In his narrating role in this work, Marlow may best be described by Booth's term, "narrator-agent",<sup>1</sup> for while one initially may be more conscious of Marlow, the observer, analysis soon reveals his profound involvement in the story. First of all, Marlow is a participating observer in the story. Things happen to him as well as about him. He participates in the obvious sense that he is in Africa on business for the same company that employs Kurtz and the other officials; the manager's tactics to delay the delivery of rivets Marlow needs to repair and re-float his steamer are directed against him; he actively offers himself as emissary to Kurtz's Intended. And he participates, too, in the more profound sense that, while in Africa, he undergoes a process of psychological change which radically alters his view of life. At the same time, Heart of Darkness may be understood symbolically as Marlow's journey into the sub-conscious.<sup>2</sup> From this viewpoint, Marlow, not Kurtz, becomes the central figure of the work.<sup>3</sup> Thus Kurtz is the central focus of Marlow's narration although he occupies little of the narrating time. Secondly, as Jerome Thale suggests, his character is "essentially simple and static".<sup>4</sup> Kurtz is not shown in the process of changing: his degradation has been completed long before Marlow's journey begins. It is Marlow who is a developing

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1. Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 153.

2. Albert J. Guerard, Conrad the Novelist (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 39.

3. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 37.

4. Jerome Thale, "The Narrator as Hero," Twentieth-Century Literature, 3 (July, 1957), p. 70.

character: the man who leaves Africa is both sadder and wiser than the mariner who defied the warnings of clerk, doctor and the Fates he met in the Belgian Company's offices, at the beginning of the journey.

Thirdly, the significance of the African experience and the nature of Mr. Kurtz are very much what Marlow makes of them. Marlow shares with us his attempts to understand his situation.\* Thus, although Kurtz does not change, Marlow's views of him change.

Heart of Darkness is related to the oral narrative tradition. Conrad uses the conventional elements of this genre - but expands their potential. This is most clearly visible in his use of the frame narrative. The frame setting authenticates Marlow's discursive style, largely conversational, although rhetorically heightened at times. Plausibility is conferred by the elaborate frame and by the status of his frame audience of professional men: a Director of Companies, a lawyer, an accountant and the unnamed "I", knowledgeable about the great seamen of England's past. At the same time, the idea of a "frame" is inadequate for Heart of Darkness because of its sophisticated use.<sup>5</sup> Where a conventional "frame" does not intrude into the inner narrative, Marlow's audience does occasionally interrupt his story. Our awareness of them is maintained and links are made between both groups of characters - those in the outer and inner narratives. Marlow himself makes a disparaging comment about the value of his own and his listeners' work in the "civilized" world. He refers to his own "monkey tricks" (Heart of Darkness, p. 34) and addresses his friends as "you fellows performing on your respective tightropes for - what is it? half a crown a tumble". (34) The cutting edge of this remark is perceived by at least one listener who growls: "try to be civil, Marlow". (34) Marlow is well aware that the

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\* Marlow's journey is similar to that of the Time Traveller in that both are trying to understand strange worlds.

5. Cedric Watts, Conrad's "Heart of Darkness": A Critical and Contextual Discussion (Milano: Mursia International, 1977), p. 22.

"civilized" world of everyday reality is one with the civilized world responsible for the atrocities he details. The text, therefore, implies a questioning of what it is to be "civilized". Thus, "the initial impression of contrast"<sup>6</sup> between the respectable group aboard the Nellie and the characters described in the inner tale is gradually eroded. Subtly, Marlow's narrative implies a complicity between them. For example, one wonders if the Director of Companies, Marlow's companion of the outer tale, has anything in common with the Director of the Belgian Company who bears responsibility for sending men to devastate the Congo. Similarly, the Accountant's "toying architecturally with the bones" (Heart of Darkness, p. 3) - i.e. his dominoes - appears initially as a simple descriptive comment. Yet, after meeting the callous Accountant of the inner tale (his chief reaction to the dying agent is that he is an intruder whose presence distracts him from his work), one wonders again if any affinity exists between the two. The impression of their affinity is intensified because of the use of the word, "bones". First, it is a synonym for dominoes, but with the preponderance of bones in Marlow's narrative, the word itself acquires sinister connotations. We see too many bones - for example, when Marlow at last has an "opportunity...to meet his predecessor" (9), Fresleven, who had been killed by a chief's son, "the grass growing through his ribs was tall enough to hide his bones. They were all there." (9) Later, Marlow comes upon some black workers who had been lured into the interior to work on the construction of a railway. Some had "withdrawn to die" (17); one, in particular, Marlow almost brushes against: "The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree". (17) Secondly, the dominoes are called "bones" because they are made from ivory - the rapacious lust for which underlies the evil pervading the entire inner narrative.

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6. Cedric Watts, Conrad's "Heart of Darkness": A Critical and Contextual Discussion, p. 26.

There is thus a direct link between frame and inner narrative.

In Heart of Darkness, Conrad makes effective use of primary and secondary narrators. The primary narrator is the unnamed "I" of the frame-narrative while Marlow, the chief narrator, is technically defined as a secondary narrator. The primary narrator serves a number of functions: he describes the physical setting (the Nellie, a cruising yawl); the time (the approach of sunset); the mood (one of pensive meditation and waiting since the Nellie cannot move down the river until the turn of the tide); and the others present. His succinct description of Marlow emphasizes his sunken cheeks, yellow complexion, straight back, ascetic aspect and manner of sitting cross-legged which in the concluding portion he expands to an analogy with a "meditating Buddha". (Heart of Darkness, p. 79) These salient points are best appreciated at the end of the inner narrative for they imply what Marlow has become as a result of his African experience. One infers a contrast between the younger Marlow who requested his aunt's intervention on his behalf to obtain him a position on a Congo steamer and the present Marlow who, it seems, now shuns new experience to meditate introspectively upon the past. He is shown in a meditative Buddha pose which suggests that he has attained "enlightenment" in terms of an awareness of "darkness" or evil.

The primary narrator may be classified as an observing narrator: we know little of him. Yet a glimpse of this narrator both before and after Marlow's narration suggests that he has been affected by what he has heard. His initial glowing references to Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Franklin, the men and the ships the Thames has borne to past adventures, and his exclamation:

What greatness had not floated on the ebb of that river into the mystery of an unknown earth!...The dreams of men, the seed of commonwealths, the germs of empire. (5)

- all suggest his romantic conception of reality. His final words contrast with these and reflect the impact of Marlow's story upon him:

I raised my head. The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky - seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness. (Heart of Darkness, p. 79)

The "sombre" gloom which may be attributed, at first, to the dying day assumes a larger significance in the context of Marlow's narrative: the "darkness" depicted in the inner section seems to have spread so that all places, all people, are implicated.

The main function of the primary narrator, however, is to motivate the secondary narrator. A number of reasons are suggested for Marlow's telling his story. Superficially, of course, he spins a yarn, appropriate enough in any seaman, but, in this case, it is also a means of whiling away the time of waiting for the tide to turn. On a deeper level, his story may be seen partly as a form of penance for lying, an act he detests and which, for him, has the "flavour of mortality" (27) and partly as an effort to understand. One tension in the story arises from Marlow's attempt to explain to himself the meaning of what he has undergone. Marlow is a moralist and he examines his experiences, both personal and vicarious, for their moral implications.

A number of adjectives may be enlisted to describe Marlow: intelligent, thoughtful, humane, subtle, ethical, curious, analytical, philosophical...but these qualities are perhaps best appreciated in the context of his behaviour in circumstances which challenge, test and reveal the inner man. As a narrator, he is a sincere and pre-eminently civilized man who acts as both guide and representative as he tells of his journey up the Congo River to the Inner Station. There, Marlow is given profound and disturbing insight into Kurtz, himself, and - by extension perhaps - into all men.

Before going to Africa, Marlow had been loafing about London for a while after his return from the East until, becoming restless, he attempted unsuccessfully to find employment on a ship. With his aunt's intervention he at last has the opportunity to fulfill his boyhood

dream of visiting Africa. In the Belgian offices of the Company, he meets the ominous old ladies whose presence serves as a warning against his journey. They appear as guards at "the door of Darkness". (Heart of Darkness, p. 11) But Marlow is not sufficiently intimidated by them to forego his adventure. Similarly, his interview with a Company clerk who in speaking of his decision not to go to Africa says: "I am not such a fool as I look" (11) is another omen Marlow ignores. His third warning comes from the Company doctor who wishes to measure his cranium and asks: "Ever any madness in your family?" (11) These three encounters give Marlow a sense of foreboding, a premonition that Africa may be other than a place of glorious adventure.

What Marlow observes in the Congo can only be understood against the backdrop of imperialism. The Congo differs from other imperial territories in being the possession of a single individual, the private property of King Leopold of Belgium, who bears ultimate responsibility for atrocities committed from 1885, when European powers recognized his territorial claim, until 1906, when the Belgian Parliament took over "his private country".<sup>7</sup> Marlow's description of the horrors of forced labour illustrates the contrast between Leopold's philanthropic talk of his civilizing mission<sup>8</sup> and the reality of the "civilizing" process for the natives. He watches members of a chain gang: as they toil uphill, the clink of their chains "kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind waggled to and fro like tails." Marlow "could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all men were connected...clinking." (16)

As this suggests, realistic surface detail is given meticulous

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7. Hunt Hawkins, "Conrad's Critique of Imperialism in Heart of Darkness," PMLA, 94, pp. 289-90.

8. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 292.

treatment, yet an air of unreality hovers over Marlow's story. For example, there is a sense of absurdity in the description of the French gun-boat shooting aimlessly at an empty continent:

Pop would go one of the six-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little white smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech - and nothing happened. Nothing could happen. There was a touch of insanity in the proceeding, a sense of lugubrious drollery in the sight. (Heart of Darkness, p. 14)

There is a similar sense of absurdity in Marlow's description of blasting cliffs for the railway: "No change appeared on the face of the rock ...The cliff was not in the way". (16) Underneath the appearance of busyness, nothing is being accomplished. This is perhaps epitomized by "the hole":

I avoided a vast artificial hole somebody had been digging on the slope, the purpose of which I found it impossible to divine. It wasn't a quarry or a sandpit, anyhow. It was just a hole. It might have been connected with the philanthropic desire of giving the criminals something to do. I don't know". (17)

The fantastic and absurd in the Congo are part of the landscape of everyday reality. Marlow's method of narration heightens the sense of mystery and absurdity.

At the Inner Station, the sense of mystery increases. Many things happen which Marlow cannot explain and he must grope and theorize in an attempt to understand his own experience. The first mystery to present itself to him is the delay about having his ship repaired and re-floated, a mystery which is associated with the manager, who, of all the officials, he most distrusts. Cynical and greedy, he has come to Africa for one purpose: to "tear treasure out of the bowels of the land...with no more moral purpose back of it than there is in burglars breaking into a safe". (31) He displays no qualities of leadership but his ability to stay well assures his success in a climate which has destroyed mentally and morally superior men. Physically, he is fittest to survive. Cedric Watts suggests that a "critical preoccupation" with the evolutionary theory is present in Heart of Darkness. Darwin optimistically claimed

that "As natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection".<sup>9</sup> Resentful of Kurtz's success, the manager does what he can to impede Marlow's mission to relieve Kurtz. He is aboard Marlow's vessel when a volunteer skipper sinks it, a fact insignificant in itself but suggestive when considered in conjunction with other facts. To repair his steamer, Marlow needs rivets and there are rivets galore at the outer station. The manager controls despatches and Marlow's request for rivets is delayed from reaching the outer station. The manager is able to make an accurate estimate of how long Marlow will take repairing the steamer. By withholding materials, he indirectly ensures the accuracy of his prediction. Marlow provides all the information necessary to suggest a "covert murder-plot";<sup>10</sup> he even unintentionally eavesdrops on an incriminating conversation about Kurtz between the manager and his uncle but seems only vaguely aware of the import of his data. He cannot fully articulate his suspicions:

I did not see the real significance of that wreck at once. I fancy I see it now, but I am not sure - not at all. Certainly the affair was too stupid - when I think of it - to be altogether natural. Still (Heart of Darkness, p. 21)

His later comment that at the station there is an "air of plotting, but nothing came of it, of course" (25) ironically reveals his continuing naïvety about the manager's stratagems. The significance of this use of irony is not to undermine Marlow's intelligence but to suggest that his view does not necessarily coincide with Conrad's and perhaps to alert us to be wary of trusting absolutely in Marlow's interpretations of events. A limitation of the narrator's point of view is that we can see things Marlow cannot. Marlow provides accurate and ample data and is usually

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9. Cedric Watts, Conrad's Heart of Darkness, p. 140.

10. C. T. Watts, "Heart of Darkness: The Covert Murder-Plot and the Darwinian Theme:", Conradiana, 7, p. 137.

correct in evaluating it: he may, at times, however, prove fallible.\*

We should notice, in this context, an important detail in the narrative. After experiencing the mystery of the delay in having the ship repaired, Marlow is again confronted by mystery - the amazing restraint of the cannibals who with only their subsistence of dead, contaminated hippo, have eaten neither each other nor the white men. Why they exercise such restraint is a mystery to which he finds no answer. There are some things which remain mysteries.

The greatest mystery to challenge Marlow on his African journey, however, is Mr. Kurtz. Marlow first hears of him from the Accountant who describes him as a "first-class agent" and "a very remarkable man". (Heart of Darkness, p. 19) The manager corroborates the Accountant's impression.\*\* Marlow becomes curious, intrigued, and his once vague interest in Kurtz turns into an obsession: he thinks constantly of meeting Kurtz and looks forward to observing his special qualities. He has already allowed the manager's spy to link them together as members of the "gang of virtue", (26) a rare example of deceit in Marlow. He allows himself to be associated with Kurtz as a means of repudiating the officials he has met whose darkness consists in "petty meanness, greed, and lust". (19) He expects to find in Kurtz a man who defeats the dehumanizing forces of the wilderness, a man with whom he can be proud to identify.

Kurtz is presented as a man of genius and culture: there was no field in which he could not have become pre-eminent had he desired. All the gifts of civilization and intelligence meet in him. "His mother was half-English, his father was half-French. All Europe contributed" to

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\* This contention will later be considered in relation to Kurtz's Intended.

\*\* But Marlow does not become deeply interested in Kurtz until he sees his painting of a woman against a dark background, blindfolded, and bearing a torch. This description serves as an ironic comment on the civilizing mission.

his making. (Heart of Darkness, p. 50) One reason Conrad exalts Kurtz to such a degree may be explained by reference to an earlier work.<sup>11</sup> In An Outpost of Progress, Conrad had also explored the theme of the white man's disintegration when isolated in the wilderness. Yet, the work evoked little response: readers could feel superior to Kayerts and Carrier and complacently dismiss their failure as unrelated to them. To undermine this sense of complacency, Conrad, therefore, makes Kurtz a man of immense talents whose corruption has dark implications for all men. Because Marlow acts as guide and is subject also to our vicarious identification, his strong sense of kinship with Kurtz becomes ours as well. As Watts writes, when

Kurtz has been corrupted, he nevertheless entangles in his destiny the apparently sound and decent Marlow. And...by means of a very complex oblique narrative opening to entangle the reader with Marlow...the reader is eventually entangled, via Marlow, with Kurtz.<sup>12</sup>

Through Kurtz, Marlow brings home to us how thin is the veneer of civilization.

Kurtz's eloquent report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs suggests, in its opening paragraph, the cause of his fall:

He began with the argument that we whites, from the point of development we had arrived at, "must necessarily appear to them [savages] in the nature of supernatural beings - we approach them with the might as of a deity"(51)

Kurtz takes advantage of this power and establishes himself as a charismatic leader but instead of using his influence for altruistic and philanthropic purposes, he perverts it to enslave the natives, to enrich himself by having them bring offerings of ivory, (a method which the manager finds unsound) indulge his lust for native women and participate in mysterious midnight rites. Whether Kurtz joins the cannibals in

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11. Cedric Watts, Conrad's "Heart of Darkness," p. 36.

12. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 36.

eating human flesh, as argued by Stephen Reid,<sup>13</sup> Conrad does not specify. Keeping the details secret adds to the sense of horror. But around Kurtz's hut the posts ornamented with human skulls bear mute testimony to his corruption. When Marlow finds him crawling on all fours - having reverted to the physical stance of a beast - Kurtz has reached the furthest extent of his regression. Instead of bringing the torch of civilization - the message of enlightenment and humanity - Kurtz has not only adopted savage customs himself but refined their cruelties. Behind the eloquent idealist, the wilderness exposes a hollow man, lacking in moral fibre and fidelity. With no check or restraint\* upon his potential evil, he expresses it with the freedom of a god, or devil: "there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly well pleased". (Heart of Darkness, p. 57)

The central mystery about Kurtz is the meaning of the phrase, "The horror! The horror!" (71), uttered "at what is usually taken to be the center" of the story.<sup>14</sup> Marlow describes Kurtz's last words as a "judgement upon the adventures of his soul on earth" (71); he seems to refer to this when he says: "The most you can hope from it [life] is some knowledge of yourself - that comes too late - a flock of unextinguishable regrets." (71) He says too: "it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth - the strange commingling of desire and hate" (72) and that it "was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was

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13. Stephen A. Reid, "The 'Unspeakable Rites' in Heart of Darkness," Modern Fiction Studies, 9 (Winter 1963-64), p. 347.

\* In an organized society, restraints are built into the system: the pressures of one's peers and bosses; the knowledge that police and punishment await should one violate society's laws. In the Africa Conrad describes, these are absent: in its immense solitude, one's ideals are starkly tested by one's self-confrontation. There the self may be stripped of illusion and fully revealed.

14. James Guetti, "Heart of Darkness and the Failure of the Imagination," Sewanee Review, 73 (Summer, 1965), p. 489.

a victory! (Heart of Darkness, p. 72) Much critical interest has been paid to Kurtz's final exclamation. In opposition to Marlow's comments, Peter Glassman places his own interpretation: namely, that Kurtz simply means "it is horrible to have to die". To support him in his freedom of interpretation, he reminds us that Lionel Trilling has suggested "with sufficient fullness that Marlow may misrepresent the significance of Kurtz's last words" and "the novel has invited us to misinterpret its apparent climax".<sup>15</sup>

Cedric Watts offers four possible meanings of "The horror!":

- a. that Kurtz judges his own past actions to be horrible, and this is a moral victory
- b. that Kurtz judges to be horrible but also desirable the temptations of the jungle.
- c. that Kurtz deems horrible the inner natures of all mankind: "no eloquence could have been so withering to one's belief in mankind as his final burst of sincerity"
- d. that Kurtz deems horrible the whole universe: "that wide and immense stare embracing, condemning, loathing all the universe... 'The Horror!'"<sup>16</sup>

Unlike Glassman, Watts derives his interpretation from Marlow's commentary but is critical of their "contradictory aspects".<sup>17</sup> What is important is that these are all moral statements. As David M. Martin has said:

The revolt is an affirmation because the existence of the standard whereby the vision is judged requires belief, and the basis for belief is the mystery that in a reductionist universe the standard should exist at all.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, there is no final answer. The reader is given freedom to evaluate Marlow's reactions but is left with mysteries and ambiguities

15. Peter J. Glassman, Language and Being: Joseph Conrad and the Literature of Personality (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 232.

16. Cedric Watts, Conrad's "Heart of Darkness," p. 117.

17. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 117.

18. David M. Martin, "The Diabolic Kurtz: The Dual Nature of His Satanism in Heart of Darkness," Conradiana, 7 (1975-76), p. 177.

to ponder for Marlow offers no definitive solution to the problems posed.

The variation in critical response confirms the ambiguity of Kurtz's final words, and supports this idea that Marlow's method of narration "does not explain". As Florence Ridley says: "he communicates over a bridge of emotional response to a given object": his "method of communicating both increases the significance of his comment and renders it more difficult of precise restatement".<sup>19</sup> Marlow does find meanings but these are his creative, if inconclusive, responses to the situation. And perhaps the most significant point is not his uncertainty about what Kurtz means but that he interprets his cry as a "moral victory". As a result of this interpretation, Marlow is confirmed in his loyalty to him and acts as emissary from Kurtz to the Intended.

Lillian Feder argues that Marlow's discovery of evil through Kurtz makes him aware of his responsibilities both to himself and to others.<sup>20</sup> His visit to Kurtz's Intended indicates his conception of the nature of his responsibility. Ted Boyle suggests that when Marlow "lies" to the Intended, he "accepts the trust of carrying the torch of a higher type of truth, a truth that neither Kurtz nor the uninitiated Marlow could understand". That is, Marlow recognizes that civilization is grounded in illusion and, without it, the values fostered by civilization could not exist. In keeping the truth from the Intended, Marlow assures her survival in peace. Criticism, in general, tends to support this view. But, as with reaction to "The horror!", contradictory views emerge. While Boyle views the Intended as a symbol of "the soul of civilization" and "a symbol of the nobility which remained in Kurtz's soul when he died",<sup>21</sup> another critic, Bruce Stark, considers her demonic, and finds

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19. Florence H. Ridley, "The Ultimate Meaning of Heart of Darkness," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 18 (June, 1963), p. 43.

20. Lillian Feder, "Marlow's Descent into Hell," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 9 (March, 1955), p. 280.

21. Ted E. Boyle, "Marlow's 'Lie' in Heart of Darkness," Studies in Short Fiction, (Winter, 1964), p. 161.

her forehead "has become a kind of reverse beacon or torch because, instead of shedding light and dissipating the darkness, it actually absorbs light and increases the darkness".<sup>22</sup>

Conrad has chosen to make the final scene ambiguous; certainly, it accords with the primary narrator's description of Marlow's "misty" tales. Marlow's method of narration is not typical of seamen for theirs have

a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut...But to Marlow the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine. (Heart of Darkness, p. 5)

A second factor is the character of the narrator. In evaluating the effect of the last scene, it is helpful to recall Marlow's attitude towards women first expressed vis à vis his aunt:

It's queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it, and never can be. It is too beautiful altogether, and if they were to set it up it would go to pieces before the first sunset. Some confounded fact we men have been living contentedly with ever since the day of creation would start up and knock the whole thing over. (12)

This sentimental and patronizing attitude suggests one of Marlow's limitations - his attitude towards women. Although he has evidently learned much about the nature of evil, his attitude towards women remains unchanged, for his treatment of the Intended is based in part on the same idiosyncratic notions he held before his journey had even begun. Marlow is susceptible to her charm. Indeed, although he attributes his visit to the Intended as an expression of this allegiance to Kurtz, his description of her portrait suggests another motive:

Thus I was left at last with...the girl's portrait. She struck me as beautiful - I mean she had a beautiful expression. I know that the sunlight can be made to lie too, yet one felt that no manipulation of light and pose could have conveyed the

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22. Bruce R. Stark, "Kurtz's Intended: The Heart of Heart of Darkness," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 16, p. 546.

delicate shade of truthfulness upon those features. She seemed ready to listen without mental reservation, without suspicion, without a thought for herself. (Heart of Darkness, p. 74)

He admits that after studying her portrait, he decides to pay her a visit, partly from curiosity and partly from "some other feeling perhaps".

(74) We are left to surmise what that "other feeling" is.

When we meet the Intended, our earlier idealized view of her begins to disintegrate but not as dramatically as did our idealized view of Kurtz. During Marlow's interview with her, he obliquely reveals that she is different from her portrait: she is older, but more importantly, instead of listening without "mental reservation", she does most of the talking and, instead of being "without a thought for herself", she is glaringly self-centered. Kurtz's death is her loss; no one else knew him as well as she did and she had all his confidence. (76) She is not surprised when Marlow says that Kurtz's last word was her name - of course, she knew it! Nowhere is the irony at Marlow's expense greater for he seems oblivious to her egocentricity. Seduced by her charm, he makes the gift of a lie. He rationalizes this saying the truth would destroy her; after all, being a woman, she is vulnerable. And he does have the memory of Kurtz's failure to cope with reality - a more convincing fact to support his decision. Moreover, he has concluded that "civilization" is founded upon a collective illusion and dedicates himself to its preservation. His lie suggests compromise or disillusion. Perhaps the most significant revelation is that Kurtz had gone to Africa to make himself worthy of his Intended. Indirectly, then, she made his disintegration possible. Furthermore, her luxurious room reminds us that she is part of the materialistic world and the value system which perpetuates itself through human exploitation while her black gown and darkened room link her with the world of darkness.

Stark, in his interpretation of the Intended as demonic assumes the extreme position that

• When Marlow stands before the Intended in her drawing room, he

is at the deepest point within the innermost circle of the Inferno and is facing the embodiment of all the darkness that was pouring out of Europe and invading the jungle. When he stands before Kurtz's Intended, he is facing a woman who is herself a "whited sepulchre" - a splendid appearance commingling with a frightful reality that simultaneously charms and repels him, an idol in the centre of the Sepulchral City that glows out of its darkness and before which he bows in adoration, just as the natives bowed down to Kurtz. This woman is the essence of the European darkness and seen in this way her name can only be "The horror".<sup>23</sup>

The unsatisfactory interview prompts us to look more critically at Marlow. Undoubtedly, he succeeded where Kurtz failed, coping, in a fashion, by concentrating on his rivets. Yet one recalls the premature dancing to celebrate rivets that have not yet arrived and, of course, the "riveted" steamer arrives too late to help. Other irritating facts about Marlow are recalled: his profiting from nepotism; his eavesdropping; his two lies; the disparity between his attitude to lies and the lies themselves. In his self-portrayal, Marlow makes himself eminently likable. But Marlow, the civilized man, is part of the world of darkness so it is hardly surprising that a little shadow falls on him.

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23. Bruce R. Stark, p. 555.

(iii) Lord Jim

Lord Jim is a composite narrative. The first four chapters are presented omnisciently; chapters five to thirty-five consist of Marlow's long oral account made, while he sits on a verandah, to an audience; chapter thirty-six returns us briefly to the omniscient narrator who tells us how two years after Marlow's story a "privileged man" receives a packet from him containing a letter to Jim from his father sent before he joined the Patna, a letter from Marlow, a narrative he has pieced together from fragmentary information gleaned from conversations with Gentleman Brown, Stein, Jewel and Tamb' Itam, and an aborted communication from Jim to someone unknown. Chapters thirty-seven to forty-five are based on this latter material.

The omniscient section is used to present information about Jim's upbringing in the parsonage, his work as a water-clerk, his romantic conception of himself as hero, his failure to act in an emergency on a training mission, his choice of a soft berth on the Patna, and its collision with a derelict ship. It also draws attention to Jim's characteristic "Ability in the abstract" and his imagination. Jim's indulgence in imaginative heroics is highlighted - his preference for sitting aloft from where he could look down "with the contempt of a man destined to shine in the midst of dangers". (Lord Jim, p. 11) His romantic, imaginative nature fashions a heroic self-concept; free from self-doubt, he awaits only an occasion for heroism; when it arises, however, he fails. The daydreams of his training period - "saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line" (11) - are punctured for us, if not for Jim, when during a collision at sea, he passively looks on while others rush to the rescue. Failing to recognize the implications of his inaction, he faults his quick-thinking fellows for "vanity" and spurious heroism (10) while he awaits, he tells himself, a fit opportunity - a time when all other men

would flinch - to demonstrate his own heroism. Jim's passivity and rationalizations prepare us for his behaviour on the Patna and his protestations to Marlow that he had not behaved in a cowardly way, that he had known no fear; although his body had jumped, he had not given it the order. In this section, Conrad also criticizes the idea of conventional moral attitudes as his ironic comments about Jim's father indicates:

Jim's father possessed such certain knowledge of the Unknowable as made for the righteousness of people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerring Providence enables to live in mansions. (Lord Jim, p. 10)

The courtroom section of the omniscient narrative introduces us, through Jim's eyes, to "a white man, who sat apart from the others, with his face worn and clouded, but with quiet eyes that glanced straight, interested and clear". (29) A feeling of empathy between Marlow and Jim is immediately established as Jim feels he has met him before; in fact, it is later disclosed that they saw each other as they were entering the courtroom. Jim senses, too, that this man shares his awareness that his speech has become useless to him. Marlow's and Jim's mutual interest is a convenient means of giving Marlow access to Jim and information crucial to his story. Marlow's intense preoccupation with Jim reveals much about his own character - his curiosity, his compassion, his need for a moral structure to his life and his flair for psychological analysis. Why Jim makes Marlow his confidant is equally plausible and reveals much about the younger man. He needs Marlow as an "ally, a helper, an accomplice". "He cannot believe in himself unless he has found another to do so. And he needs a judge, witness, and advocate in the solitude of his battle with himself."<sup>24</sup> He seeks in Marlow "an instrument of absolution by which he may escape responsibility for his critical lapse in duty".<sup>25</sup> Jim senses that Marlow is a sensitive,

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24. Albert J. Guerard, Conrad the Novelist, p. 147.

25. Paul S. Bruss, "Lord Jim: The Maturing of Marlow," Conradiana, 8 (1976), p. 15.

sympathetic listener, someone who may perceive the truth which lies hidden behind the facts of his case, facts which, he feels, misrepresent him but from which he cannot defend himself. Jim turns to Marlow as confessor and friend during his ordeal, pouring out matters which under ordinary circumstances he would keep private.

The omniscient section ends after portraying Jim and introducing Marlow. What now follows is a process of fine judgement rather than the ironic sharpness of a neutral observer, a subtle blend of sympathy and judgement which Marlow as first-person narrator now provides. As Dorothy Van Ghent suggests:

From here, Marlow takes over. He selects, objectifies, and humanizes the evidence on both sides, but he lets it - intensified and set in perspective through his intelligent, freely roaming curiosity - speak for itself...For Jim's "case" is not an absolute but a relative; it has a being only in relation to what men's minds can make of it. And Marlow provides the necessary medium of an intelligent consciousness, at once a symbol of that relativity, a concretization of the processes by which just judgement may be evoked, and - through his doubt and reverence - an acknowledgement of the irony of judgment of the relative.<sup>26</sup>

Guerard gives another explanation of Marlow's function:

And this is one reason why Marlow must appear, and why we must have the fiction of after-dinner listeners: the first narrator could not have justified much longer such a refusal to explain. But Marlow has a good reason not to tell his listeners that the Patna didn't sink. They would already know this much of the story, though perhaps little more. This is the basic convention of Conradian...impressionism: that the reader (who is merely "listening in") knows as much as the narrator's nominal listeners. But of course he doesn't.<sup>27</sup>

The convention of the reader's "listening in" is used to justify withholding information, sometimes for the purpose of eliciting sympathy for Jim, but not always. For example, until late in the story we are not informed that the ship sinks; in which case, no special plea is made for Jim. The reader's reaction is controlled by denying him access to all the information and thus ensuring his participation in the intellectual

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26. Dorothy Van Ghent, The English Novel: Form and Function (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1953), pp. 237-238.

27. Albert J. Guerard, Conrad the Novelist, p. 135.

process of judging. Marlow is justified in omitting information to prevent the reader from making a simplistic judgement of Jim.

Marlow, in Lord Jim, has widened his circle of acquaintances to include many influential and prosperous people to whom he turns for advice about Jim and assistance in attaining employment for him. He knows the Eastern world<sup>28</sup> and is a wiser and more impressive character than in Heart of Darkness. There, he was a younger man undergoing an intense process of maturation which gave him a heightened consciousness of man's nature. The Marlow who appears in Lord Jim is consistent with the character he became after his ordeal in the jungle. With "the benefit of all his official experience he does enjoy a seasoned vision which the Marlow of the earlier tales...had not yet discovered, and consequently he is not prone to immature misjudgement".<sup>29</sup> To Jim, he is an authority figure. Unwittingly, Marlow invites confidences from men "with soft spots, with hard spots, with hidden plague spots". (Lord Jim, p. 30) Marlow confesses himself to be no better than other men, concerned with his own affairs, and with guilts of his own to preoccupy him. Nevertheless, he underestimates both his own interest in people and their need for someone who listens. Jim desperately needs someone on his side to bolster his self-esteem and confirm him in his good opinion of himself in a doubting world. Respect from a man of Marlow's stature can do this. Marlow may also be able to enlighten him as to why he jumped, something he does not comprehend.

Marlow's narrative confirms the impression given in the omniscient section that Jim is a romantic idealist who dreams only of an opportunity to perform heroic deeds, impress other men, and satisfy his own egoism. Failure, for him, is devastating: if he admits it, his self-image and his reason for living will be destroyed. Jim, therefore,

28. Albert J. Guerard, Conrad the Novelist, p. 135.

29. Paul S. Bruss, "Lord Jim: The Maturing of Marlow," p. 13.

cannot come to grips with his failure: it is beyond his comprehension no matter how much he attempts to understand it. He cannot relinquish his romantic self-concept for without belief in his own heroism, he cannot exist. It defines him. He can never accept his jump as a definitive act; it must be a discrete error. Guilt and disbelief haunt him as he both seeks another test and flees from reminders of his past failure.

Marlow's role is to reveal for the reader Jim's paradoxical character. His sympathetic identification with Jim is balanced by his attachment to his code of conduct. Jim is obsessed by his failure and Marlow is obsessed by Jim. He is profoundly disturbed by the problem of reconciling Jim's action with his character, as well as with more abstract issues. Marlow has to decide whether acts are definitive or whether a man is more than what he does.

Jim is a simple soul without the intellect to subject himself to psychological and moral scrutiny, and Marlow supplies that. Jim's own story would be biased but Marlow provides a distanced and more impersonal analysis.

One obvious contrast between Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness is the relative insignificance of the frame. In Heart of Darkness, a subtle interaction between the external frame and the internal narrative was used to heighten the thematic implications. In Lord Jim, the frame situation is minimally developed. Both Marlow and his audience receive scant attention: he is a voice in darkness speckled only by cigar ends whose occasional brilliance reveals his "pensive eyes" and "unruffled forehead". His listeners are silent, absorbed; they are, with one exception, undefined, without reactions other than a negligent "Well" to encourage Marlow to continue. The exception is the privileged man. He had expressed to Marlow a negative opinion about Jim and his fate.

Gurko suggests:

- This man is selected as the privileged listener because he is

sceptical of Jim's redemption and scornful of racial intermingling; he doubts any good can come from a lone white man acting outside the frame of his own community. The last chapters are sharpened by the intimate presence of this doubting observer whose disbelief keeps the final melodrama from being taken on its own terms.<sup>30</sup>

Marlow reminds the privileged man that ultimately Jim's fight is with himself. The people with whom he lived simply provide an opportunity for him to make decisions, to vindicate himself or fail. The conditions for Jim's success could be met only in a country like Patusan but the place does not undermine the achievement. That Marlow communicates Jim's full story to only one listener underlines the solitary nature of Jim's accomplishment. Marlow's words fall like seed upon stony ground: after all the talk, how much has been communicated? Of all the listeners, who really comprehends Jim or cares about him?

Although the frame is kept brief, it intrudes upon the novel. References and appeals to Marlow's audience are numerous throughout the book. Moved by Jim's longing to jump out of the lifeboat and return to the spot where he had last seen the Patna, Marlow asks emotionally:

Why the impulse? Do you see the significance? Why back to the very spot? Why not drown alongside - if he meant drowning? why back to the very spot, to see - as if his imagination had to be soothed by the assurance that all was over before death could bring relief? I defy any one of you to offer another explanation. (Lord Jim, pp. 84-85)

Marlow's impassioned appeal on Jim's behalf interrupts the flow of his narration and we are moved abruptly back to the frame. He demands of his audience a judgement in Jim's favour: "Wasn't he true to himself, wasn't he?" (85) Another time, Marlow struggles against his feelings and attempts to judge Jim dispassionately: Jim has been describing the lifeboat scene with himself standing at attention, holding a wooden tiller ready against the Captain and the other deserters. Marlow asks:

Can you imagine him, silent and on his feet half the night, his face to the gusts of rain, staring at sombre forms, watchful of vague movements, straining his ears to catch rare low murmurs

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30. Leo Gurko, Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1965), p. 130.

in the stern sheets! Firmness of courage or effort of fear?  
What do you think? (Lord Jim, p. 90)

Marlow's comments indicate that his values shift; he is not narrating from a single, controlling set of values. As he tells Jim's story, he interprets it. Marlow reveals the difficulties he has in judging and involves us, too, in the evaluating process.

Throughout his account, Marlow makes constant reference to his audience so that although they exist visually only as shadowy forms, without personality, we are conscious of them as Jim's silent judges. Conrad's readers are in a position similar to the audience, held captive by Marlow's words, asked to evaluate Jim's character as Marlow juxtaposes his emotional sympathy with intellectual disapproval. Like the listeners, each reader can only make a private judgement.

A first-person narrator usually indicates why he narrates - Marlow's suggestions are complexly linked to his relationship with Jim. He has been drawn to the Inquiry to attempt to understand a violation of the seaman's code. Going to understand a naked, ugly fact, he finds instead Jim, whose appearance proclaims he is "one of us". (36) The exact meaning of this phrase is difficult to pin down. One meaning becomes apparent in contrast to the privileged man's phrase "giving your life up to them" (them meaning all of mankind with skins brown, yellow, or black in colour"). (239) That is, it could function merely in terms of racial identity. But Marlow means more than this by it. He is also thinking of Jim as a fellow seaman. Marlow, sea captain by profession, has been instrumental in inducting young men like Jim into the seaman's way of life, a life of relentless hard work, endurance, courage and, above all else, fidelity to the code which unites all those bound "to the service of the Red Rag, to the craft of the sea". (37) Although Marlow in his sensitivity and analytical acuity is clearly not of the "stupid kind" like Jim he, nevertheless, identifies with Jim, who reminds him of the dreams and illusions he knew as a young man about to commit

himself to life at sea. Jim, then, is also a link with his own youth:

He was a youngster of the sort you like to see about you; of the sort you like to imagine yourself to have been; of the sort whose appearance claims the fellowship of those 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! (Lord Jim, p. 94)

Because of their seaman's bond, Marlow feels protective towards Jim.

But he is not only an embodiment of Marlow's youth; he may also represent the son Marlow never had:

What wonder that when some heavy prod gets home the bond is found to be 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. (95)

Another way of understanding "one of us" is by contrast with Jim's fellow-officers aboard the Patna, particularly the grotesque German Captain for whom the sea represents only a soft way to fill his belly. He has no conception of dedication and service. Marlow and Jim both share this recognition but Marlow extrapolates it into something even more important: it is both the source of his conduct in life and his assurance that life itself has meaning.

But Jim's failure challenges his code. Marlow begins to suspect that the arbitrary imposition of a moral code is an inadequate response to a complicated reality. Had Marlow been satisfied with his code, he would immediately have dismissed Jim. Jim indirectly challenges Marlow's code and although ultimately Marlow clings to his code as his only means of dealing with reality, his absolute faith in the code is undermined. Jim becomes not a single individual but one of us, a representative man, a man whose divided self contains the clash of conscious intention with powerful instinctual, unconscious forces. Jim's jump from the Patna exposes the pitiful weakness of reason to combat "the strength, the power, the horror of human emotions". (45) Jim cannot bear his vivid imaginative projection of the scene of terror when the pilgrims learn of the collision: "His confounded imagination had evoked for him all the horrors of panic, the trampling rush, the pitiful screams, boats

swamped - all the appalling incidents of a disaster at sea he had ever heard of". (Lord Jim, p. 67) It is arguable that Jim jumps to escape knowledge of their suffering. But the question is raised, too, whether Jim did not also jump from a subconscious fear of death, a fear he cannot acknowledge because he is unaware of it. Jim's failure becomes Marlow's own and, in that sense, Marlow must bear Jim's guilt and somehow absolve him. He thus seeks some redeeming cause for Jim's behaviour to allay in himself the "obstinate ghost", the "uneasy doubt" "gnawing like a worm, and more chilling than the certitude of death - the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct". (41) Marlow's interest in Jim's case then - the motive force behind his involvement, his desperate attempts to communicate what he can of the truth - is to understand Jim for his own salvation. Unless Marlow can establish the validity of an ideal of conduct, the human situation becomes relentlessly dark. Marlow communicates not simply to defend, exonerate, or understand a simple seaman but to say something about mankind in general. Why Marlow narrates is closely linked to what he narrates.

Marlow's code does not allow for fine distinctions but is based on the hypothesis that man is rational, in control of himself, and is, therefore, responsible for his actions. Marlow cannot absolve him. He tells Jewel that Jim is not good enough but then, he continues, neither is anyone good enough. Man's divided self, the existence of the conscious and unconscious mind, the co-existence of the rational and irrational in man suggest to Marlow the futility of his code. Jim's romantic self-image is, in fact, outside the code, although for the first part of the book, it seems to be organized in terms of the code. He fails to live up to the code but he finally fulfills his romantic image. Marlow, however, never does relinquish his code but, in judging Jim, he seeks another standard for comparison, namely, other men.

Marlow is first drawn to Jim because of his appearance. Even in

the omniscient section - indeed, in the very first paragraph - Jim appears "spotlessly neat, apparelled in immaculate white from shoes to hat". (Lord Jim, p. 9) White, traditional symbol of purity, is Jim's colour. Jim's appearance arouses Marlow's interest in him making him ponder how a boy promising as "the sun ever shone on", "clean-limbed, clean-faced, firm on his feet" (34) can be guilty of the most heinous crime a seaman can commit - infidelity and betrayal of those whose lives are entrusted in his care. Marlow affirms: "I would have trusted the deck to that youngster on the strength of a single glance, and gone to sleep with both eyes - and, by Jove! it wouldn't have been safe". (38) Through Jim, Marlow is made to doubt himself and he begins to doubt his faith in a "fixed standard of conduct". (41) When Marlow is confronted by Jim's apparent character and his incontrovertible guilt, he is willing to question his own beliefs: as David Daiches says he "reveals by his hesitations and questionings his own uncertainty about the meaning of it all".<sup>31</sup> On his uncertainty, the book hinges. Without Marlow's uncertainty about Jim, his hesitation to dismiss him, there would be no story, for Lord Jim is about the process of judging a man.

The novel is propelled by Marlow's attempt to understand Jim through contrast and comparison with other characters and thereby define how he is different from the others. When compared to others, Jim is sometimes better, sometimes worse. In contrast to the Captain who rattles out of town and the chief engineer who goes into the hospital, Jim stays for the Inquiry, endures public exposure and the cancellation of his seaman's certificate. His decision to undergo the punishment of a public trial earns some qualified respect from Marlow who decided that his "facing it - practically of his own free will - was a redeeming feature in his abominable case". (Lord Jim, p. 54) Marlow defends Jim's

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31. David Daiches, The Novel and the Modern World (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 31.

decision to Big Brierly, a nautical assessor at the hearing: "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". (Lord Jim, p. 52) For Brierly, it is a kind of cowardice, of softness. (52) He is irritated that Jim, a white man, is reduced to a public spectacle, a shame upon his race. Jim's trial destroys Brierly's complacent self-confidence and shortly after the trial he commits suicide after, presumably, looking hard at himself and finding a hitherto unsuspected potential for failure. Brierly's death suggests that Jim's is not a private case but has implications for others, even a man such as Brierly with his impeccable record for duty and service. Yet an equally plausible reason for Jim's attending the Inquiry is his pride, which is perhaps good as providing an ideal of self which he will work to achieve.

At the same time, two other details from the narrative of the trial show Jim's motives in another light: at the trial, Jim is compared, to what at first appears to be his detriment, with the Malays. His conscious ambition of achieving heroism contrasts with the unconscious, casual manner in which the Malay helmsmen carry out their duties. One of them, when asked for his reaction, admits he thought nothing of the matter, while the other explains that although he knew some evil had befallen the ship, he could only continue steering as he had been given no order to do otherwise. The suggestion that the white men were afraid of dying, he discounts absolutely with an assurance of privileged insight. His faith in the moral superiority of white men - his belief in the legends of great men, great deeds - silences those attending the Inquiry. Yet Marlow's calling attention to these two dutiful men introduces another aspect of heroism - that of consciously and deliberately grappling with one's fear; the Malays have acted correctly, but encountered no inner resistance and knew no fear; they simply and unconsciously did what was expected.

A similar questioning of heroism is contained in the Bob Stanton episode; as Gurko suggests, it "exposes the ridiculous side of heroism and by so doing reveals the juvenile element in Jim's dream; in the desire to be a hero, there is always the danger of being a fool".<sup>32</sup> Whereas Jim left approximately eight hundred pilgrims aboard the Patna, Bob Stanton refuses to leave even a single passenger, and that a lady's maid, aboard the Sephora. The concept of heroism is reduced to absurdity as Bob, "the shortest chief mate in the merchant service", (Lord Jim, p. 109) wrestles with a gangling woman "strong as a horse", (109) who is too hysterical to submit to rescue. Giving one's life for another is not necessarily admirable: Bob strikes a pathetic figure in a cameo of dark comedy.

The next part of the book resembles a private trial with Marlow bringing forth witnesses who offer opinions about Jim or serve, because of their character, as touchstones for moral judgement. One of Marlow's most interesting witnesses is the French Lieutenant, an officer on the gunboat that towed the Patna to port. Although he spent thirty hours on the Patna uncertain whether it would sink or not, he, at first, has to be prodded to remember her name: "It is droll how one forgets". (102) But the most oppressive aspect of the incident - the only one which disturbs his placidity - is the memory of the absence of wine: "I - you know - when it comes to eating without my glass of wine - I am nowhere". (105) But one cannot discount the Lieutenant on this basis for he bears two obvious badges of courage - "a starred scar on the back of his hand - effect of a gunshot wound...the graze of a spear or the cut of a sabre". (102) These are his credentials to speak of courage. Courage and what constitutes it is very much an issue in Jim's case: one assumes it is the hero's essential quality. Jim would agree with this general view. However, the French Lieutenant does not share Jim's

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32. Leo Gurko, Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile, p. 130.

romantic idealism and accepts that "Man is born a coward" (Lord Jim, p. 107) and acts bravely because of necessity, habit and the example of others. (107) Marlow is impressed by the Lieutenant's discrimination that Jim "ran away along with the others". Richard Stevenson feels that the point the Lieutenant makes in this statement is that Jim runs away: "The most important feature of Jim's response to his leap into the destructive element, then, even for the indulgent Marlow, is that of flight".<sup>33</sup> Yet Marlow's reaction to the comment is to smile, "the only genuine smile...he can remember in connection with Jim's affair". (106) For Marlow to be pleased, the emphasis can not fall upon Jim's running away - that has been a source of irritation and embarrassment to him - but upon his being different from the others. He was in their company but not one of them. From this and the Lieutenant's philosophical comments, Marlow deduces that he judges Jim leniently and, because of his respect for the man, feels upheld in his partiality towards Jim. But the Frenchman quickly corrects that impression: "The honour...that is real - that is! And what life may be worth when...the honour is gone... I can offer no opinion - because - monsieur - I know nothing of it". (108) The Frenchman refuses to comment further and exits abruptly.

To determine how this interview furthers our understanding of Jim, one must consider that the Frenchman, a "generic representative of his country"<sup>34</sup> uses a rigid formula for judging Jim. His format is "bounded by the fact of universal cowardice at one end and the imperative necessity of maintaining honour at the other...He has looked at Jim through the sharply stencilled frame in which he chooses to accept experience".<sup>35</sup>

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33. Richard Stevenson, "Stein's Prescription for 'How to Be' and the Problem of Assessing Lord Jim's Career," Conradiana, 7 (1975-76), p. 241.

34. Leo Gurko, Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile, p. 42.

35. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 42.

Gurko suggests that Conrad was "repelled by the incapacity of the French to get beyond themselves, to acknowledge the existence of the universe which was frameless"<sup>36</sup> and would, therefore, find the Lieutenant's attitudes limiting because in "imposing shape and clarity on experience...[he disdains] any attempt to break the mould by difficult penetrations into the unexplored, unknown region outside it".<sup>37</sup> Thus, although Marlow appears ineffectual in defending Jim against the Lieutenant's standards, he is doing something which Conrad finds more admirable - exploring the possibility that there is more to experience than any neat formulae imply. One other point, too, suggests that the Lieutenant's criticism of Jim is not as devastating as first appears because when they are compared, the Lieutenant is demonstrably lacking in imagination. He is, therefore, not an adequate judge for the imaginative Jim. And Marlow reiterates that those who do not feel do not really matter.

Marlow's most impressive witness, and the one who has provoked most critical controversy, is Stein. Marlow introduces him as "one of the most trustworthy men" (Lord Jim, p. 144) he has ever known, a recommendation which makes one attend thoughtfully to Stein's pronouncements on how best to conduct one's life. In his own romanticism, he identifies with Jim and summarizes and clarifies his character and associated problem, for although Stein speaks of mankind, his words apply to Jim, whose imperfection consists of a restless inability to keep still on "his heap of mud", (152) and accept his limitations. Instead, he dreams of being "a very fine fellow" (152) only to discover that his innate weaknesses act against him. Jim is not good, strong, or clever enough. Stein's parable on how to be has been submitted to painstaking analysis by critics such as Albert Guerard, Dorothy van Ghent and Richard Stevenson. Though differences arise about Stein's reliability and the metaphorical

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36. Leo Gurko, Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile, p. 43.

37. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 43.

ambiguity of his words, a consensus exists that Stein is suggesting man ought to attempt to realize, through a paradoxical blend of submission and exertion, his ego-ideal, that is work to transform his illusions of himself into reality. Stein is not only a romantic but a practical man as well and his suggestion that Jim be sent to Patusan decides the conditions for the remainder of the novel.

Marlow's major narrative task is, as demonstrated, to bring together and comment upon the testimony of numerous observers of Jim who "convey not only information about Jim but also a moral attitude". Conrad's art is demonstrated through Marlow "in the way he carefully qualifies each narrator's analysis of Jim and shows clearly that the truth about Jim must be the sum of many perceptions". As Thomas Moser says: "Stein's way remains a way of looking at Jim but not the way". The way of looking at Jim is "the sum of all the attitudes with each attitude qualifying the others and each qualified by the personality of the speaker, and all the attitudes transmitted and transmuted by the screening consciousness of Marlow".<sup>38</sup>

At the beginning of my discussion of Heart of Darkness (see p.64) the problem of determining Marlow's role - whether he is protagonist or observer - was discussed. Lord Jim raises a similar problem: is Jim or Marlow the protagonist? Again, the issue is complicated. Many factors point to Jim: his name serves as the book's title and, although in such disparate works as Humphrey Clinker and Antigone the eponymous characters are not protagonists, these are exceptions. Marlow is referred to once, and that briefly, in the omniscient chapters. The boundaries of the story are set by Jim's career: the book begins with a description of Jim and ends with his death. His failure is the central issue: the book's movement is from his guilt to his atonement and every "character

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38. Thomas Moser, Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 39.

and every incident is subordinated to and intended to develop this theme".<sup>39</sup> The bulk of the Patna section presents illustrative episodes and interviews covering an exhaustive range of possible "emotional and moral responses to a relatively simple man".<sup>40</sup> Visually and thematically, the focus is upon Jim.

No one would deny Conrad's interest in Jim's story; in his original sketch for the novel, "Tuan Jim", Marlow is "nowhere in evidence". Conrad, in 1899,<sup>41</sup> was thinking of Lord Jim as a story to include in a volume with Youth and Heart of Darkness and may have decided "that Marlow could serve as a connecting link"<sup>42</sup> for the three stories. The story, however, becomes much more involved and Marlow's role becomes increasingly larger, far more, it seems, than Conrad had originally intended. From a consideration of the evolution of Lord Jim from sketch to novel, it is perhaps reasonable to assume that Conrad intended Jim to be the protagonist and thought of Marlow as an effective device for presenting him, for arguing "Jim's brief as both prosecutor and defense attorney".<sup>43</sup>

Eloise Hay suggests there

is good reason to suppose that Marlow rescued Conrad at a critical moment in the writing of Lord Jim, at the point where Conrad decided to shape Jim's character more rigorously by introducing the heroic obsession. At this point he would have wanted, perhaps needed, another character in whom he could pour the full measure of his ambivalence toward men who consider themselves larger than life size.<sup>44</sup>

Jocelyn Baines, in his Conrad biography, also perceives Marlow's role as primarily that of narrator. His role in Lord Jim

39. Jocelyn Baines, Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1960), p. 241.

40. Albert J. Guerard, Conrad the Novelist, p. 145.

41. Eloise Knapp Hay, "Lord Jim: From Sketch to Novel," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of "Lord Jim", ed. Robert E. Keuhn, (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 32.

42. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 32.

43. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 33.

44. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 32.

as a character in the book and as Conrad's mouthpiece [is] to probe, analyse, and comment on the state of mind of another. There was thus no need for the author to commit what was to Conrad the cardinal sin of breaking the illusion with the obtrusion of his own comments. Marlow then was the chief device for developing the theme.<sup>45</sup>

And as a device, as witness-narrator, Marlow is most effective. But Marlow plays a larger role in the novel. Thale, in his article, "The Narrator as Hero", reminds us of the familiar novel pattern in which the hero goes into the world, has things happen to him and, because of these, develops or grows up.<sup>46</sup> Lord Jim does not conform to this pattern because he does not develop; his attitude to honour, his faithfulness to his egoistic self-concept is remarkably consistent. His death simply fulfills his boyhood dreams of heroism. His dreams have not changed but, in contrast to his lapse on the Patna, he finally is able to behave in a way he feels corresponds to them. His success consists in controlling his body's overt response, matching action to dream, but he has undergone no process of enlightenment. Self-knowledge is not his goal: he shuns any revelations of self that do not conform to his ego-ideal.

The relationship between Jim and Marlow is best exemplified in another novel pattern in which

development comes not to the...man of action, but to someone else, an onlooker, who does not have adventures but observes those of the main figure closely and learns from them. He does not bring about spectacular events, but he is involved in them and he does more than record, he receives the spiritual impact of the prince's [the man of action's] adventures...There is a division, or doubling of the conventional hero into the man of action and the man of experience.<sup>47</sup>

Marlow, unlike Jim, does develop: in Marlow's case, this is through his vicarious identification with Jim's experiences. His development may best be perceived in relation to his seaman's code. When Marlow

45. Jocelyn Baines, Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography, p. 243.

46. Jerome Thale, "The Narrator as Hero," p. 69.

47. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 69.

first meets Jim, his first reaction is to condemn him for betraying this code. From his involvement with Jim, however, he learns that Jim, too, reveres the code and cannot understand how he failed to adhere to it. Jim's deviation prompts Marlow's criticism. But because he identifies with Jim and fears a similar potential for failure within himself, Marlow re-examines the code and attains a new perspective on it, himself, and his fellow men.

Gurko outlines how Jim upsets Marlow's complacency:

Jim's conduct, despite his acknowledged indifference, undermines the position of the group not simply by its individual example but by the doubts it aroused about each of themselves in the minds of the others. This is the irritant that forces its way into Marlow, causes him to question himself, moves him to seek exculpation or justification for Jim and leads him to tell the long tale to his listeners with the commitment not just of a chronicler but of a special pleader. More than anything else, Marlow is the conscience of the community, with whom all its members are involved as communicants<sup>48</sup>

Jim's unsettling effect upon Marlow makes him realize that his professionalism is a "protection and an evasion, a shelter from the storm" for his code "obviates the necessity for constant personal encounters with... anarchic forces".<sup>49</sup> The solidarity of followers of the code is "prudent and complacent" offering "an unprotecting conformity with the attitudes of their group".<sup>50</sup> Marlow continues to respect his code as a guide, but, recognizing its limitations, no longer applies it as an absolute authority for judging men. He continues to believe the code is necessary for life at sea but it may be outside Jim's character to follow it; for most people, it is extremely difficult to live up to the code.

Marlow's story of Jim ends equivocally: Jim has been true to his own ideal but disloyal to those who love and trust him. But Jim's story

48. Leo Gurko, Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile, p. 133.

49. Eric Hatch, "Tuan Jim as Artiste Manque," Conradiana 9 (1977), p. 265.

50. Ian Watt, "The Ending of Lord Jim," Conradiana 11 (1979), p. 14.

is subsumed in the larger context of what Marlow learns from it. All that happens to Jim is part of Marlow's experience and in that sense, Marlow is the protagonist; the "novel rests in what Jim's story means to Marlow rather than what happens to Jim...Marlow is the character in the novel who learns most and the one for whom the action has the most significance".<sup>51</sup> In his presentation of Marlow, Conrad may have gone beyond his conscious intention. Jim's story - in no way diminished - catalyzes Marlow's further maturation. Ultimately their relationship is interdependent. Lord Jim offers an acute example of the difficulty of categorizing characters by technical terms such as protagonist.

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51. Raymond Gates Malone, "'How to Be': Marlow's Quest in Lord Jim," Twentieth Century Literature, 10 (January, 1965), p. 172.

(iv) Chance

In Chance, as in Heart of Darkness, Conrad employs a primary narrator. He describes the setting and introduces Powell and Marlow.\* The common bond of the sea between them prepares for their developing friendship and makes plausible their continued interaction: the detailed preparation in the frame narrative provides a motive for Powell's later confidences to Marlow. The first chapter focuses primarily on Powell, perhaps giving too much space to his examination and the details of his first berth as justification for his appearance on Anthony's ship.

The primary narrator takes an active role: he does not passively accept Marlow's views but asks pertinent questions, halts his occasional rhetorical flourish, and, in particular, criticizes his comments on women. He admires Marlow generally and praises his expertise in the "psychological wilderness", but his admiration is qualified, especially in relation to Marlow's attitude towards women. For example, he interrupts Marlow in one tirade against women to ask: "Do you expect me to agree with all this?" (Chance, p. 63) Conrad makes effective use of his primary narrator even to the extent of using his comments to evoke, at one point, a mood in the frame which foreshadows the approaching horror, in the inner story, of de Barral's attempt on Anthony's life:

The night was getting on to what I may call its deepest hour, the hour most favourable to evil purposes of men's hate, despair or greed - to whatever can whisper into their ears the unlawful counsels of protest against things that are; the hour of ill-omened silence and chill and stagnation, the hour when the criminal plies his trade and the victim of sleeplessness reaches the lowest depth of dreadful discouragement; the hour before the first sign of dawn. I know it, because while Marlow was crossing the room, I looked at the clock on the mantelpiece. (415)

The primary narrator is confined to the frame and does not play any part in the main narrative but his intermittent appearances and interaction with Marlow keep us aware of Marlow's method of narration and his

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\* Incidentally, Marlow's natural introduction is superior to his somewhat abrupt appearance in Lord Jim.

idiosyncratic attitudes to his story. He underlines the ironic disparity of a confirmed bachelor's telling a love story, and also makes us aware that a story is being told.

The narrative structure of Chance falls into a "Chinese box" pattern. The frame narrator receives the story from Marlow who, in turn, is dependent for information primarily upon the Fynes, Powell, and to a lesser degree, Flora. The narration is distanced and concentric. Marlow relates an incident "which is heard from someone else who heard it from someone else who heard it from someone else".<sup>52</sup> The structure is too often admired as a marvellous but redundant apparatus. Frederick Karl comments: "In Chance...there is a great show of method whose function is relatively simple".<sup>53</sup> Gurko similarly complains that the novel is hollow, that structure exceeds substance.<sup>54</sup> Thomas Moser criticizes the structure of Chance for being, at times, complex to little purpose:

Its apparatus of several narrators makes it superficially complex, but in fact, the machinery does little more than irritate the reader. It does not challenge him to ponder more deeply the meaning of the subject.

The central question in relation to Chance seems to be this: does its structure evolve from inherent complexity as in Lord Jim and Nostromo, or does it merely conceal a fundamental naivety?<sup>55</sup>

Using the example of the Governess's words to Flora, Moser points out that although four intervening consciousnesses (those of Flora, Mrs. Fyne, Marlow and the frame narrator) convey this to us, yet the reader experiences only Flora's description of the scene and Marlow's comment upon it. "In short, the method has been so little exploited as to add

52. Leo Gurko, Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile, p. 222.

53. Frederick P. Karl, A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad (New York: Noonday, 1960), p. 78.

54. Leo Gurko, Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile, p. 225.

55. Thomas Moser, Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline, pp. 172 and 163.

no meaning to the story." Moser's criticism assumes that Conrad's structure is designed to convey multiple views of reality, that multiple narration often allows the reader to see "the action filtered through several intervening planes of consciousness".<sup>56</sup> I would argue, however, that this occurs incidentally and that Conrad chose his structure for a different reason.

Indeed, much of the criticism of Conrad's Chance is misdirected because it is based upon false expectations. Jerome Zuckerman, in his article, "Contrapuntal Structure in Conrad's Chance", also expresses misgivings about the inadequacy of much of its criticism: "critics have not yet come to terms with it, or - more accurately - have not yet perceived the area where its artistic strength lies".<sup>57</sup> One example of false expectation as a basis for the denigration of the structure of Chance is contained in Hough's comment:

this intricate introduction with multiple narrations (very skillfully managed, by the way) seems to promise a more complex and many-sided mode of apprehension than the book actually affords. It is not, for instance, the prelude to a complex way of presenting character and situation through several different visions, as it might be in Henry James. The plot, when it unfolds, though strikingly original (I know nothing else remotely like it) is in fact seen in a fairly simple light, in spite of the elaboration of the machinery.<sup>58</sup>

The point is to ascertain how Conrad uses the structure and not how Henry James might have used a similar structure.

The area in which criticism is least successful is in interpreting the outer narrative which shows how Marlow learns about and reveals the inner story of Flora and Anthony's relationship. Marlow, in Chance, is not personally involved in the story: it affects his development not at

56. Thomas Moser, Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline, pp. 168 and 164.

57. Jerome Zuckerman, "Contrapuntal Studies in Conrad's Chance," Modern Fiction Studies, 10 (Spring, 1964), p. 49.

58. Graham Hough, "Chance and Joseph Conrad," The Listener, 58 (26 December, 1957), p. 1063.

all nor does it pose philosophical or moral problems to perplex or disturb him. In Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim, he was personally involved; to separate his roles of witness and protagonist and categorize his narrative role was problematical. No similar difficulty arises in Chance for Marlow is quite clearly a witness-narrator, "a device and nothing more".<sup>59</sup> That aspect of his role requires little explication: other than to acknowledge his slight involvement with Flora, whom he may have saved by his timely appearance as she courted death on the edge of a cliff and his casual acquaintance with the Fynes. His involvement with the major characters is peripheral. What criticism generally fails to perceive is that the structure is integral to the thematic concern with the process of knowing in which the reader is invited to participate.

Rigid, traditional expectations about what a narrator ought to know may also impede our appreciation of Marlow's role in Chance. We generally assume the narrator knows who he is writing about, has all pertinent information and can describe with authority, conviction and insight crucial, dramatic scenes. Marlow denies our expectations. Where a first-person narrator usually offers immediacy and intimacy, Marlow offers us distance and conjecture. He has never met the protagonist, Roderick Anthony, and has seen Flora de Barral only twice before their final, brief encounter, and glimpsed her father only once. Marlow does not try to conceal his ignorance but deliberately draws attention to it.

Frances Cutler writes perceptively of Conrad's deliberate narrative transgressions in Chance:

We have seen him ignoring the rules of narration: that a story should have but one teller, to whom nothing in his tale is unknown; that the psychological story in particular demands the omniscient author-narrator. But Marlow's method not only defies the text-books: it insistently questions some basal assumptions of the critics of fiction. They have declared that the novelist, by eliminating the accidental and irrelevant and

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59. Walter Allen, The English Novel, p. 306.

revealing the causal, simplifies life. Yet here is a writer who deliberately complicates life, who, instead of putting his characters under the microscope, surrounds them with their reflections in the mirroring minds of tellers and listeners.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, when Flora and Anthony have the crucial meeting which is to determine the fate of their relationship for a considerable period, we are left outside the Eastern Hotel on the pavement with Marlow while he speculates about what they may be saying to each other.

In order to appreciate Marlow's role in Chance, we might first consider his own and other characters' comments about what he is trying to do. Powell describes Marlow as "the sort that's always chasing some notion or other round and round his head just for the fun of the thing". (Chance, p. 33) The tentative nature of his story is deliberately emphasized as he draws attention to what he is doing: "You understand I am piecing here bits of disconnected statements". (222) While speculating on the possible cause of the Anthonys' estrangement, Marlow again indicates his method of theorizing and making inferences on the basis of information given him:

The means don't concern you except in so far as they belong to the story. I'll admit that for some time the old-maiden-lady-like occupation of putting two and two together failed to procure a coherent theory. I am speaking now as an investigator - a man of deductions. (326)

The comments of the primary narrator provide insight into Marlow's deductive role in Chance:

You are the expert in the psychological wilderness. This is like one of those Redskin stories where the noble savages carry off a girl and the honest backwoodsman with his incomparable knowledge follows the track and reads the signs of her fate in a footprint here, a broken twig there, a trinket dropped by the way. I have always liked such stories. Go on. (311)

When the primary narrator, speaking of de Barral, observes: "You seem to have studied the man", (84) Marlow's response is to describe his own method:

"Studied," repeated Marlow thoughtfully, "no, not studied. I

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60. Frances Cutler, "Why Marlow?" Sewanee Review, 26 (January, 1918), p. 37.

had no opportunities. You know that I saw him only on that one occasion I told you of. But it may be that a glimpse, and no more, is the proper way of seeing an individuality...If one has a taste for that sort of thing, the merest starting-point becomes a coign of vantage, and then by a series of logically deduced verisimilitudes, one arrives at the truth." (Chance, pp. 84-85)

From Marlow's comments and those made about him, a picture emerges of an investigator engaged in the task of assembling a psychological profile of some people he has either met or heard of and whose personalities and relationships intrigue him. Marlow may appear excessively curious, prone to gossip, and voyeuristic in Chance. But when the primary narrator assumes that he and Marlow have been indulging in gossip, Marlow strongly denies the accusation. Marlow has just mentioned how fortunate it is that most people are "incapable of understanding what is happening to them" (117) when "I" interjects:

"But we, my dear Marlow, have the inestimable advantage of understanding what is happening to others...Or at least some of us seem to...And what is it for? Is it that we may amuse ourselves gossiping about each other's affairs? You, for instance seem -" (117)

Marlow interrupts what would appear in context to be a criticism of his penchant for analyzing other people and their lives. He argues that even if gossip provides only a respectable means of amusement, it is justified. He is convinced that understanding others helps deepen one's humanity and tolerance:

"But from that same provision of understanding there springs in us compassion, charity, indignation, the sense of solidarity; and in minds of any largeness an inclination to that indulgence which is next to affection." (117-118)

Hudspeth summarizes the justification for Marlow's interest in people:

As the novel develops, it becomes apparent that Conrad's "vision of things" deals with the necessity of understanding human life and with the persistent obstacles which inhibit such knowledge. To deal with this problem in the novel, Conrad closely examines the life of Flora de Barral. This examination is difficult, for the meaning of the lives of human beings is carefully hidden both from themselves and from those who observe them. Only with great patience, sensitivity, and good fortune can anyone come to

understand the life of another human being.<sup>61</sup>

Marlow is not made insecure by his distance from primary sources but is pleased that through a chain of human interaction he is able to acquire information. What is marvellous and pleasing to him is that he is able to learn so much. So he explains to the primary narrator that he had news of Flora from Powell (Chance, p. 257)<sup>\*</sup> and is careful to document his research into people. He "footnotes" his investigation:

"You may be surprised at my knowledge of these details. Well, I had them ultimately from Mrs. Fyne. Mrs. Fyne, while yet Miss Anthony, in her days of bondage, knew Mrs. De Barral in her days of exile." (71)

Thus, what has been criticized as a weakness in Chance - Marlow's lack of personal observation and his reliance upon secondary narrators - when perceived from the appropriate viewpoint, may be seen as a strength, a large part of what the novel is about. Marlow is proud of his abilities as an investigator and although "I" appears, at times, sceptical of the truth of what Marlow says, he is fascinated by his friend's knack of gathering information from witnesses and making deductions from it. On one occasion, the primary narrator teases Marlow suggesting he may have failed to get sufficient information to uncover the "psychological cabin mystery": (325)

"You are going to confess now that you have failed to find out", I said in pretended indignation.

"It would serve you right if I told you that I have. But I won't. I haven't failed. I own though that for a time I was puzzled. However, I have now seen our Powell many times under the most favourable conditions - and besides I came upon a most unexpected source of information...But never mind that." (325)

How Marlow comes to know is a significant feature of Chance. Information is acquired and interpreted through logical deductions, inferences and thoughtful speculation. The gaps in information - absences from

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61. Robert N. Hudspeth, "Conrad's Use of Time in Chance," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 21 (December, 1966), p. 283.

\* "Well, I do know...if only because I have been keeping in touch with Mr. Powell." (257)

crucial scenes and the instance of the letter whose precise contents are known only to Flora and Mrs. Fyne - are highlighted. Again, Frances Cutler is sensitive to Marlow's function and technique in Chance:

Marlow would quicken us to the mystery of forgotten lives, would share with us his and our own questionings. And how could such tales be told save as Marlow tells them - chance incidents, scraps of speech, interwoven, interpreted?<sup>62</sup>

Marlow's storytelling is characterized by "his absorbing passion for the adventure of the spirit, his constant sense of the mystery of that adventure, his seizing of the significance of personal contacts". Seeing only in "glimpses and through others' eyes" we arrive at a version of the truth. Perhaps more important, we, too, are involved in this process of finding out, of solving the psychological mysteries:

we actually enter into the creative process: we grope with him through blinding mists, we catch at fleeting glimpses and thrill with sudden illuminations...we...not only share in the creation, but verily 'confirm and complete' these stories, whose aim is the search itself and not its ending.<sup>63</sup>

Robert Hampson in his article, "Chance: The Affair of the Purloined Brother", suggests that the form and narrative method in Chance may be related to the detective story with Marlow interested not in tracking down criminals but in solving two specific mysteries - Flora and Anthony's elopement in Part I and the tangled relations on board the Ferndale in Part II, mysteries not about events, but about psychological processes. Marlow, like a detective, interviews witnesses and attempts to arrive at a coherent theory. Differences in accounts resulting from differences in character and attitude must be resolved before the psychological puzzle can be pieced together.<sup>64</sup> This approach to Chance shows Conrad developing a novel approach to psychological fiction and

62. Frances Cutler, p. 34.

63. \_\_\_\_\_, pp. 34-38.

64. Robert Hampson, "Chance: The Affair of the Purloined Brother," The Conradian, (Spring, 1981), pp. 9-10.

adapting the structure of another genre for his own artistic purposes.

Both Cutler and Hampson appear to ground their arguments in a belief in Conrad as a conscious craftsman in Chance. This attitude counters Moser's proposal that Chance is the first Conrad novel to mark a decline from his previous standards - a decline which he attributes to Conrad's inability to cope with man-woman relationships in his work. In his depiction of Flora and Anthony's love, Conrad, in fact, explores the areas of diffidence, repression, and the failure to communicate with remarkable insight. The problem posed to criticism by Marlow's function in the text, once solved, attests not to Conrad's deterioration but to his mastery of his art and his willingness to experiment with form.

In Chance, Conrad employs Marlow as intermediary for the last time. In this novel, Marlow has dwindled into a garrulous and misogynistic shadow of his former self. Although he was by no means infallible in the earlier works, he could generally be relied upon for fairness and impartiality. In Lord Jim, in particular, he is meticulously impartial as he tries to balance his personal sympathy for Jim with the demands of his strict code of ethics. In both these earlier works, his wisdom is evident not only in his comments but in his power to spellbind his listeners. In Chance, however, the primary narrator is frequently unimpressed with Marlow's comments and quick to say so.

Although Marlow's investigative skills are demonstrated, his talent for psychological probing confirmed, and his reasons for character analysis justified, Marlow's personality does invite criticism, primarily in his attitude towards women. It is hard to reconcile the earlier Marlow with the cantankerous and opinionated narrator who, in Chance, has this to say of women:

As to honour - you know - it's a very fine medieval inheritance which women never got hold of. It wasn't theirs. Since it may

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be laid as a general principle that women always get what they want, we must suppose they didn't want it. In addition they are devoid of decency. I mean masculine decency. Cautiousness too is foreign to them - the heavy reasonable cautiousness which is our glory. And if they had it they would make of it a thing of passion, so that its own mother - I mean the mother of cautiousness - wouldn't recognize it. Prudence with them is a matter of thrill like the rest of sublunary contrivances. 'Sensation at any cost,' is their secret device. All the virtues are not enough for them; they want also all the crimes for their own. And why? Because in such completeness there is power - the kind of thrill they love most (Chance, p. 63)

In describing the villainous governess, he describes her fault as typically feminine:

Hers was not a rare temperament, except in its fierce resentment of repression; a feeling which like genius or lunacy is apt to drive people into sudden irrelevancy. Hers was feminine irrelevancy. A male genius, a male ruffian, or even a male lunatic, would not have behaved exactly as she did behave. There is a softness in masculine nature, even the most brutal, which acts as a check. (100-101)

The wisdom of the early Marlow was tacitly acknowledged by his audience but when he delivers this diatribe upon women, he evokes a stare of disapproving astonishment in a listener:

For myself it's towards women that I feel vindictive mostly, in my small way. I admit that it is small. But then the occasions in themselves are not great. Mainly I resent that pretence of winding us round their dear little fingers, as of right. Not that the result ever amounts to much generally. There are so very few momentous opportunities. It is the assumption that each of us is a combination of a kid and an imbecile which I find provoking - in a small way; in a very small way. You needn't stare as though I were breathing fire and smoke out of my nostrils. I am not a woman-devouring monster. I am not even what is technically called 'a brute'. (150-151)

In contrasting Marlow's tone and attitude with the romantic theme of Chance, Conrad establishes an ironic distance between the narrator and his story. A consideration of the changes in Marlow's character and their implications for the novel is thus vitally important.

Marlow's attitude towards women in Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim was protective and sentimental: he wanted to spare his aunt, the Intended and Jewel from abrasive contacts with reality. In Chance, he voices a different opinion; here, men need to be protected from the truths of women: "The women's rougher, simpler, more upright judgment,

embraces the whole truth, which their tact, their mistrust of masculine idealism, ever prevents them from speaking in its entirety". (Chance, p. 144) In Chance, men, not women, need illusions. Yet towards Flora, Marlow retains the sentimental attitude of the earlier novels. Gurko criticizes this attachment:

Flora does not earn Marlow's sympathy. He gives it to her simply because she is a young woman in distress, a purely sentimental gesture since it is aroused by Flora not as an individual but as a member of a genre. Any other attractive young female in distress would arouse in him the same response. It is sentiment that ties him to her, not the genuine emotion that arises from an awareness, an acknowledgement of someone as a particular person.<sup>65</sup>

The discrepancy between the attitudes contained in his statements about women and his attitude towards Flora may be attributed to his "habit of pursuing general ideas in a peculiar manner, between jest and earnest" (23), a warning from the frame narrator which we should perhaps heed before taking Marlow's generalizations too seriously. Certainly, while his generalizations are hollow, his insights into characters are keen. More important, however, is that this discrepancy relates to, and draws attention to, the position of women as a theme in the novel. Marlow's commentary accentuates the novel's exploration of the traditional literary theme of the battle of the sexes. The motifs of dominance and submission are explored in a number of marriages: those of Carleon Anthony, de Barral (although he has little time for his wife, she persuades him to enter the banking business, the most momentous decision of his life), the Fynes, and Flora and Anthony.

Carleon Anthony represents the male as dominant and oppressive. In his poetry, he idealizes women but, in "real life", so Marlow suggests, he destroys both his wives and distorts his children's development. Both run away from home, Zoe to marriage, to dominate her pedestrian husband when she is not busy indoctrinating the girlfriends, and

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65. Leo Gurko, p. 230.

Roderick, to sea; when he does marry, his diffidence and sense of inferiority threaten his hope of happiness.

Mrs. Fyne is the stock figure of a domineering, anti-male feminist. Her father's attitude may have decided her to oppress, rather than be oppressed, for, in her own marriage, she rules her husband. Like her father, she, too, is a domestic tyrant.

Mrs. Fyne expends much time and energy in befriending young women but her good will requires their submission. For example, she cares for Flora when her world shatters and uses her influence to find work for her. Her kindness, however, has a price: Flora must accept her feminist doctrines. When Flora elopes with Anthony, in violation of Mrs. Fyne's code of feminine inconsiderateness to men, their relationship sours.

In Chance, Conrad participates not only in the debate about feminism current in his time but also demonstrates that the way a story is told can be thematically significant. The novel shows how difficult is the search for truth. We do have a version of the story, Marlow's version. Whether his story is true is shown to be problematical.

CHAPTER FOUR

A. (i) Introduction to the Art Trilogy

Joyce Cary chose to write the three novels of his art trilogy, Herself Surprised, To Be A Pilgrim and The Horse's Mouth in the first person with all three narrators, Sara, Wilcher and Gulley as protagonists. Although his earliest works were overloaded with ideas, Cary came to realize that his special interest was in character. Not until he focussed upon a single larger-than-life character as he first did in the African novel, Mister Johnson, did he find his definitive fictional voice. Walter Allen refers to Cary's protean gift<sup>1</sup> - his ability to "become" a number of starkly different characters, a quality distinguishing him from a writer such as D. H. Lawrence whose works are more obviously extensions of himself and his philosophy. In the art trilogy, Cary's gift manifests itself. The characters are highly original creations and much larger than life although totally convincing within the context of each novel. One quality each character has in common is creative imagination, an ability to fashion a characteristic universe, a way of life unique to himself. The ability is the same for each but the quality of each world is different. Sara is elemental woman; Wilcher, the conservative, and Gulley, the artist both as creator and destroyer. Cary's purpose is to elaborate fully their outlooks and responses and, in so doing, highlight their multiple views of reality and show how characters responding to the same data form unique and characteristic patterns. The common theme,

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1. Walter Allen, Joyce Cary (Writers and their work: No. 41) Published for The British Council and the National Book League (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1963), p. 5.

then, linking the three novels is the way in which each exercises his creative imagination to form a vision of the world.

As I have suggested, characterization is Cary's chief artistic interest, but rather than subject his characters to analytic scrutiny, Cary allows his characters to reveal themselves. Cary's use of first-person narrative enables the reader to live in the emotions of his characters. An immediate sense of life results, while at the same time, nuances of feeling are intimately detailed. Enid Starkie, speaking generally of Cary's choice of first-person narration, states:

The nature of his understanding of character led him, I think, to greater heights when writing in the first person than as the omniscient author in the absolute third person. A narrator cannot be expected to know everything about the people who pass through his hands, for he is limited by his own personality, and he can see only facets of them - the facets which impinge on his personal notice. The extent of his understanding will therefore depend on the character of the narrator.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, Cary's protagonists - Gulley, Sara and Wilcher are not developing characters. Frederick Karl, in discussing Cary's method of characterization, says:

Cary rarely stops long enough to create people at their moment of decision; for him, they are fixed by what they are, and they are unable to change or grow. They are not developing characters who must meet a situation or a crisis; the latter, instead, is imposed upon them, and they acquiesce.<sup>3</sup>

We might relate this to another aspect of Cary's characterization that Enid Starkie has commented on: Cary's tendency to generalize characters into types:

Joyce Cary's talent for caricature led him inevitably to paint people as types, as belonging to some category, and not as unique individuals. He was inclined to think - in fact the phrase comes up again and again, in some form: 'Children are like this', or 'like all children', or again 'like the modern girl', or 'like all women'.<sup>4</sup>

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2. Enid Starkie, "Joyce Cary, A Portrait," Essays by Diverse Hands, 32 (1963), p. 135.
  3. Frederick R. Karl, "Joyce Cary: The Moralizer as Novelist," Twentieth-Century Literature, 5, pp. 186-187.
  4. Enid Starkie, "Joyce Cary, A Portrait," p. 135.

First-person narration allows us a great deal of intimacy with Cary's protagonists: we perceive the world as each character perceives it: all other characters are viewed through the single major character in each separate work. The narrator is the main subject of each novel. Cary is keenly aware that there is no single static way of perceiving reality. Gulley, Sara and Wilcher have starkly different interpretations of life. The trilogy format allows a kaleidoscopic view of reality rather than a single, focussed one. The reader is challenged to decide if one has more validity than any other, or if all are equally valid. Each book provides a partial view of reality; reality is encompassed, and maybe not fully then, only in the three works together. Characters have different facets exposed in different books or appear slightly different because of the protagonist's outlook. Thus Sara, in Herself Surprised, intends to be a virtuous, proper lady and is always surprised to find herself in unladylike, compromising positions. But to Gulley in The Horse's Mouth, she is an old bawd always testing her wiles, always seeking a man. Wilcher, in To Be A Pilgrim, is less aware of her vivacity and life force: she is a great comfort to him - the true servant who knows her place and can behave appropriately to the master of the house whether in his kitchen or in his bedroom.

One limitation of first-person narrative in a single novel is that one is subject to the narrator's bias.\* In the trilogy, however, each book may give further insights into a character so that we see him from the inside and the outside. Thus, after reading a later novel, one may adjust a previous conception of a character, always bearing in mind that this altered conception is affected by another character's bias. Thus Charles Hoffman has praised Cary's handling of first-person narration, and, in particular, Cary's creation of a composite picture through the

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\* Within each book, the reader is locked into perceiving the world by the nature of the given character. However, although we see the character as he tells us who he is, he may also reveal more than he realizes or intends.

use of different narrators for each volume of the trilogy:

The form of the trilogy enabled Cary to develop the narrating personalities fully, each according to his or her point of view, yet at the same time he could achieve complexity because the themes and the characters of each novel of the trilogy are further developed in the other two novels.<sup>5</sup>

Cary's artistic intentions contrast with those of Wells and Conrad. Wells's characters are vehicles for ideas while Cary's characters are important in themselves. Secondly, the kinds of worlds they depict are different. Wells's dark, grim worlds of The Time Traveller and The Island of Dr. Moreau attest to his lack of faith in man's humanity. They have little in common with the buoyant world of Cary's trilogy. Incidents in the trilogy may be quite as grim as many in the scientific romances but Cary's attitude - his sense of comedy - transforms their significance.

Conrad and Cary differ for other reasons. Conrad is a moralist who often subjects his characters to intense scrutiny as they undergo some form of test, as, for example, in Jim's jump from the Patna. Conrad is particularly concerned with betrayal: the betrayal of oneself or of others. Cary does not take betrayals seriously: they are collisions caused by freedoms in conflict; in expressing themselves, people bruise each other but are expected to have courage enough to get on with living. Thus, Gulley's desertion of Sara does not diminish his integrity but is, in a sense, an expression of it. An artist cannot be possessed and domesticated: he must have his freedom. Gulley, too, is an inveterate puncher - venting his frustrations on the noses of his women - but, again, this is not presented as a criticism of him. Secondly, Conrad tends to use Marlow as mediator to evaluate other characters. His task is to maintain a careful balance between sympathy and judgement. Cary does not admire the first-person witness method of narration:

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5. Charles G. Hoffmann, Joyce Cary: The Comedy of Freedom (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964), p. 36.

It has only one advantage: it enables the writer to describe the narrator. I have never yet used this device, but I am not going to forswear it. I may some day pull one of my dossiers out of a drawer, some bundle of character, incident and suggestion, which has been waiting years for the technical method which will give it expression; and discover, to my surprise, that this one is the answer.<sup>6</sup>

Cary's cursory and casual criticism of this method does not deserve serious response at this point for the advantages of Conrad's use of Marlow have already been examined in detail. Cary's unwillingness to forswear using the method certainly undermines his attack and suggests that he is not giving the issue careful attention. Nevertheless, his instinctive reaction against the method is understandable for his own purpose of celebrating character rather than exposing it is more effectively accomplished in the first-person protagonist method of narration.

First-person narration works effectively for Cary for a number of reasons. Firstly, his plots are episodic and hence lack intrinsic unity. A single narrator helps hold the work together by virtue of his participation in the different episodes. Secondly, as Cary explains in his preface to the first trilogy, his choice of first-person technique is connected to his philosophy:

What I set out to do was to show three people, living each in his own world by his own ideas, and relating his life and struggles, his triumphs and miseries in that world...

Their situation, in short, was to be that of everyone who is doomed or blessed to be a free soul in the free world and solve his own problems as he goes through it...

Each of us is obliged to construct his own idea, his own map of things by which he is going to find his way, so far as he can, through life. He must decide what he wants and how he shall achieve himself...

The ruling idea is all important. A Hindu pilgrim without any possessions in the world save a rag round his loins and his staff may well be happier than a Texas millionaire. But the millionaire will not be able to enter into the pilgrim's world any more than the pilgrim could live comfortably as a millionaire. Their reactions to life, their feelings about the world, their valuation of achievement would be completely beyond each

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6. Joyce Cary, "The Way a Novel Gets Written," in *Joyce Cary, Selected Essays*, ed. A. G. Bishop (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1976), p. 127.

other's understanding. And this is the case, to a more or less degree, with all of us. We are alone in our own worlds.

We can sympathize with each other, be fond of each other, but we can never completely understand each other. We are not only different in character and mind, we don't know how far the difference goes.

That's why each of my three chief characters had to write in the first person and reveal his own world in his own style.<sup>7</sup>

Robert Bloom has shown how Cary's handling of the first-person protagonist method is related to his lack of interest in moralizing. He relates Cary's chosen form to a tacit belief in an indeterminate world:

Cary's vision of reality [is]...essentially indeterminate, we see at once the need for this private world - in order to live, people must put their own construction on the unordered turmoil around them - and the even greater inevitability of the trilogy and its technique. In these three novels, Cary adds to his other devices an adroitly indeterminate narrative method, which becomes his most characteristic and significant contribution to the art of fiction...We have recourse, then, in the trilogy, only to the three private worlds presented in the three novels; when one narrator's account clashes with the others, the truth lies nowhere, or, what amounts to the same thing, everywhere.<sup>8</sup>

I shall now examine chronologically the novels of the art trilogy for the purpose of exploring Cary's use of the first-person protagonist method.

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7. Joyce Cary, First Trilogy (New York: Harper, 1958), pp. ix-x.

8. Robert Bloom, The Indeterminate World: A Study of the Novels of Joyce Cary (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), pp. 83-84.

A. (ii) Herself Surprised

Cary employs no frame narrator in Herself Surprised. A frame situation, however, does exist. In it, Sara Monday, the primary narrator, refers briefly to her trial and imprisonment. The main narrative - an extended flashback of her life - reveals a more sympathetic woman than the judge's opening comment suggests. In the last paragraph, which returns us to the frame situation, Sara writes that a kind gentleman from the news agency has offered her \$100.00 in advance for her story. Whether we have just read the story he wants or whether that is yet to be written is uncertain. We, therefore, do not know if the given story was written for artistic or economic reasons. Sara has no special qualifications for writing: her education is limited; she has no literary taste (her favourite author is Charlotte Yonge); she is not a writer by profession and has no literary aspirations.

Her story is didactic, taking the form of a confession in which Sara offers the example of her life as a warning to others to beware the temptations of the flesh. Sara makes no attempt to defend herself against her accusers: she is convinced they are right in their judgement against her; she only wonders at her flagrant disregard of society's moral order. Sara's errors stem from following her emotional dictates. Her failure to recognize the power of her emotions indicates her lack of self-knowledge. Cary, however, is aware of the primacy of emotion in her existence. Although she feels obliged to express Christian remorse, the conventional clichés of a morality which expects women to deny sexual desire and pleasure<sup>9</sup> do not reveal Sara's true self. Her emotional drives determine her actions but she is unable to relate what she does to the conventional values she tries to apply. She can only rationalize or criticize her own behaviour; intellectually, she is incapable of

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9. R. W. Noble, Joyce Cary (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1973), p. 51.

criticizing the conventional Victorian view. Cornelia Cook accurately characterizes Sara's real nature:

The Lockean view of sensation as apprehension, which was later sophisticated in the Utilitarian assignment of pleasure as the basis of moral action, is epitomised in Sara Monday's sensuous relationship to the life around her.<sup>10</sup>

Cary uses an ironic approach in Herself Surprised. There is a difference between the way Sara perceives herself and the way we perceive her. Telling ironies result from her story of her life. Cary's irony is gentle rather than bitter as we laugh at Sara's protestations of looking after her men because it means so much to them; her Victorian pretences fail to conceal her obvious sexual pleasure.\* She voices Yonge's platitudes about chastity, humility and resignation but never lets them interfere with her pleasure. Her seductions by Hickson and Jimson expose the ironic incongruity between her sensuality and pious protestations. Sara's unconscious hypocrisy is a constant source of humour.

The title, Herself Surprised, is significant here. In a letter to Elizabeth Lawrence, Cary commented: "The essence of Sara is the revelation of Herself to herself - she is surprised at herself but also she is 'surprised' for us, in her nakedness, which is her naïve surprise".<sup>11</sup> Sara is, at times, genuinely surprised at herself but, at other times, only pretends to be surprised. Her surprise at her sexual lapses appears spurious. For example, during an outing with the millionaire, Hickson, she explains her compliance to his desire:

So when we came to the little temple and found there all kinds of lemonade and wines and sandwiches and sweet cakes laid out upon a clean cloth; and garden chairs with silk cushions, I was

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10. Cornelia Cook, Joyce Cary: Liberal Principles (London: Vision Press Limited, 1981), p. 95.

\* Cary uses Sara to reflect upon Victorian social pretences. Although she tells of her life in the Edwardian period, she acquired her values in Victorian times.

11. Letter to Elizabeth Lawrence (24 February, 1948).

very ready to drink some sweet wine, and eat and compliment Mr. Hickson on his water party. "You spoil me," I said, but he answered No, he could never do enough for me in return for what I had done for him, and so on. He had often spoken so and I did not greatly attend to it. And at the same time, I admit, he would take and press my hands and even kiss them and once or twice, he had even kissed my cheek and squeezed me a little.

Why had I not stopped him? I can't tell except that he was my friend and Matt's and I did not want to hurt his feelings.

So now in the temple, what with the water and the stillness of everything, even the aspen leaves seemed to be asleep, I did not notice Mr. Hickson or what he was doing, but only felt the joy of the evening, until I came to myself and saw that he was going too far. Then I was so angry that I hardly knew what I said. I told him, of course, that I would never see him again, and he apologized a hundred times, and blamed my beauty (Herself Surprised, p. 31)

Similarly, while sunbathing with Gulley, she again forgets herself:

I love the heat and lying in the sun and I know it makes me lazy and careless so I don't care what happens. So that my mind was laughing at little Jimson when he held my hand and told me he could make me so rich and give me furs and jewels; yet my flesh delighted in his kindly thoughts. So it grew sleepy and I forgot myself and he had his way, yet not in luxury, but kindness, and God forgive me, it was only when I came to myself, cooling in the shadow that I asked what I had done. (92-93)

Cary shows Sara's genuine surprise early in the novel when she reacts to the strange woman who turns out to be herself. Her failure to know herself or even recognize herself is evident in her recollection of seeing her reflection in a salon mirror while she is honeymooning with Matthew in Paris:

I remember the first time I saw myself in my true body. It was on my honeymoon, in Paris, in a grand shop, the grandest I had ever seen. It had big mirrors in the showroom, between the pillars, like glass doors, and I was walking to the stairs in my new hat as big as an Easter cake, and feeling the swish of my new silk petticoats and the squeeze of my new French stays. I seemed to be looking into the next saloon, and I thought: 'Look at that fat, common trollop of a girl with a snub nose and the shiny cheeks, jumping out of her skin to be in a Paris hat. Wouldn't you bet she was out from Dartmouth fair last week? You can almost smell the cider on her lips. What a shame to expose herself like that and her nation to these foreigners.'

But in the same flash I saw that it was me. It stopped me dead with the blow. I knew I was not a beauty, but till that hour I had not seen myself with the world's eye. (10)

This incident has an obvious emblematic significance in relation to the narrative as a whole.

Thus the prison chaplain's admonition to Sara: "Know thyself" has an ironic ring: this implies that she is, or ought to be, engaged in a quest for self-knowledge, that she is a quest heroine. However, Sara does not develop nor is she involved in any painful process of self-analysis. Her experience of prison and her confessional autobiography do not alter but confirm her character. Cary's intention is to reveal her fully and celebrate her personality and approach to life. Sara, a sensuous woman, reacts physically and emotionally and is incapable of intellectual analysis on which self-knowledge is predicated. Echeruo says of Cary's method that it

records the fluctuations of Sara's consciousness as a woman who is intellectually incapable of making a deep and systematic examination of it. Her novel retains the integrity of that limited insight, and, through the evident irony of her own unconsciousness, points to the larger moral significance of her actions.<sup>12</sup>

Elsewhere, Echeruo further elaborates on Cary's method of characterizing Sara:

From the very first chapter, from the very inflections of her language, from the humour of her story, we 'sense' the kind of woman she is; and in the rest of the novel's action, we only seek for consistency and plausibility in that character whatever the variety of challenges to which it may be exposed. Instead of beginning with a character in the process of thought and following that thought in order to reveal the personality behind it, Cary finds a character after the event, and makes the character piece together for the benefit of a sceptical, hostile or sympathetic world, the forces responsible for actions originally performed in the fullness of feeling and the immediacy and the routing of everyday life. And since all explanations of past action involve rationalisation, motives that once seemed unquestionable because urged on us by the force of present exigency, lose their cogency, and can then only be defended by an insistent act of faith in them. Thus whereas, in some other novelist, the process is one of continuous discovery, in Cary's Herself Surprised the effort is at recovery.<sup>13</sup>

As Echeruo suggests, Sara's story is convincing and realistic. She belongs to the lower classes and is faced with economic and social

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12. M. J. Echeruo, Joyce Cary and the Dimensions of Order (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1979), p. 66.

13. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 64.

problems which she solves instinctively by using her feminine wiles to attract men. Her life is indeed seen from the perspective of human relationships, particularly relationships with men. Structurally, the novel falls into three distinct parts. Larsen neatly summarizes these:

The first part deals with Sara's marriage to Matt Monday and concludes with his death; the second narrates her affair with Gulley Jimson, which ends in their separation and her difficulty with the law for writing bad cheques; the third develops her relationship with Tom Wilcher, first at the country house Tolbrook and then at Craven Gardens in London.<sup>14</sup>

Sara does form warm and enduring friendships with women as well, for example, with Rozzie and Nina, but men arouse her deepest interest. However, it is not just that Sara is incapable of intellectual analysis: we are also made to feel that she is not completely honest. We feel that despite her many revelations, there is much she has not told us, particularly about her knowledge of men. In referring to Hickson's seduction, for example, she says he "blamed my beauty and his own love and so on, as they always do". (Herself Surprised, p. 31) The latter phrase indicates that Sara has more experience of men than she actually states. Similarly, towards the end of the novel, she admits also to having flirted with three boys at the same time. (219) Other indications that Sara is even less innocent than she pretends are people's reactions to her relationships with Hickson and Gulley. At the fair, for example, she is conscious that people are closely observing her behaviour with Hickson. And later, when Gulley is in town, she goes to see him every day for a time; when Matthew wants to find her, he knows precisely where to look.

The first man in her life - at least the first we learn about - is her husband, Matthew. What she says about him also reveals much about her own personality. When he proposes marriage, Sara tells us she was surprised to find herself saying yes. She had previously detailed his

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14. Golden L. Larsen, The Dark Descent: Social Change and Moral Responsibility in the Novels of Joyce Cary (London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1965), pp. 104-105.

physical shortcomings and, on occasion, reprimanded him for making advances to her. We are, however, not surprised at Sara's answer for, all along, we have suspected that she had been playing the old game of seductive coyness. Winning brings her economic security, social status, and all the pleasures of the marriage bed. Unfortunately, Matthew has been so long dominated by his mother and sister that he is sexually inadequate. But Sara panders to his ego and so flatters him and improves his self-image that, much to her satisfaction, she makes a man of him. Sara enjoys domestic life. Possessions and pretty clothes give her joy so her life with Matthew is one of gratification and contentment. She is especially pleased with her enhanced respectability and the ego-satisfaction of having married above her class; she deliberately provokes resentment and jealousy from females of Matthew's class who find her style of clothing too loud and her manners inappropriate.

Sara deliberately flirts with Hickson and allows herself to be seduced from a practical as well as a pleasure motive. Hickson can be very useful to her for as Matthew's social position is improved, so, too, is Sara's. And she is proud of her position in the community. At not quite twenty-four, she has a

house of sixteen rooms, and five servants in, three out; and my landau and my victoria and my governess cart; and my at home days; and three children; and another started, Mrs. Matthew Monday of Woodview on the county nursing committee. (Herself Surprised, p. 34)

Her improved social position brings not only prestige but also amusement:

I would dance all night, three nights running, for though Matt could not dance, his cousin would find me partners and come himself. But what was sweeter than dancing and the lovely waltzes of those days were the gardens gay with paper lanterns, and the trees as green as lettuces over the fairy lamps; and the smell of the limes and the night stocks hanging on the dark, and the lovely girls in their trailing skirts walking under the old walls, like the ghosts of queens. (35-36)

Although Sara manipulates Hickson for her own ends, she does feel sorry for him and his lonely life. She is impressed by Hickson's wealth but his unhappiness draws her to him:

As well, I liked Mr. Hickson at first sight for his sad eyes; and perhaps for knowing he was a sad man. Although he was not yet at the middle thirties and married for the last four years, his wife was a gadabout, neither to cherish nor love, nor even to give him a home to make his friends welcome and hold up his position in the world. She was only a shame to him. I was told that at all their houses, in London and the west and at Bradnall, where she was never seen, she had her own rooms and her own bed and never came to his and gave him no comfort even in duty. It seemed very wrong that so rich a man, who had worked hard for riches, should get so little for it, not even so much as any ploughman with a simple woman to his bed and his table. (Her-self Surprised, p. 24)

Sara's liaison with Hickson brings grief as well as prosperity. Although she does not boldly confess to bearing his son, her words suggest that this is the case. The narrative, at this point, is ambiguous; Sara, it appears, is not being as honest as she pretends. She confesses in one paragraph that she "was too careless and too easy with him" (33) and rationalizes the cause:

A woman grows easily coarse as she is made for the rough work of child-bearing, and so things that would have shocked me as a bride were so little to me now that I did not even notice them at all. (33)

Juxtaposed in the very next paragraph is: "But then, my boy Matthew was born and died of croup in the first month." (33) Sara's assumption of guilt suggests that although her son bore her husband's name, he was Hickson's child:

"So, I thought, God strikes when you least expect and His wrath is terrible..." It has come," I thought, "and it is just what I might have expected, for as my marriage was far beyond my due, so out of my marriage comes my punishment and my destruction."

I remembered then all my provocations, and Hickson, and that I had put off my blacks for my poor mother after four months, only to go to a garden-party. For poor little Matthew I wore them like a widow, and the coarsest linen and wool stockings that made my legs itch. I would not let Matt near me and mortified my life. I trembled for the next stroke, for Belle and Edith and for Matt himself. (33-34)

The next man in Sara's life is Gulley Jimson. He brings Sara trouble and joy. Hickson, jealous of her interest in Gulley, fades from her life and Gulley, in painting Matthew as he really is, undoes Sara's creative work on her husband. Cary's use of Gulley's painting to enable

Matthew to see himself is similar to his earlier use of the salon mirror to show Sara her "real" self. The painting confirms Matthew's latent suspicion that he really is a fool:

"No...he's seen me as I am - and he's brought it out in the portrait. That's his genius - to put a man's character in to his picture." (Herself Surprised, p. 49)

He regresses back to the time of his "creeper" days:

The poor man had gone behind all sense now and he was like a child, afraid of the dark. He would wake up at night, and say that he was smothering and catch hold of me and cry out that I must save him from hell. He said that he had done such wickedness that God could never forgive him. All this, so the doctors said, because his heart was weak and could not put enough blood into his poor brain. (73)

Of all the men in Sara's life, Gulley is her great love. His vitality and enthusiasm match her own and they have marvellous times together. Sara is a source of artistic inspiration for Gulley: he admires her flesh almost as much as she does; similarly, Gulley inspires her. She finds in him a man much in need of domestication. His rags appeal to her maternal instinct and she busies herself with sewing, cooking and looking after him. Sara's relationship with Gulley demonstrates that, much as she enjoys social status and economic security, they assume only a secondary importance. She cares deeply for Gulley and theirs is a mutually inspiring relationship. But, after a while, Sara's possessive nature and her plans to re-habilitate him and make him a commercially successful artist lead Gulley to flee from her. His art requires freedom and he has taken from Sara all she has to give. She is left to rage because she no longer has anyone for whom to cook, sew and live.

After Gulley's desertion, Sara shows herself to be remarkably resilient: her past does not haunt her and she adjusts quickly to present exigencies. She finds herself a housekeeping position and is soon making her master's house her own. At Tolbrook, she rejoices in being a good servant; indeed, in no other passage does Sara express a comparable contentment:

For where could a woman find a better life, I mean in a good

house with a good draught in the chimney, and double sinks and really hot water, as I always had at Tolbrook. Then it came back to me about what poor Jimson had said about my true home being in a kitchen and that I was a born servant in my soul and my heart gave a turn over and I felt the true joy of my life as clear and strong as if the big round clock over the chimney-mouth was ticking inside me. 'So here I am,' I thought, 'mistress of my own world in my own kitchen,' and I looked at the shining steel of the range and the china on the dresser glittering like jewels, and the dish covers, hanging in their row from the big venison one on the left to the little chop one on the right, as beautiful as a row of calendar moons, and the kitchen table scrubbed as white as beef fat and the copper on the dark wall throwing out a glow to warm the heart, and the blue delf bowls like pots of precious balm...And, indeed, I felt bits of myself running out from the grand kitchen into pantry and scullery and larder and beyond into the passage and the still-room and even to the wood cellar and the boot-hole as if I was really a king or queen whose flesh is brought up to be the father of all his countries, and not to forget the little byelands even when they are on the dark side of the sun. (Herself Surprised, pp. 149-150)

This passage illustrates how Cary associates Sara with kitchen imagery. It recurs throughout the text and stresses Sara's role as cook and housewife. Yet Sara suffers no sense of limitation: her kitchen is a kingdom and she is a monarch. The imagery thus draws attention to her imaginative enhancement of her environment - her ability to find beauty in objects which normally are appreciated only for their utility. Sara's artistry makes of her kitchen utensils and equipment - her china, dish covers, range and table - works of art. Sara responds to present time and place. Not for her the far away and unattainable. Yet the quoted passage suggests that Sara feels safe and at home in the outside world because she views it as a larger kitchen. Her attitude explains Sara's strength and her limitations. She has no real sense of history or awareness of larger issues and ideas other than those she acquires from personal contacts. Cary's original intention was to enlarge Sara's outlook:

But when I let Sara talk about art and history I found that she lost something of her quality and force; the essential Sara was diluted. This would not be so in life. In life every richness of feeling and imagination intensifies the force of the person. But books are not life, they are limited by the character of the medium, the form of their expression. And in such a dilemma, whether to stick to my scheme, or to stick to character, the character as felt and known in the book, I stuck to my rule,

which was character first. So that Sara's notions of history and art were largely cut out, and Sara was left in her essential (Preface to Herself Surprised, pp. 7-8)

The trilogy as a whole compensates for the narrowness of Sara's world. The world of the artist is contained in The Horse's Mouth, while To Be A Pilgrim offers insight into politics, history and tradition.

At Tolbrook, Sara inevitably becomes involved with the master of the house. Although Wilcher belongs to the upper-class world, Sara sees nothing in him or his way of life to intimidate or impress her. He is just another poor man who needs looking after. His life is lonely and dull: in the daytime world, he retreats into his law office and, in the evening, he retreats into his library. His emotional life is inhibited; his long attachment to Julie does not inspire him while his monotonously regular visits to her threaten his health. Sara has more to offer Wilcher: warmth, devotion and all the convenience of living in. She knows her place, a comfort by night and a cook by day, she is careful to compartmentalize her roles and respect their employer-employee relationship. She makes no demands and so earns Wilcher's trust and dependence. In response to her generosity and his need, he decides to marry Sara.

In portraying Wilcher through Sara's eyes, Cary subtly satirizes the concept of class. Although Wilcher has wealth and position, he has no happiness and is more to be pitied than envied. Petty expenses irritate him: he is worried as any pauper about money. Sara has fewer economic anxieties and, in fact, gets far more pleasure from his possessions than he does. His sexual perversions bring him into conflict with the police; in his own home, his servants gossip about his need to expose himself; his notoriety is such that employment agents warn job-seekers against him. Wilcher is a victim of his possessions: his relatives scheme about his money and try to arrange his life to suit themselves. Blanche proves the most aggressive and troublesome; just as Wilcher looks forward to a life of contentment with Sara, she has her sent to prison

for theft. Wilcher is too dominated to know how to help. Her pilfering does not trouble him: he knows he pays her too little. Generosity, not greed, motivates her thefts: she needs money for Gulley, for whom she still feels responsible, and for Tommy, his son, whose education she is financing.

Sara's portrait of Wilcher in Herself Surprised reveals only part of his character. The depth of his feeling and intellect comes as a revelation in To Be A Pilgrim. Sara's knowledge of Wilcher is superficial, restricted by her personality and limited powers of perception. Who she is affects what she sees. Her behaviour elicits a particular kind of response in men so that she has only a partial view of any of them.

The novel as a whole poses a question about Sara's character. Adherents to the negative view are the judge and prison chaplain, Miss Maul, and the matrons of Woodview. Sara's behaviour provides them with ammunition against her: she is loud, vulgar, a thief and an adulteress. Sara regrets, rather than contests, the world's opinion yet, as she tells her story, she reveals herself as a generous, vibrant and elemental woman. She is unquestionably amoral by society's standards but Sara follows different rules - those of *primaeval* nature. Our final impression of Sara acknowledges her faults but approves the woman.

Cary's portrayal of Sara demonstrates his ability to submerge his own ego in his character. Sara's language is appropriate and her outlook consistent. We glimpse the outside world, not for its intrinsic interest but because of its relevance to Sara. Her personality is the subject of the novel and all other matters are subordinated to it.

A. (iii) To Be A Pilgrim

Sara Monday in Herself Surprised portrays Thomas Wilcher, the narrator of To Be A Pilgrim, from her particular viewpoint. Before considering Wilcher's self-portrayal, a brief recapitulation of Sara's impressions of him is useful.

One advantage of the trilogy format over a single autobiographical narrative is that the narrator can more easily be described from the outside. Thus Sara provides this description of Wilcher: he "was a little man with a bald head and round black spectacles. His nose was short, just like a baby's, and he had a long blue upper lip, like a priest". (Herself Surprised, p. 142) Echeruo comments: "The three images are those of the scholar, the infant and the cleric; the intellectual, the childlike and the sentimental man he is throughout the novel".<sup>15</sup> None of Sara's information is proven false in the second novel but we do become aware that her knowledge is shallow, incomplete and coloured by her own interests, personality and the kind of response she elicits from him.

A comparison of Sara's portrayal of Wilcher with his self-portrait reveals a large discrepancy between them. In Herself Surprised, Sara emphasizes Wilcher's tendency to pursue and harass young women whereas Wilcher minimizes these habits and presents them only late in the text. Thus To Be A Pilgrim shows Wilcher to be interesting and complex while Herself Surprised portrays him as senile and perverted. Therefore, when Wilcher begins his story, we are astonished at his sensitivity and awareness.

Sara relates to Wilcher in two ways: as servant and woman. Conscious of the diplomatic requirements of her dual role, she plays the dutiful servant even in bed. Her behaviour points to Wilcher's class

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15. Michael J. C. Echeruo, Joyce Cary and the Dimensions of Order, p. 53.

consciousness and his sense of order. Her deference and discretion earn his loyalty and trust. Sara also draws attention to Wilcher's parsimony, perversions and, incongruously, his religious nature: he keeps up the tradition of family prayers and regularly reads the Church lessons. She also describes how the master of Tolbrook Manor is manipulated by grasping relatives and lives in terror of being arrested for accosting young women. From her portrayal of Wilcher, a picture emerges of a comic, slightly pathetic, old man.

When Wilcher begins his own narrative, Sara is serving her prison sentence and her references to Tolbrook already belong to the past. Wilcher is now seventy-one years old, more feeble than the man Sara remembers, and close to death. Because of his illness, he requires full-time medical surveillance and his niece, Ann, a medical doctor, has moved in to care for him. Wilcher's narrative shares some features with Sara's. Both are memoirs, confessional in nature, and cover a considerable time-span. Wilcher describes people and events from the 1880's to 1939 and refers to three different eras - Victorian, Edwardian and post World War I. While Sara writes to justify herself to the world, Wilcher writes to explain himself to himself.

Sara's narrative, once begun, moves along chronologically. Structurally, Wilcher's narrative is more complex; Cornelia Cook refers to its "fitful chronology" and illustrates with two events: Wilcher tells first of the grown-up Lucy whispering "To be a pilgrim" which expands into the memory of Bunyan's hymn roared from the "thick swollen lips" of Puggy Brown but later he recalls the chronologically earlier memory of Lucy as a child scolding him because he is late for the walk to church.<sup>16</sup> However, an underlying chronological pattern does exist in Wilcher's story of his past: initially, we learn of Wilcher's early family life;

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16. Cornelia Cook, Joyce Cary: Liberal Principles, p. 117.

later, we see his brothers' and sister's lives unfolding, and much later, we learn how each died. Chronologically speaking, the work is much simpler than the distorted worlds of Conrad's Nostromo or Ford's The Good Soldier. It consists of a series of juxtapositions of past and present. Sounds and sights in the present arouse memories of the past which Wilcher uses to conduct an inquiry into the nature of life in general and his own life in particular. Still, as V. S. Pritchett points out: "it has the intricacy of reflected points of view".<sup>17</sup> Character interacts with character, generation with generation and from the resulting ideas and conflicts, Wilcher tells of those which are meaningful to him and affected the shape of his own life. The characteristics of Wilcher's family are chosen deliberately to provide specific contrasts all of which relate to Wilcher's struggle to define and defend himself.

Setting is a unifying element in To Be A Pilgrim: Tolbrook Manor is thematically and structurally important. The voices which haunt Wilcher belong to the house: his relatives were born and often died there and maintained links with the house throughout their restless lives. Each room and its furnishings remind Wilcher of scenes from his past: a chair, a tree provides the stimulus to send him backward in time.

In To Be A Pilgrim, Wilcher is confined mainly to his bedroom; we might, therefore, expect a narrow view but, surprisingly, we gain a wide-ranging knowledge of the external world. The reason for the breadth of Wilcher's narrative is his store of memories covering three generations and his acute analysis of people with divergent interests and personalities. Wilcher may appear senile, but his story reveals him to be an intelligent and perceptive observer interested in politics, religion, tradition and the clash of generations. While Wilcher dominates his own narrative, he does not study himself in isolation but in

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17. Victor S. Pritchett, "Books in General," New Statesman and Nation (October 17, 1951), p. 464.

the context of other people over a lengthy period of social change. He explores ideas through individuals: for example, Victorian attitudes as expressed by his parents; the evangelical movement in the context of his sister's elopement with a Benjamite leader; Edwardian politics, as his brother, Edward, experiences them; and post-World War I attitudes as exemplified in his nephew, John, and his wife, Gladys.

To Be A Pilgrim bears the weight of extending the moral and historical dimension of the trilogy. Larsen appreciates the scale on which Cary planned his major work:

in the first trilogy [Cary]...wished to extend the exploration of his idea into the immensely broad and complex phenomena of the life-time development of individuals on the one hand and the culture of a nation on the other.<sup>18</sup>

Yet all information about other individuals and social trends and movements is sifted through Wilcher's mind: everything bears the imprint of his mind. Even though his thoughts arise involuntarily, their pattern creates our impressions of both past and present. His narrative reflects the quality of his mind.

The people who inhabit Wilcher's brain once had a real and separate existence but Wilcher looks to them for answers about how to be in order to arrive at a personal value judgement. Noble finds that Wilcher's "present serves mainly to provide mental connections with the events of his past".<sup>19</sup> Barbara Hardy concurs with Noble's opinion; she suggests that Wilcher's life is the life he has lived rather than the life he is presently living at Tolbrook. He looks on in the present but participates in the past.<sup>20</sup>

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18. G. L. Larsen, The Dark Descent: Social Change and Moral Responsibility in the Novels of Joyce Cary, p. 101.

19. R. W. Noble, Joyce Cary, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1973), p. 54.

20. Barbara Hardy, "Form in Joyce Cary's Novels", Essays in Criticism, 4 (April, 1954), p. 193.

On the simplest level, Wilcher's return to the past is typical of the old: the people he remembers, whose voices still talk to him, are those who were closest to him - members of his own family whom he loved. As he remembers them, he draws attention to key aspects of their personalities and relates his assessment of them to his thesis of right living. The journey motif, which the title suggests, may refer to the kind of pilgrimage which Wilcher actually engages in - an imaginative journey into the past by which, Cornelia Cook points out, he

interprets and assesses the personalities of his family and nation, and its extended chronological scope all indicate that progress is central to the novel's theme. Throughout its action the novel questions the nature of the personal and historical progress observed and the nature of progress itself.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, for example, Wilcher's portrayal of his Victorian mother enables us to contrast her style with that of women of later eras: Julie Eeles, whose room (with its Beardsley prints) and acting role (as Nora in Ibsen's The Doll's House) suggest she is a woman of the 'nineties; Gladys, "a caricature of the hard modern woman of the 'twenties"; and Ann, "the stereotyped career girl of the 'thirties steeped in psychology and intellectual independence".<sup>22</sup>

Wilcher's reminiscences about his sister and her religious associates, reveal both him and his age. In particular, Wilcher's experience of the Benjamites draws attention to a particular aspect of Edwardian life - that of

the flourishing non-conformity which spread from rural pockets to the great urban centres of the late Victorian industrial revolution, assisted by the liberalisation of laws regarding education and Dissent. Sects like the Benjamites were the breeding ground of radicals, people whose religious energies found a kindred spirit in the energetic zeal of reforming politicians. Edward Wilcher benefits from their support.<sup>23</sup>

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21. Cornelia Cook, Joyce Cary: Liberal Principles, p. 125.

22. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 124.

23. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 115.

Thus, Wilcher tells us -

The Benjamites and a dozen other strange sects did vote for Edward, in force. They seemed to like his violent speeches, his denunciations of their political sins; as much as they enjoyed the hellfire threats of their preachers. (To Be A Pilgrim, p. 69)

In the same way, Wilcher's reminiscences about his brother, Edward, reflects other aspects of Edwardian life. His name links him to the Edwardian period and, in many ways, he is a man of his time - refined, cultured, and politically acute - a man destined for success. But his couplets with their mocking distortion of eighteenth-century optimism suggest his hollowness. His cynicism, so opposed to Lucy's faith, makes him question the value of life:

"That's it, Tommy - is life worth living? Give a man everything in the world, give everyone everything they think they want, and they might still ask that question. Judging by my experience, they might be all the more ready to ask it." (75)

Cary's portrayal of Edward may be based partly upon the Edwardian politician C. F. G. Masterman. Certainly, a comparison reveals resemblances: both are Liberal politicians, writers; both experience dramatic political defeats and both lose vitality even when successful. S. L. Hynes describes Masterman's decline:

as the Edwardian decade passed his words lost urgency, and he seemed to lose confidence in the power of reform. Like his party, he simply lost momentum.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, Edward, the man with all the gifts - intellect, classic good looks, charisma - proves unstable and moves from involvement, to detachment to despair. A factor contributing to Edward's hollowness and cynicism may be the hypocrisy of the age: it was privately indulgent but publicly virtuous. The King set the tone. As Hynes remarks:

His moral views...were those of his time and company, a contradictory mixture of public propriety and private indulgence.<sup>25</sup>

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24. S. L. Hynes, The Edwardian Turn of Mind (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 59.

25. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 4.

Contrasting with Edward's cynicism is Amy's faith, a quality which gives her courage and cheerfulness in circumstances that would probably devastate anyone else. As Wilcher re-evaluates his past, his attitude towards her changes. He remembers how the family used to laugh at her, but as his narrative goes on he begins to appreciate and even admire her. Both Bill and Amy may be described as idiots in the Greek sense of being private citizens.<sup>26</sup> He has no personal ambition and no material interests. He never questions the status quo but serves God and his country. As he remembers his personal past, Wilcher comes to see values in this couple that he had not seen at the time.

A similar re-valuation takes place in relation to Robert. At first, Wilcher sees Robert purely as a destructive force. But Tolbrook is in a state of decay: its buildings are shabby; its fields laid waste; and its trees rotten. Wilcher's attachment to things makes him bitterly resist Robert's changes: for example, his plan to cut down the rotten trees in the driveway: "yes, yes, but it's not your tree, Robert; that's my tree, or rather Uncle Bill's tree - he planted it for the Jubilee of '87." (To Be A Pilgrim, p. 18) But Robert proceeds to have his way. The most dramatic evidence of Robert's innovations is found indoors in a pillared saloon - a once magnificent room. Robert uses it as a storage shed and keeps his reaper, furrow plot and binder inside:

Rakes and hoes were leaning against the classic panelling, garden seats were planted before the inner doors, and a workbench stood under the great central chandelier of the three, under which, as my grandmother has recorded, Jane Austen once flirted with her Irishman. Upon the one chair remaining in a corner a yard cat was suckling two kittens. It needed nothing more to say that barbarians had taken possession. She did not even run from me, but lay watching, with up-twisted neck and the insolent calm ferocity of some Pict or Jute encamped in a Roman villa.  
(128)

This scene with its analogy between the changes at Tolbrook and the barbaric sacking of Roman villas suggests that Robert is an insensitive

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26. Cornelia Cook, Joyce Cary: Liberal Principles, p. 114.

barbarian with no appreciation for the culture he destroys. Cary makes use of Robert's introduction of machinery and tools into a room in Tolbrook Manor to symbolize social change: Robert is converting the home of the gentry into a working farm. One might compare this change to the one Wells describes in Tono-Bungay as Bladesover and its traditions give way also to forces of change. Thus, as the novel draws to a close, Wilcher presents this scene again, this time with a different evaluation: Wilcher now finds that: "the very ruin of this beautiful room is become a part of my happiness."

Robert, I suspect, is more Brown than Wilcher, a peasant in grain. But he does not destroy Tolbrook, he takes it back into history, which changed it once before from priory into farm, from farm into manor, from manor, the workshop and court of a feudal dictator, into a country house where young ladies danced and hunting men played billiards; where at last, a new rich gentleman spent his week-ends from his office. And after that, I suppose it was to have been a country hotel, where typists on holiday gaze at the trees, the crops, and the farmer's men, with mutual astonishment and dislike. Robert has brought it back into the English stream and he himself has come with it; to the soft corn, good for home-made bread; the mixed farm, so good for men, to the old church religion which is so twined with English life, that the very prayers seem to breathe of fields after rain and skies whose light is falling between clouds. (To Be A Pilgrim, p. 328)

This paragraph suggests that as a result of Wilcher's re-examination of his past, he has come to accept change as inevitable and essentially English. He compares his country to "the wandering Dutchman, the pilgrim and scapegoat of the world" who has taken him "with her on a few stages of her journey". (342) He acknowledges his personal failure to be creative but his reminiscences bring him peace and self-acceptance as he re-values his own personal history and the developments in English political and social life in his lifetime.

A. (iv) The Horse's Mouth

Gulley Jimson, the narrator and protagonist of The Horse's Mouth, begins to write after suffering a stroke while working on his final masterpiece, "The Creation". Because he can no longer paint, his passion to create and communicate finds expression in writing. For Andrew Wright, the novel "is a portrait of an artist undertaken neither to teach nor to explain, but impulsively, to create".<sup>27</sup> Giles Mitchell suggests another reason why Gulley writes:

Jimson's tale chronicles a quest for a final all-encompassing perception which will explain and affirm the divine fecundity of the eternal world.<sup>28</sup>

As visual artist, Gulley transforms sensory data into symbols which have universal significance. His quotation from Blake emphasizes this aspect of creativity:

Five windows light the caverned man; through one he breathes the  
air  
Through one hears music of the spheres; through one can look  
And see small portions of the eternal world.  
(The Horse's Mouth, p. 11)

The events Gulley relates cover a period of approximately one year - the last year of his life. Obviously, the novel covers too short a time period to be classified as a memoir but Gulley provides information enough about himself in the present and through flashback to enable us to perceive his life as a whole and recognize that it is not only a personal portrayal but a study of the artist as archetype. Cary is deliberately vague about the style of Gulley's art:

I'm afraid I had no idea of Gulley's style and didn't want one. If I had fixed him to a style he would just become a period piece and not simply the original artist. His tragedy is universal; I didn't want it fixed in the particular.<sup>29</sup>

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27. Andrew Wright, Joyce Cary: A Preface to His Novels (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1972), p. 124.

28. Giles Mitchell, The Art Theme in Joyce Cary's First Trilogy (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1971), p. 78.

29. Joyce Cary, The Horse's Mouth, edition of 1957, George Rainbird and Michael Joseph, p. ix.

Indeed, Cary saw The Horse's Mouth as a "study of the creative imagination working in symbols".<sup>30</sup> We can glimpse what Cary means by this last phrase in the intensity of Gulley's response to sensory information. Having just been released from prison, his senses are especially acute: similes and metaphors tumble after each other as Gulley reacts to and interprets an explosion of sensory data:

Sun in a mist. Like an orange in a fried fish shop. All bright below. Low tide, dusty water and a crooked bar of straw, chicken-boxes, dirt and oil from mud to mud. Like a viper swimming in skim milk. The old serpent, symbol of nature and love. (The Horse's Mouth, p. 11)

Because Gulley is the narrator, The Horse's Mouth is not a realistic novel. Gulley's world is outside conventional everyday reality and other characters, when seen from Gulley's perspective, become grotesques. However, even though the world of Greenbank is heightened and at a remove from the everyday world, it is consistent and convincing: unity of tone, characterization and theme are produced by Cary's use of first person.

What the other narrators, Sara and Wilcher, say of Gulley in the earlier novels has already created an impression for us but not until we actually listen to Gulley himself do we know him from the inside. Gulley plays only a minor role in Wilcher's life as a bought-off rival for Sara's attention. Hazard Adams suggests:

We can dismiss Wilcher on Jimson quickly. Characteristically, he would prefer not to dwell on unpleasantness and therefore refrains from much comment. To think of Jimson, perhaps, is to think of Sara in a way which prevents him from seeing her as a symbol of his release.<sup>31</sup>

But for Sara, Gulley is her great love and she has much to say about him. In Herself Surprised, she provides a detailed description of Gulley's appearance:

30. Joyce Cary, The Horse's Mouth, the New York edition of 1944.

31. Hazard Adams, "Joyce Cary's Three Speakers," Modern Fiction Studies, 5., p. 118.

"Mr. Jimson was a little bald man with a flat nose and a big chin. His head was big and hung over so that his face was hollow in the middle. He was much older than we expected, getting on for forty; very shabby too, and had a front tooth missing... We had never seen an artist before and though Mr. Jimson was not my idea of an artist, he was better because he was so simple and gay, never minding his own shabbiness or his lost tooth. He smiled away as if he had no thought of it. I thought: 'You're not one to care what the world thinks,' and so I warned to him at first." (Herself Surprised, p. 41)

Sara depicts Gulley as an incorrigible rogue: he manipulates her; makes false promises of marriage; cheats her out of her money; seduces her, uses her for artistic "fodder", beats her, and abandons her. Sara's portrayal of Gulley is, when contrasted with Gulley's self-portrayal in The Horse's Mouth, superficial and inevitably coloured by her personality and purposes. As Frederick Karl suggests, Sara's function is to

destroy the very artistry in him which constitutes his attraction. Sara tempts and seduces and then tries to reform. Her great need is to domesticate Gulley, to make him precisely like other men, and to clip his artistic wings so that he can no longer fly above and beyond her.<sup>32</sup>

Sara is challenged by Gulley for what attracts her to him - his independence and his artistry - is precisely what she desires to possess, and, if successful, she will destroy his best qualities. To surrender to Sara's sexual powers would cost him his integrity as an artist. Gulley has to be wary of entrapment: he must take from Sara only what he needs for his art but flee her before her possession becomes complete:

Materiality, that is, Sara, the old female nature, having attempted to button up the prophetic spirit, that is to say, Gulley Jimson, in her placket-hole, got a bonk on the conk, and was reduced to her proper status, as spiritual fodder...I was too busy to enjoy myself - even when I was having the old girl, I was getting after some ideal composition in my head. Taking advantage of the general speed up in the clockwork. (The Horse's Mouth, pp. 52-53)

In The Horse's Mouth, Gulley presents himself - the male - as spiritual force, triumphing over the female as material being.\* Accordingly,

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32. Frederick Karl, "Joyce Cary: The Moralist as Novelist," p. 185.

\* See page 139.

Sara is presented as a materialist obsessed with her body and appearance, while Gulley cares nothing for his body and everything for his soul. Thus, as Sara gets older, she loses much of her fire and becomes depressed at the increasing signs of her physical decay:

"Don't you hate to feel old, Gulley?"

"No, what I hate is to feel young, and then my arms and legs go back on me."

"Oh, it's different for a man. But I feel so old, I could cry. And I feel it all the time. Everything seems to say to me: You're an old woman, Sara Monday. No more fun for you in this life. You'd better go and bury yourself." (The Horse's Mouth, p. 76)

Because Sara defines herself by her flesh and her power to attract men, old age devastates her. As an artist, Gulley looks for "eternal forms" or archetypes, and in Sara, he finds eternal Eve or the feminine archetype. Thus, at Plantie's, when he sees the old woman come in, fall on the empty chair, "panting like a steamboat, and...push her dress about and pull her bonnet and jerk her legs and elbows, as old women do when they're flustered", (75) he responds to the archetypal Sara who, for him, transcends the ravages of age:

For you couldn't help liking the old trout. The very way she was speaking; easy from her soul as a jug runs when you tilt it to a wet lip; it made me tingle all over; it made me laugh and sing in the calves of my legs. It made my toes curl and my fingers itch at the tops. It made me want to go bozo with the old rascal. What a woman. The old original. Clear as a glass-eye and straight as her own front. The very way she worked her great cook's hand, jointed like a lobster, round her glass; and lolled her head on one side, and turned up her eyes and heaved up her bosom when she sighed, enjoying the feel of herself inside her stays; it made me want to squeeze her till she squealed. (81)

Thus, leaving her, Gulley realizes:

Yes, I thought, and that's what I've been missing in my Eve, something that old Cranach had, yes, something from Sara. And not just the hips either, and the high waist; it's something in

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\* Cary effectively uses Blake's poem, The Mental Traveller, to highlight the theme of the male-female battle for domination. One theme of the poem is that the female will hold man in thrall in a fallen world. Sara, an embodiment of this will, lures Gulley into her sheltered world from which he must free himself if he is to create.

the movement; and as soon as I got back to Plantie's I opened one of his old encyclopaedias and began to draw what I wanted on the end-papers; the everlasting Eve, but all alive-oh. She came out strong like Sara, the Sara of twenty years ago. (The Horse's Mouth, pp. 85-86)

Charles G. Hoffmann, has noted how Cary's choice of first-person narration in The Horse's Mouth

illuminates for us the tragedy of the creative mind: the comic mask which Gulley wears intensifies the catastrophe at the end of the novel. Were it not for the first-person technique we would see only the comedy of action, the impudence and irreverence of the character. What we are made to see is the Artist himself at work.<sup>33</sup>

Sara's account had presented that "comedy of action": in this third part of the trilogy, with Gulley's own account of himself, we are shown not just a different Gulley but a very different reality.

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33. Charles G. Hoffmann, "Joyce Cary: Art and Reality, The Interaction of Form and Narrator," University of Kansas City Review, 26 (1960), p. 276.

## IV. B. (i) Introduction to the Political Trilogy

The political trilogy is more tightly constructed than is the art trilogy: the three major characters, Nina Nimmo, Chester Nimmo, and James Latter, share in many of the same major experiences, both domestic and public. One figure, Chester Nimmo, dominates all three novels and one central concern of the trilogy is to attempt to reveal the truth about his character. To James Latter, Nimmo is an opportunist and scoundrel; to Nina, he is a good man forced to use devious and deceitful means of achieving his goals; to himself, Chester is a good man trying desperately to serve humanity.

These differing viewpoints suggest the relativity of truth. Each narrator can provide only an individual and, hence, qualified interpretation of reality. Yet, each narrator's motive in writing is to present the truth. In fact, the problematical nature of truth is an important theme of the trilogy. Thus, reference is made in Prisoner of Grace to other possible "truth"-tellers - Aunt Latter, Sally and Bootham. They each claim to have access to the "truth" about Chester. Similarly, in Prisoner of Grace and Not Honour More, the "truths" of the press and of history are questioned: it is suggested that "facts" are inadequate or problematical.

The theme of truth is particularly appropriate to the world of politics. Cary begins his article, "Political and Personal Morality" by saying:

Almost every great statesman has been described as a crook. Metternich, Cavour, Bismarck, Gladstone, Disraeli, Lloyd George, Roosevelt; history is made up of names at which the moralist holds his nose. In literature to describe a character as a politician is to rank him with the villains

He continues:

Yet we all know honest men in politics, we all discuss political issues as if they were amenable to moral law; we all distinguish between countries which have a high standard of political

morality and those which are corrupt.<sup>34</sup>

This problem may be seen as the ground on which the trilogy is raised. Later, in the same article, he raises the issue, relevant to the trilogy, whether a double standard of morality exists - one for the public figure and one for the private citizen. Cary asserts:

In fact, there is no double standard. Lies are always lies, evil is always evil; public and private morals are governed by precisely the same law.<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, Cary does give examples of instances when a politician is forced to conceal the truth or even lie to the public because to respond truthfully would jeopardize the country's good. Again, the trilogy explores precisely this problem: can the politician maintain his integrity and still be successful? Thus the people closest to Chester - Nina, his wife, and James Latter - are disturbed by the discrepancy between his high moral stance and his compromises and deceptions. Jim rejects him utterly as a liar and hypocrite but Jim is the most limited and least sympathetic of the three major characters. Nina, in Prisoner of Grace, remains divided. She has access to most of the facts - some of them damning - but she can neither dismiss him as a crook nor accept him as an honest man. For her, as perhaps for most readers, the truth lies somewhere between these extremes.

Except the Lord, Chester's own account of his boyhood and early manhood, comes as a shock after Prisoner of Grace for one, at first, cannot reconcile Nina's portrayals of Chester with his own. In his own story, he is convincingly sincere and idealistic. Except the Lord does not contain levels of meaning; only when read in conjunction with Prisoner of Grace and with the knowledge that Chester is dictating his memoir while one of a ménage à trois with Nina and Jim, can one appreciate how

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34. Joyce Cary, "Political and Personal Morality," Saturday Review, (31 December, 1955), p. 1.

35. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 2.

he manipulates the truth to make himself appear simple and good. His technique is based on omission: we do not learn about the problems confronting the mature politician nor do we learn much about his marriage. We have to make an imaginative leap to relate the youth of this novel to Nina's husband. Cary's use of first-person narration for the political trilogy makes us aware of the relativity of truth for each individual. Nina, Chester and Jim are intimately involved with each other, yet remain isolated because of their private, idiosyncratic interpretations of reality. Cary contrasts the style and tone of each narrator. Chester's biblical tone - his exalted rhetoric - is appropriate to the preacher and the politician while Latter's terse and abrupt style reveals the impatient soldier. Cary's use of contrasting styles and divergent viewpoints also creates a sense of ambiguity appropriate to the political world. In this context, Nyce has discussed the appropriateness of using the first-person trilogy format:

By giving over each novel to a separate speaker and by having each voice contradict and qualify the other voices, Cary achieved the ambiguity and sense of confusion he saw as cardinal characteristics of the atmosphere of political power.<sup>36</sup>

Friedman takes this further:

Nina, Chester and Jim create perspectives which, in isolation, would command a fair degree of sympathetic involvement. But each is juxtaposed against the other two, which, because of the intense emotional interconnectedness of the second trilogy, thereby serve as a negating context, a pejorative moral comment.<sup>37</sup>

But, in the end, these conflicting perspectives not only problematise our moral evaluation of the characters and their actions, they also express the problematic nature of truth. They create the "indeterminate

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36. Benjamin Nyce, "Joyce Cary's Political Trilogy: The Atmosphere of Power," Modern Language Quarterly, 32 (March, 1971), p. 90.

37. A. W. Friedman, "Joyce Cary's Cubistic Morality," Contemporary Literature, 14 (Winter, 1973), p. 94.

world" of Cary's fiction.<sup>38</sup> The discussion of the novels in the political trilogy will focus upon the presentation of the narrators' versions of truth, the special problem of dealing with truth in the political world (where advancement or political survival sometimes colours the politician's perception of truth), and the underlying issue of whether truth is attainable suggested by the ambiguities created in the trilogy.

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38. Robert Bloom, The Indeterminate World: A Study of the Novels of Joyce Cary (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962).

B. (ii) Prisoner of Grace

Nina Latter, the narrator of Prisoner of Grace, is intelligent, sophisticated and reflective. Her story provides both a personal and historical perspective on the past, encompassing the present and looking toward the future. In contrast, the other narrators of the trilogy appear temporally myopic for Chester Nimmo is locked in the past and James Latter in the present. The focus of Nina's novel is upon Chester; however in portraying this consummate politician and spellbinder, Nina reveals his effects upon her and the other people with whom he is most intimate. She seeks to present the truth about their domestic life and the larger political world but succeeds instead in making us aware of the problematical nature of truth. We ask to what extent Chester's moral ideals are perverted by his lust and egotistical ambition.

Nina begins her story with an explanation of why she writes:

I am writing this book because I understand that "revelations" are soon to appear about that great man who was once my husband, attacking his character, and my own. And I am afraid that they will be believed simply because nowadays everyone believes the worst of a famous man. (Prisoner of Grace, p. 9)

Nina's intention is, however, ironically undercut for she reveals that Chester is far from innocent. In pointing out the discrepancy between Nina's expressed intention in writing and her final accomplishment, Giles Mitchell wonders if "revelations" by others could possibly be as damning as Nina's own.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, Nina's aim of defending Chester influences the plot structure: as R. W. Noble points out, Prisoner of Grace consists of "a series of expected accusations against Nina and Chester, interspersed by Nina's lengthy refutations". But the novel is not quite as simple as this might suggest. The character of the narrator complicates this narrative structure: "Her anecdotes and explanations often confirm and complicate, as well as refute the expected

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39. Giles Mitchell, "Joyce Cary's Prisoner of Grace," Modern Fiction Studies, 9 (Autumn, 1963), p. 263.

allegations."<sup>40</sup> Nina is not a morally reliable narrator: she seeks the right answers to moral questions but succeeds only in confusing herself. Part of the problem is that Nina sacrifices morality for comfort and peace. As a teenager, for example, she allows Jim to make love to her so he will stop pestering her. Her moral apathy is demonstrated again when she agrees to marry Nimmo rather than oppose her aunt. Moral ambiguity is inherent in her story and part of its fascination. At the same time, the self-division that is manifested in her actions also influences her account of those actions: it shapes Prisoner of Grace and has stylistic implications.

In his preface to the 1954 edition of Prisoner of Grace, Cary writes:

A last point which is perhaps worth making; some critics objected strongly to the brackets. The history of the brackets is this. The first scene finished was that at the railway station where Chester plants in Nina's mind that fear of guilt which drives her back to him, which makes her a prisoner of grace. This scene worked and so I saw that the book could be written.

But when I began at the beginning in the first person I ran into a great difficulty. Nina telling on her husband, analysing his motives, appeared mean and small, and therefore an unreliable witness. Of course she had to have her own point of view, she could not know all Chester, but she had to be trustworthy in herself or the book became an essay in the cynical and told nothing true of the political experience.

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I was ready to throw away a year's work when one night, I don't know why, those brackets occurred to me. Nina, I said, is essentially a woman who can understand another's point of view, she has to be so to tell her story. All her judgements are qualified. And qualifications go into brackets.

And when I tried the brackets they did make Nina a credible witness. They enabled her, even in the first person, to reveal her own quality of mind. She had, in short, a brackety mind. The brackets made the book possible, without the brackets there could have been no book. (Preface to Prisoner of Grace, pp. 7-8)

An example which illustrates Nina's divided opinion of Chester occurs when he suggests that Latter is welcome in their home.

"And how," he said, "could we forbid Captain Latter the house?"

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40. R. W. Noble, Joyce Cary (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1973), p. 84.

"You mean that people would talk?" [Nina asks.]

This hurt Chester, because it had naturally occurred to him (it couldn't help it) that people would be interested to see how we received Jim (for there was always gossip, probably much more than we knew of, as we both suspected), and he looked at me with a mournful glance (he gave his eyes this expression by opening them rather wider than usual and raising his eyebrows) and answered me rather sadly (which was fair, because he did really despise gossip) that it was not a question of gossip but of common kindness and family duty. (Prisoner of Grace, p. 67)

Part of Nina is aware that Chester is putting on a mournful glance while part of her feels that his expression is genuine. She tries desperately to be fair to him and in so doing indicates her confusion, his ambiguity and the complexity of a given situation. But brackets also have other uses; the material included may be simply factual or may provide a detail, an image, a touch of irony, an insight into character. Thus, Nina's bracketed remarks sometimes reveal a shrewder insight into people and their motivations than does the unbracketed portion of her commentary. For example, in the following excerpt, Nina shows by her aside how well she knows her aunt:

Aunt Latter, of course, knew all about this affair. She knew most people's affairs. But though she laughed at Nimmo and rather disliked him (she did not need to like her pets, and, of course, if she had not had to forgive them a good deal she would not have felt how much her help was necessary to them), she would say to me, "Don't be too unkind to him, Nina; he is much too useful...I shouldn't wonder if he gets on the county council some day. (20)

Hoffmann suggests that Nina's bracketed narration retains

the immediacy of felt experience...Nina's parenthetical remarks are not awkward afterthoughts, a story-teller's hasty reminder to himself to take up a point later; they are careful asides which reveal an attitude and make the reader want to know more<sup>41</sup>

Her habit of bracketing ideas suggests her desire to incorporate all facets of a situation - to present the whole truth. Nina's concern with expressing all possible viewpoints has implications for the trilogy as a whole as it, too, encompasses multiple views of reality.

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41. Charles G. Hoffmann, Joyce Cary (Pittsburgh: The University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964), pp. 134-135.

The background for Prisoner of Grace is politics - the art of human relationships in both domestic and public spheres - and an area in which compromise and qualified statement play so large a part, an excellent arena for studying truth and falsity. On the domestic side, uncertainty is rife. When Chester proposes to Nina, it is not clear that he is aware that she is already pregnant with her cousin's child. However, she has money and social position - both assets for an aspiring politician. After some prodding from her domineering Aunt Mary, Nina accepts Chester's suit even though she does not love him. Whether Chester loves Nina is uncertain. Their marriage may be motivated by both politics and love, or politics alone.\* Chester's decision to grant Nina a divorce when it is no longer politically damaging casts doubt upon his feeling for her; yet, the divorce is only a technicality for Chester establishes himself in her new household on the pretext of needing help with his memoirs and continues to enjoy her sexual favours.

Chester's ability to deceive himself about the paternity of Nina's children suggests that a parallel capacity for self-deception may exist in the public sphere. The incident of Nina's adultery with Jim during which Sally is conceived is ambiguous. Either Chester is trusting and Jim and Nina betray his trust or he has arranged the situation knowing what might result. We do not know the truth. Nevertheless, Chester, at times, gains power over Nina by manipulating her feelings. For example, in the railway station scene, Chester bends her to his will: Nina has decided to leave him for Jim but Chester's rhetoric instills a sense of class guilt; leaving him, he argues too, is tantamount to betraying her country. Torn between her desire for Jim and a sense of obligation to Chester, Nina sits undecided until the train pulls out. She describes

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\* Giles Mitchell sees the marriage as a class triumph - a victory over Nina, and by extension over the Slapton-Latter family - and the symbolic "defeat of an effete gentry by the lower classes".<sup>42</sup>

42. Giles Mitchell, "Joyce Cary's Prisoner of Grace", p. 270.

her terrible indecision:

I seemed to have no will to do anything, or rather I had two wills which were fighting inside me and tearing me apart. I can never forget the agony of that time, which must actually have lasted three or four minutes before the train went out. And really I think it was a kind of relief to me when at last it did so, for it made a decision for me. It ended that agony; and though it ended only in a kind of despair, it was more bearable. (Prisoner of Grace, pp. 95-96)

Having succeeded in keeping his wife, Chester then capitalizes upon her pregnancy: it brings him votes - enough to win a difficult election by a margin of forty-six.

Another ambiguous area of deception and self-deception involves the confusion of sexual virtuosity with love. Nina assumes her intense pleasure with Jim is inspired by love; however, Jim has acquired a new technique of love-making from an Indian handbook. She then decides to instruct Chester. Ironically, he, too, attributes their increased pleasure to increased love whereas her aim had been to register the distance between them. In fact, the ambiguities of the relationship between Chester and Nina are epitomized in the sex act. Habitually, Chester begins sex with prayers which Nina compares to "grace before a meal". (62-63) At first, she only pretends to enjoy their love-making and mentally scoffs at him:

"Look at him now, how ridiculous he is really, almost crying with excitement and greed; here is your prophet of the lord" (for you may be sure that the more excited Chester was the more certainly he would begin with some "religious" words...your great man, wriggling and panting and sweating like a nasty little animal." (62-63)

But, to her shock, Nina finds herself becoming aroused by Chester's peculiar blend of prayer, politics and sex. Giles Mitchell discusses the symbolic importance of sex for them:

The growth of Nimmo's power over Nina, epitomized in the sex act, parallels the extension of his power in the political world; the progressive loss of all mutual trust between them, and the use of a language which disguises the truth of their marriage parallels Nimmo's gradual loss of political ethics.<sup>43</sup>

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43. Giles Mitchell, "Joyce Cary's Prisoner of Grace", p. 268.

In the public sphere, Nina provides us with many instances of ambiguities and possible self-deceptions.\* Thus, she "defends" Chester's truthfulness in politics by explaining his flair for choosing suitable truths:

It has always been a charge against Chester that he could seem to believe anything that "suited his book", that he could always spellbind himself with his own voice.

But this is one of those dangerous "facts" which are so hateful because they are partly true as facts and so hide the real truth which is that Chester's imagination suggested to him every day hundreds of truths and it was always easy for him to find among them one that "suited" him. And certainly at that time (taught by experience) he was very careful in his choice of what to be excited about. (Prisoner of Grace, p. 70)

For example, in Chapter Ten, when Chester launches his political career with an attack upon the Tarbiton community council, Nina contends that all his charges are lies. We may, however, ask whether she is right: her view may be biased because members of her family serve on the council. Chester feels she is politically unaware. Another complicating factor is that he may be using a political language which she interprets literally rather than symbolically. But Chester's attacks are so successful that he is elected to the local council and proposed for the county council. Being known, it seems, is more important politically than the reasons for being known. Similarly, when Chester is involved in an incident in Chorlock, it looks as if he deliberately incites violence to attain national prominence. Again, there are two different ways of looking at what is going on, Nina's view and Chester's. He may simply be going there because a meeting is being held. Nina also attends the meeting, gets attacked and becomes a "martyr". This is an example of how a "truth" may be a misinterpretation, and of the

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\* Noble, however, feels that "Cary's representation of the conflict between truth and deception in Chester's political life is neither as profound nor as convincing as his insights into this tension in the personal lives of Chester and Nina".<sup>44</sup>

44. R. W. Noble, Joyce Cary, p. 86.

impossibility of deducing intentions from the appearance of actions.

Nina's most damning indictment of Chester concerns his political transformation from pacifist to warmonger when invited to become Minister of Production in the War Cabinet. Although the move appears politically opportune, it leads ultimately to Chester's defeat. Nina accuses him of "ratting" yet is moved by his words as he argues in defense of his revised opinion. His speech is an example of how language may be manipulated to distort truth. Nina summarizes:

[He] "confessed to being deeply misled" and to never having believed it possible for any civilised people to be guilty of so dastardly a crime (the invasion of Belgium) against the very basis of civilised religious liberty, which was the sanctity of the pledged word. And so, with a reluctance which those who knew him and his record could understand, he had been compelled, as an act of conscience, to support the cause of truth, which was also that of peace and freedom, against aggression which he could only describe as devilish. (Prisoner of Grace, pp. 267-268)

Nina's reaction to Chester's speech is divided. Is his change of heart genuine or assumed for political advantage? To some degree, she is swayed by his rhetoric:

And I told myself that Chester had really been surprised by the sudden attack on Belgium, that he had been indispensable in the War Cabinet, that it had been his duty, just as he had said, to ignore a pledge given under other circumstances; in fact, that in real life one cannot always keep pledges. (268)

But Nina is not totally convinced of Chester's sincerity and can imagine him calculating:

'I can break my word with impunity because, in the rush of new and important events, people will forget about the whole matter.' (268)

Although the trilogy leaves us with ambivalent views of Chester, Cary defends him in the preface to Prisoner of Grace:

Nimmo has been called a crook. He is not meant for a crook. A crook is essentially a man who is out for himself, who has no principles. Crooks are uninteresting people because their range is so narrow. In state politics they are especially dull. The question had to be how does a real politician, the handler, the manager of people, who is also a man of principle, keep his principles? How far do his ends justify his means?

...

I am not pretending that Nimmo was a completely admirable character. There are few such anywhere in the world. He is an egoist like most successful politicians. Probably no man would give himself to that craft, certainly he would not succeed in it, without a great deal of conceit. Politicians need great self-confidence. Nimmo was a man, too, not very scrupulous in his eloquence. But the modern leader of the people needs to be a spellbinder, and poets have never been very scrupulous in getting their effect. (Prisoner of Grace, pp. 5-6)

On the domestic level, however, there is less room for doubt. Nina's narrative reveals the devastating effects Chester has upon his own family, particularly upon herself and their son, Tom. Nina is overwhelmed by her husband's personality, stifled in her personal development and limited in her freedom. Chester exploits her emotionally evoking guilt feelings to dominate and keep her. She cannot love him but fears to leave him: she may be unable to live with herself afterwards especially if a divorce should wreck his career. She remains with him, a victim of her own divided will. Her subjection to him contributes to the tragic outcome of the trilogy as foreshadowed in Nina's closing words. She cannot evict Chester from Palm Cottage and end their absurd love triangle even though she suspects that Jim will eventually murder her. Nina expresses her sense of uneasiness and insecurity in Chester's world:

It was at this time I began to feel among "political" people the strange and horrible feeling which afterwards became so familiar to me (but not less horrible), of living in a world without any solid objects at all, words and schemes and hopes and ambitions and calculations where you could not say that this idea was obviously selfish and dangerous and that one quite false and wicked because all of them were relative to something else. The lies were mixed up with some truth (like selfish calculations)(like Goold's planning to make trouble at Lilmouth) melted at the edges into all kinds of "noble" ideals (like Chester's passion for freedom and free speech). (Prisoner of Grace, p. 60)

Similarly, Nina's daughter, Sally, devotes herself and her husband to Chester's service at the cost of her own independence while her brother, Tom, after recognizing that his "father" is a liar, becomes a cynic. He wastes his talent on brilliant but soul-destroying imitations of Chester. Losing faith in Chester makes him lose faith in himself and he is eventually driven to take his own life.

The isolated facts of Nina's story are hardly in Chester's favour.

Yet her style succeeds in making us share her uncertainty so that the truth about Chester remains elusive. Furthermore, the narrative also makes us feel that truth itself is elusive and uncertain.

B. (iii) Except the Lord

Except the Lord is Chester Nimmo's memoir written while he is living with Jim and Nina Latter, a fact which provides an ironic backdrop to the contents of his work. Chester appears candid and sincere but, upon analysis, his self-portrayal proves idealized and simplistic. At the time of writing, he is an old man but he restricts the time period of the novel to his boyhood and youth because, Andrew Wright suggests, he "cannot explain in his own words the events of his political career".<sup>45</sup> It contains too many complications, contradictions and paradoxes so Chester chooses instead an arranged and selected truth. In his story, there is a core of truth: for example, Nina's story corroborates his class hatred and his basic political ambition of alleviating poverty. Prisoner of Grace does reveal how Chester's lust for power and compromises to retain power distort this desire, yet it confirms his sympathy with the poor.

Chester's tone contrasts with Nina's. The opening paragraph is pretentious and elevated: Chester describes the three women in his life as "noble"; his family is "sacred to memory"; and his writing "throws light upon the crisis that so fearfully shakes our whole civilization". (Except the Lord, p. 5) We are reminded of Nina's giggles at Chester's peculiar manner of speech. Chester's probable reason for writing is political: he wants to gain public sympathy and enhance his reputation. A professional politician, Chester practises his rhetorical skills upon the reader. Cary alerts us to his intentions with author-imposed ironies and ironies generated by contrasts with the earlier novel. One irony Noble points out is "Chester's compulsively exaggerated praise of Nina's moral purity [which] is an ironic preparation for the tragic

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45. Andrew Wright, Joyce Cary: A Preface to his Novels (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958), p. 142.

climax of Not Honour More".<sup>46</sup> Other ironies include Cary's use of Maria Marten, a Victorian melodrama, and the Second Coming, which fails to take place, to mark turning points in Chester's development.

Except the Lord is the story of Chester's development and those forces which most influence him. The dominant influence is, naturally enough, his family. His feelings of love and loyalty are genuine. His hatred of poverty and class oppression is shown to stem from his boyhood experiences - the fears of eviction, unemployment and the associated break-up of the family. Chester later uses his memories of deprivation to generate maximum emotional sympathy. No reader can fail to be moved by his account of his mother's slow death: over-work and anxiety make her an easy prey to consumption. Similarly, his father's downward economic spiral, hastened by his commitment to evangelical preaching, his generosity to the poor, and his personal integrity, inspire our sympathy. Chester successfully portrays himself as a loving son and brother: we do not question the facts and are moved by his story while remaining aware that our feelings are being manipulated.

Another of Chester's techniques for evincing sympathy is to acknowledge his "crime". This presumably refers to his loss of faith, his espousal of Marxism and his career as political agitator. After confessing his sins, Chester details his recovery of faith upon hearing his father read Psalm 127:

Except the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that  
build it;  
Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.  
Lo, children and the fruit of the womb are an heritage and gift  
that cometh of the Lord.

This is another example of Cary's use of irony: Nina reveals in Prisoner of Grace that Chester has been denied the heritage of children and his influence upon Nina's children by Jim Latter is destructive. If "the house" symbolizes Chester's political career, then that reference,

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46. R. W. Noble, Joyce Cary (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1973), p. 99.

too, is ironic for, at the time of writing, Chester has been voted out of office. The truth, as both Prisoner of Grace and Not Honour More reveal, is that Chester is not favoured by the Lord. The title of his memoir points to the irony of its contents.

We learn nothing of Jim Latter from Chester. Although Not Honour More revolves around Chester, he makes no mention whatsoever of Jim. Jim's obsession with a man so little interested in him appears ironic. Chester does refer to his noble wife and attributes his political success to her chance arrival in her Aunt's sitting room where Chester, resentful of Aunt Latter's tardiness, is about to leave. Chester, typically, exaggerates the importance of meeting her:

I might say that to the chance entry of that child I owe all the achievement in the world for which, rightly or wrongly, I have received honour. But that would not be true. It was not merely the chance of that small girl's entry which so powerfully affected my destiny - and I might add, not in self praise but in hers, not my destiny alone but that of my country - it was her nature, the case of her soul. (Except the Lord, p. 139)

His description of their meeting - his admiration of her beauty, innocence and candour - suggests that his proposal may indeed have been motivated from genuine affection, unless we assume this is only one of the many convenient truths Chester chooses to profess.

One of the key lessons Chester's father tries to teach his children is the importance of truth. A lie, therefore, assumes disproportionate significance because of the Nimmo's evangelical upbringing. Nevertheless, two lies are given prominence in the novel. The first is Georgina's lie to her father: she denies that her employer, Mr. G., makes sexual overtures to her - a "lie" which does not deceive her father. Although their relationship is never as close as before the "lie", Georgina devotes herself to him. Love for her family causes Georgina to lie: if she were to admit the truth, her father could no longer permit her to work for G. and all the family would suffer greater economic privation. In this instance, the "lie" does not actually deceive her father; it is motivated by good intentions and is a means to a good end.

Nevertheless, it remains a lie.

But the other lie - Chester's to Georgina when she asks if he is involved in inciting violence during a strike - is a political cover-up.

It gives Chester a feeling of power and triumph:

[Georgina] asked me...if I had heard of the attack on the carts. I said, 'yes,' and she answered, 'Did you set them on to it?'

As I climbed into my seat, I answered 'No,' but I was glad that my face was hidden from Georgina. I even felt a momentary discomfort in my breast, such a pang as that which comes when one is called upon to destroy something precious and irreplaceable.

But in the same instant there arose in me a sense of glory and triumph, something quite unexpected in its force and puzzling even to myself - I had lied to Georgina for the cause. (Except the Lord, p. 254)

Cary draws attention to this lie because it indicates Chester's capacity for deliberate deceit when political advantage is at stake. Although Chester criticizes his own lying "for the cause", Nina's narrative reveals that his career necessitates many such lies. The problem of the appropriate lie perplexes Chester in his memoir for he asks: "when and where is one justified in telling a flat lie?" (186) In both cases, the consideration of the appropriate lie also raises the question whether the end justifies the means.

The question of truth and lies arises again in relation to the Lillmouth Great Fair. It is a temptation which Chester, Georgina and Richard fail to resist. But an even greater temptation to Chester and Georgina is the play, Maria Marten. Chester argues with Georgina that because the play is based on a true incident it is exempt from their father's ban against theatre as a "temple of lies": he wants to deceive himself so he will feel justified in going. But Georgina refuses to deceive herself: she admits it is wrong to go, but decides to go anyway. Cary contrasts the attitudes of Chester and Georgina to highlight Chester's capacity for self-deception. The situation is complicated when Maria Marten acts as an illumination for Chester: its seduction of a poor and virtuous maiden, Maria, by the Satanic landlord, Corder, makes Chester

fully conscious of his hatred of the rich. Ironically, his feeling is based upon distortion and over-simplification, for the poor are not necessarily good, nor the rich necessarily wicked. At the same time, Corder makes a powerful impression upon Chester. While he rejects Corder politically, Chester finds himself identifying with the stage villain because he dominates the entire play. Watching Corder provides a second illumination for Chester: he grasps the "mysterious power of the actor" (Except the Lord, pp. 98-99) and falls victim to "the spell of the orator". (99) Instinctively, Chester realizes that the power of the actor can be his: it is but a question of "striking the right attitudes". (99) Thus, the play provides him with two insights: firstly, his basic political theme of redressing class inequality and, secondly, he becomes aware of oratory and artifice as a means to that end. Chester does not have to convince himself of the importance of redressing class inequality but he can, like an actor, use his voice and acting skill to convey his emotional sincerity and thus play upon the emotions of his audience. Maria Marten is thus seen to have relevance to Chester's political career. It influences his own oratory; indeed, political language in general is associated with playacting and its associated skills. Cary uses the play to make us aware that political language involves exaggeration of truth and is ineffective when qualified. (One need only recall Nina's qualified language to be convinced of this.) These factors lead us to ask if it can still contain truth.

Chester devotes a great part of his memoir to his role as political agitator. The seed of this career is planted when he happens upon an illustrated pamphlet written by an atheistic socialist. The pamphlet arouses Chester to a fevered consciousness of social injustice:

I read as I had never read before, for the first time I knew the passion of illumination, not only my mind but all my senses seemed to strain forward in eagerness. I was not aware of thought or feeling, the argument seemed to fly into my brain and to find there a place so exactly prepared for it that every sentence fell instantly into the niche that had ached for its coming. (128-129)

For Chester, the subversive pamphlet expresses an important truth. His deepest feelings recoil from atheism. Nevertheless, its views on social inequality leave an indelible impression on him. It is the failure of the Second Coming, as predicted by his father, that undermines Chester's faith and leaves him open to political influences. He is lured further from the religious world when he falls under the spell of the voice and gestures of the orator, Lanza. Chester experiences yet another epiphany. What he learns from Lanza is the presentation of self in political life, which again relates to the question of the ends justifying the means.

Chester describes Lanza's impact upon him:

I say again, how powerful is logic, the simplest construction of reason, to the imagination of the young. Once I had accepted Lanza's first appeal to experience, as I did with instant conviction, knowing its truth, I saw rise before me an edifice in which every part was secured by the weight and tension of fact, and every proportion carried the assurance of beauty, a vast and lofty cathedral of the spirit, which united under one majestic dome both my religious intuition and those vague political notions derived from so many sources - yes, and from all the ambition, the resentments, of a poverty-stricken childhood.

For me it was a conversion. (Except the Lord, p. 141)

Two other characters also influence Chester: Dr. Dolling and Pring. Dolling warns Chester that to associate with him is dangerous. This warning makes Dolling only more attractive, since it appeals to Chester's idealism and his egotism simultaneously:

But I believed him then, and nothing could have been more attractive to a boy of my age than such a challenge - to defy the established authority of the land was itself a distinction, it gave me the self-respect achieved by an heroic gesture. But to make such an affirmation for liberty and brotherhood - that was a glory of the noblest kind.

The egotism and turbulence of youth - is it not too often merely the need of a worthy cause to absorb the first violence of a responsible will? (149)

Similarly, Chester's ability to see Pring is affected by his own emotional needs. He admits his capacity for self-deception while, at the same time, defending his tendency to hero-worship:

It is not for nothing that nations in disillusionment fly to a dictator - that young men, seeing their road dark before them, seek an infallible guide - that revolution brings in the police

state. I desperately needed my master, my Napoleon, and though I was ready no doubt to find him in any man possessing authority and a policy, yet I was not altogether deceived in my estimate of Pring. He had elements of greatness and it was not his fault that he did not achieve great things. (Except the Lord, pp. 239-240)

Chester, for a while, becomes a fanatical Marxist and gets his opportunity to work for "the cause" during the Lilmouth Strike. With reference to his behaviour during the strike - his support of violence - Chester confesses he was led into evil ways because, he explains, of his desire to do good. Again, Chester's account of his past draws to our attention the political problem of ends and means.

In his memoir, Chester treats his faults as discrete rather than characteristic; however, whenever political motives necessitate, one suspects that Chester will resort to similar wrongdoing. His lying and inciting violence reflect his willingness to put politics before people, to allow the ends to justify the means. Similarly, although Chester implies that his errors belong to the past, Nina's story contradicts this. Chester would like us to believe that he has learned from his errors and grown beyond them, but Nina's story confirms Chester's consistency. Obviously, Except the Lord loses much if read in isolation. When read in conjunction with Prisoner of Grace, Except the Lord again raises the question of truth. How do we reconcile the Chester it portrays with Nina's husband? Many differences may be reconciled but the two images of Chester fail to converge. Cary's intention in using the first-person trilogy format is to show that each individual has a private and idiosyncratic view of reality and however close people may seem to each other, total communication and understanding is impossible. We are left with the mysteries of individual viewpoints, the problematic nature of truth, and the shadowy area where self-deception and lies converge.

B. (iv) Not Honour More

Not Honour More is James Latter's statement dictated to Policewoman Martin while he awaits execution for murdering his wife. He implies that his revelations will justify her murder. His intention is to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth:

If I have wilfully falsified any word in this statement, if I have made anything look different from the truth even if against me, I deserve to be considered a contemptible cur. More than Nimmo himself because he has never set up the truth and doesn't know what truth is.

My whole case is this, that if a man or country gives up the truth, the absolute truth, they are throwing away the anchor and drifting slowly but surely to destruction. I say nothing can save but truth and the guts to take it. For truth will always prevail. (Not Honour More, p. 27)

Most of Not Honour More is told in first-person but Jim includes Nina and Chester's letters, long harangues from Chester, and miscellaneous short dialogues, all of which serve to document Jim's truth.

While one admires Cary's talent for assuming the identity of various characters - the "negative capability"<sup>47</sup> which is revealed in these two first-person trilogies - his talent leads to the awkward style of this novel. Jim's expression is terse, fragmented, stilted, factual, and cliché-ridden; it is, however, appropriate for he is unreflective and inarticulate, definitely not a "talky boy" (17) clever at "wangling".

(13) Jim himself excuses the style of Not Honour More: "it was not put into good style for publication [because it was] dictated at high speed for shorthand." (27) Helen Gardner suggests his language is "like that of a police officer giving evidence" and says also:

[Cary] showed considerable skill in modifying Jim's way of speaking enough to make the book just readable without destroying his characteristic lack of expressiveness. All the same, it was an almost impossible task he set himself, as if Jane Austen had decided she must re-tell the story of Emma through the

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47. David Perkins, Ed., English Romantic Writers (Keats's Letter to his brothers George and Tom Keats), New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., p. 1209.

mouth of Miss Bates, or Dickens had let Mrs. Nickleby tell the story of Nicholas Nickleby.<sup>48</sup>

Jim intends to portray himself as truthful and sincere but Cary's ironic use of first-person narration enables us to see him differently: we criticize rather than admire him. Another irony is that his viewpoint tends to mitigate our criticism of Chester. By balancing Jim's devotion to plain, simple truth and desire for simple justice with Nimmo's recognition of compromise and tolerance, Cary partially vindicates Chester. We come to recognize that humanity is better served by a flexible, pragmatic politician than by an idealistic soldier, particularly one who accentuates his devotion to truth with pistol shots against those he feels are lying. The honesty on which Jim prides himself is shown to be a limitation of his character. He lacks forgiveness and grace, both of which are essential in human relationships. Jim's uncompromising and dictatorial personality prefers force where Chester chooses persuasion. Nina shares with Chester an ability to compromise and tolerate. Cornelia Cook praises her flexibility and contrasts it with Jim's rigidity:

Nina learns to accommodate Chester's impulsive nature as she learns to accept the possibility of "impossible" situations. In other words, she learns the inevitability of change and with it the relativity of truth. Nina's discovery repeats Georgina's and Chester's own; in apprehending the relativity of truth the heart is open to sympathy and tolerance, out of which grow love. The opposite to this understanding is Jim Latter's unbending and abstract truth which admits only stark alternatives - right or wrong, love or hate, life or death.<sup>49</sup>

Not Honour More completes the portrayal of Jim Latter begun in Prisoner of Grace. Nina's narrative showed Jim to be stubborn, selfish, reckless and politically obtuse; we learned of Jim's lust for Nina but not his virulent hatred of Chester. In retrospect, we realize that

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48. Helen Gardner, "The Novels of Joyce Cary," Essays and Studies, 28 (1975), p. 89.

49. Cornelia Cook, Joyce Cary: Liberal Principles (London: Vision Press Limited, 1981), p. 229.

Nina's passive personality, easy tolerance and passion for Jim are distorting factors. For example, we know from the earlier novel that Nina is not safe with Jim - (he risks both their lives in his sailboat) - but we are not prepared for Jim's capacity for violence. Nor are we prepared for Jim's obsession with truth. Jim's narrative, like Chester's, comes as a surprise. Nina's earlier description is not contradicted but shown to be inadequate.

Not Honour More emphasizes Jim's obsession with narrow, rigid truth which leads him to violence and injustice. Jim is devoid of humour, tolerance and any ability to compromise. His career as a soldier suits him for his inflexible personality craves rule and regulation. His attitude towards truth is simplistic: he sees himself as an honest man against a corrupt society. Yet for all his devotion to truth, he can never see the truth about himself. He is always right: when the bank refuses to honour his cheques for insufficient funds, then Jim finds the bank at fault. He is incapable of self-criticism; despite his gambling debts, desertion of his pregnant girlfriend, adultery, attempts at murder, and successful murder, he finds himself an honourable man in a dishonourable world. Thus, for example, throughout the novel, Jim expresses his belief in the sanctity of family life. Yet, he is hardly an ideal family man: for example, he impregnates Nina at a time when he cannot possibly marry her. And, later, he so little respects her married state that he again makes her pregnant. Finally, his continued involvement with her leads to her divorce from Nimmo. As usual, Jim can perceive the hypocrisy of others, but not his own. His concept of "truth" is both self-deceptive and an idealization of his own actions and desires. The title, Not Honour More, taken from Lovelace's poem, "To Lucasta: On Going to the Wars", is obviously ironic. Latter never questions his own worthiness, as did the soldier of the poem who went to battle to prove himself worthy of his lady. Instead, Jim questions Nina's worthiness. Jim's honour is but a parody of real honour. While he

perceives his own actions as honourable, he tends to be suspicious of other people's motives. Jim sees plots everywhere. And no doubt, some plots do exist. But one doubts if they proliferate in the world of the novel to the extent they do in Jim's brain. Jim feels that all of Nimmo's actions are politically motivated. He blames him for inciting the general strike, the main public event of the novel, in order to establish himself as a leader and thus gain enough publicity to worm his way back into power. Assuming Nimmo is totally unscrupulous, Jim suspects that the gathering at Georgina's graveside is staged to win general sympathy and the support of the religious element. Jim is convinced that Nimmo, before making a decision, finds out how public feeling is running, and then adopts the popular view.

Cary includes situations which illustrate Jim's limitations concerning truth. For example, Jim's co-operation with Drew, a local reporter, indicates the absurdity of his belief in always telling the truth. He gives Drew a statement for publication in the Tarbiton Gazette; it begins: "The reason of my action against Lord Nimmo was because I caught him interfering with my wife." (Not Honour More, p. 26) In spite of Jim's protests, Drew deletes this sentence because: 'Truth can be the worst kind of libel'. (28) In contrast with Jim's folly in exposing private affairs, Nimmo's discretion wins our approval. Silence is sometimes more appropriate than truth. Jim's limitations are again exposed when Mrs. Brome invades Palm Cottage seeking justice from Nimmo whom she blames for her son's death. Although her son had been medically unfit, Nimmo had not exempted him from the army. When Jim finds her lurking about Palm Cottage seeking justice for her son's death, he thinks she is a hopeless lunatic. He fails to recognize the truth of her case or perceive that she has more reason to hate Nimmo than he does. Jim has no ability to empathize with anyone else, not Brome, not Nimmo, not his wife. Only one point of view exists for him - his own.

Another example of Cary's thematic concern with truth involves Jim's

changing attitude towards his wife. Jim's suspicious nature and his simplistic attitude towards truth lead him to change his attitude towards Nina and ultimately destroy her to vindicate his honour. Initially, he had idealized her and can agree with Nimmo when he speaks to him of Nina as following "the truth of her soul". (Not Honour More, p. 51) "I did not doubt...he was speaking truth about my dear wife. For I believed in her. I did not doubt for one moment she was faithful and true." (51) But two events undermine Jim's confidence in Nina: firstly, Brightman's note ascribing Amelia Jones' dismissal from Palm Cottage to her catching Nina "in an incriminating situation" (54) with Nimmo; and secondly, Jim's observation about the Tivoli picture:

Half the window was in the picture too and when I moved a little to come in front of the window, my own face came into it.

I saw in a flash that anyone sitting where Nina had sat yesterday with her back to the window could see anyone who looked in. I said to myself, 'Nina pushed Nimmo away and did it very violently - but was it because she saw me looking in at the window?' (56)

This insight reminds him of Nina's behaviour as a teenager in Lilmouth, when she gave herself to him to avoid spoiling a concert. Jim revises his opinion of Nina:

I had to see a woman, a young girl, who could do a thing like that was not an ordinary girl - she didn't think much of her moral virtue. I had to ask myself if she had been so faithful to me as I liked to think. She had now got Nimmo's hand on her arm. She was pale with anxiety and pity - I thought I'd never seen anyone look so beautiful or so good. And I thought of what Nimmo had said, I didn't know a great deal about that woman. She was as tricky as a set of Japanese boxes. (57)

What Jim can never understand is Nina's divided loyalty and how her feelings for both him and Nimmo place her in situations where compromise is necessary. She tries to create happiness for all three of them but Jim, possessive, narrow and selfish, cannot comprehend their total situation. By his simple measure of truth, Nina is a deceitful woman deserving only to die.

From the three novels, three different viewpoints of Chester Nimmo emerge: Nina's is ambivalent; Chester admits his faults but makes

himself sympathetic; Jim depicts him as scheming and manipulative. Cary deliberately arranged to create an ambiguous portrayal of Chester. But Cary's intention is more profound: he explores the distinctions between truth and lies; truth and self-deception; deception and self-deception not simply as part of his portrayal of Chester and the other major characters but to make us question man's attempts to seek an absolute truth.

## CHAPTER FIVE

(i) Preface to the Alexandria Quartet

In The Alexandria Quartet, the narrator, Darley, is in the process of writing the novel we are reading. The literary self-consciousness of the work stems from Darley's awareness of himself as an aspiring writer. He hopes to achieve truth in fiction and the variation in form - the subjective Justine, the more objective Balthazar, the omniscient Mount-olive and the mythic Clea - reflects this. In placing Darley as protagonist or observer, we encounter a problem similar to the one facing us in Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim. Darley, unlike Marlow, however, is deeply involved in the story he narrates and his experiences catalyze his development: he learns to love and to write.

(ii) The Alexandria Quartet

Lawrence Durrell in The Alexandria Quartet makes use of a number of different narrators. But the primary narrator, Darley, is the major informing consciousness for Justine, Balthazar and Clea, three of the four books of the tetralogy. Because of Darley's central importance to the novels (we are dependent upon him for our ultimate insights into themes, characters and all that makes up the Alexandrian experience) his exact function as narrator needs consideration. Is he an observing or participating narrator, or both? Witness or protagonist? Critics generally agree that Darley is an observing narrator: Thomas Young's description of him as an "eye-witness narrator"<sup>1</sup> is typical. However, some elaboration is helpful in coming to grips with Darley's function in the novel. I would like briefly to compare Darley with the types of narrators previously discussed.

Darley contrasts most clearly with primary narrators who are used as devices as in the frame narratives of The Time Machine, The Island of Dr. Moreau, Heart of Darkness and Chance. In Wells's scientific romances, for example, the primary narrators serve only to introduce the secondary narrators and enhance the credibility of them and their stories. Even Wells's secondary narrators are only simple types, vehicles for ideas rather than intrinsically interesting as characters. This is obviously not true of Darley for he is a complex developing narrator. A comparison of Darley with Conrad's Marlow suggests a closer resemblance than with Wells's narrators since Marlow, like Darley, develops as a result of his experiences.

As a narrator, Marlow is reliable: Darley is not. His unreliability is thematically significant, and lies at the core of Durrell's work. Marlow, in his capacity for intellectual analysis, differs from Darley

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1. Thomas B. Young, Thematic Emphasis and Psychological Realism in Lawrence Durrell's 'Alexandria Quartet' Diss. (Ohio: Ohio State University, 1963), p. 79.

who, although a reflective narrator, presents his material subjectively, imaginatively, emotionally and sensuously. Despite his empathy with Jim, Marlow tells the truth. Darley, however, is not truthful. Although we do not know at a first reading that Darley is creating a fiction in Justine, the inclusion of Arnauti's novel may alert us to this possibility. Certainly, Balthazar's revelations in Book II confirm our latent suspicions and we come retrospectively to perceive that in Justine Darley is creating a fiction. Later, we realize that Balthazar, too, is another fiction or, at least, a partial truth. Durrell makes the problem of discerning reality a key issue: Darley's characters are largely what he imagines them to be. He comes to recognize that a gap exists between people as he thinks of them and as they really are; appearance and illusion come between him and his Alexandrian acquaintances.

Cary's narrators are unquestionably the protagonists of the works they narrate. Seemingly larger than life, they dominate their respective worlds; in contrast, the people with whom they interact appear dwarfed. Gulley, Sara and Wilcher show us the world through their eyes: at the same time, we see them moving, like leviathans, through their worlds. When Darley is compared to the Cary protagonists, it becomes obvious that we are looking out, with Darley, upon the Alexandrian scene, feeling as he feels, being deluded as he is deluded, and are inside his brain, as it were, coming to know him only in the way we come to know ourselves, tentatively and with difficulty. Subtly, gradually, he emerges; and although with Darley we focus upon an outer world, it is not so much the outer reality that is most significant as Darley's struggle to find truth and perceive reality. At first, he sees through a mist dimly and the forms he sees are sometimes distorted. Only through struggle can Darley clarify his world. Cary and Durrell both accept the existence of a reality separate from a person's individual and possibly idiosyncratic view of it. But Cary's protagonists in the art trilogy are not interested in finding the empirically real; they

want to shape creatively the raw data of experience into a unique characteristic pattern. Cary admires and celebrates their creative response to reality. What Durrell demonstrates through Darley is quite different. He shows how Darley is deceived, how in the act of observation he affects what he observes. Darley's successful development as a character depends upon his going beyond distortion to truth. Cary celebrates the distortion; Darley struggles against it.

An awareness of Georg Groddeck's influence upon Durrell helps us understand his treatment of Darley. In 1949, Durrell wrote an introduction to Groddeck's The Book of the It<sup>2</sup> in which he discusses Groddeck's key concepts and expresses his admiration for both the man and his ideas. Durrell ends his introduction with a quotation from The Book of the It which has implications for The Alexandria Quartet. Darley's search for knowledge is hampered by his affecting and distorting what he observes. Groddeck discusses this problem in the passage Durrell quotes:

Every observation is necessarily one-sided, every opinion a falsification. The act of observing disintegrates a whole into different fields of observation, whilst in order to arrive at an opinion one must first dissect a whole and then disregard certain of its parts...At the present time we are trying to recover the earlier conception of a unit, the body-mind, and make it the foundation of our theory and action. My own opinion is that this assumption is one we all naturally make and never entirely abandon, and, furthermore, that by our heritage of thought, we Europeans are all led to trace a relationship between the individuum and the cosmos...We understand man better when we see the whole in each of his parts, and we get nearer to a conception of the universe when we look upon him as part of the whole. (Introduction to The Book of The It, xxiv)

Groddeck's idea affects not only Darley's personal quest for knowledge but also the entire structure of the novel. Each book interprets the same reality differently. Thus Balthazar, for example, does not contradict Justine but demonstrates how reality is perceived by different observers.

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2. Georg Groddeck, The Book of the It, introd. Lawrence Durrell (London: Vision Press Limited, 1949).

If The Quartet is compared with Cary's Herself Surprised, two different ironic treatments may be observed. In Herself Surprised, Sara is regarded ironically by the reader: he is aware of the gap between her self-image and what she really is. Author and reader enjoy Sara's protestations. The kind of irony Durrell employs, however, is aimed at Darley and the reader, for Darley appears to be reliable: he has a host of documentary sources\* to corroborate his evidence about the people of Alexandria. But Darley, it turns out, although honest and sincere, is unreliable because his truth is subjective and relative; it changes as he becomes better informed. Durrell's technique has prompted criticism from Matthew Proser who objects to being duped and feels that Durrell has deliberately tricked his readers, thereby violating that implicit trust the reader traditionally grants.<sup>3</sup> Proser's expectation is very naive. Durrell is concerned with a different point entirely and one he can best emphasize by that method of presentation. Specifically, what Darley reveals in Justine is true, subjectively true. Darley's apparent unreliability reflects Groddeck's theory that personality is not stable, as the traditional novel assumes, but "only a continuously changing form" (Introduction, The Book of the It, xiv) which is itself an expression of the It. The "It" is Groddeck's term for the psyche of man:

The sum total of an individual human being...physical, mental, and spiritual, the organism with all its forces, the microcosmos, the universe which is a man, I conceive of as a self unknown and forever unknowable, and I call this the 'It' as the most indefinite term available without either emotional or intellectual associations. The It-hypothesis I regard not as a truth - for what do any of us know about absolute truth? - but as a useful tool in work and in life; it has stood the test of years of medical work and experiment, and so far nothing has happened which would lead me to abandon it or even to modify it in any essential degree. I assume that man is animated by the It, which directs what he does and what he goes through, and that the assertion 'I live' only expresses a small and superficial part of

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3. Matthew N. Proser, "Darley's Dilemma: The Problem of Structure in Durrell's Alexandria Quartet," Critique, 4, No. 2 (Spring-Summer, 1961), p. 22.

\* See later discussion of ambivalence of documentary material.

the total experience 'I am lived by the It' (Introduction, The Book of the It, vi)

As this suggests, Groddeck differs from Freud in his attitude towards the ego. For Freud, it is supreme:

But to Groddeck the ego appeared as a contemptible mask fathered on us by the intellect, which, by imposing upon the human being, persuaded him that he was motivated by forces within the control of his conscious mind. (vii)

Groddeck's influence upon Durrell and indirectly upon The Alexandria Quartet is profound. Groddeck believes the Self or It - "the universe which is a man" - is ultimately unknowable and we are but its "shadows and functions". (ix) Nevertheless, he suggests that liberation comes only from becoming aware of that small portion of the It which the watchful may comprehend. Hence, liberation through a limited kind of self-knowledge is possible. The Alexandria Quartet shows Darley in quest of himself: his difficulties in coming to know, his struggle with illusion and deceit and ego-imposed deceptions are all related to "It" theory. Darley needs to go beyond the limited world of the ego: "with Groddeck we learn the mystery of participation with the world of which we are part, and from which our ego has attempted to amputate us". (xiii) Only if Darley succeeds in attaining awareness of himself - as much awareness as his human limitations allow - will he be able to love. Durrell revises Descartes's famous proposition to accord with Groddeck's theory: "I am, therefore I can love". (xi)

Groddeck's theory not only influences Durrell's treatment of character and the plot-movement of The Alexandria Quartet but also its open-endedness which is expressed in the idea of the "n-dimensional novel" and the presence of workpoints following Books I, II and IV. (It is significant that there are no workpoints in Book III, which is a traditional third person, closed-form novel.) Because the It is unknowable, we live in a world of flux and mystery, one where insights are few, fleeting and precious and where first causes and final solutions are beyond us.

Another aspect of Groddeck's thought also finds expression in The

Alexandria Quartet: the overwhelming presence of sickness and disease, both physical and psychological. Above all, Groddeck was a doctor concerned with making his patients and humanity healthy and whole. He rejects cause-effects relationships of disease and health; finding no causes of sickness, he decided that "disease as an entity did not exist, except inasmuch as it was an expression of man's total personality, his It, expressing itself through him. Disease was a form of self-expression". (The Book of the It, viii) The people of Alexandria, in general, lack self-knowledge and are held prisoners of the limited world of ego. The story of Justine, for example, explores her desperate circular attempts to find herself and escape ego-bondage. Her sickness is a paradigm for that of her many fellow-citizens.

In comparing Durrell's treatment of primary narrator with those of the other novelists discussed earlier, clear differences do emerge. Two of the most interesting differences are Darley's unreliability and his position as narrator which makes it more difficult to place him as either eye-witness or protagonist. I will attempt to clarify his dual function. He is certainly an eye-witness, an observer, but thematically and structurally, he appears as a protagonist. Bertil Romberg says of Darley's role: "Despite his dominant position, moreover, Darley as the first-person narrator is not so much a main character as rather the connecting link, a medium".<sup>4</sup> Darley is a first-person narrator who is his own subject. Lubbock casts doubt upon the effectiveness of having the narrator function in this way:

He must be distinct to see; he cannot remain a dim silhouette... the light must fall full upon his face. How can he manage it? How can he give that sharp impression of himself that he easily gives to his world? It is a query that he is in no position to meet, for the impossible is asked of him. He is expected to lend us his eyes (which he does), and yet at the same time to present himself for us to behold with our own; the subject of his story requires no less.<sup>5</sup>

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4. Bertil Romberg, p. 33.

5. Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, p. 139.

Later, Lubbock reiterates that "no man can completely objectify himself, and a credible account of anything must appear to detach it, to set it altogether free for inspection".<sup>6</sup> Lubbock's objection does not invariably hold true as the Cary protagonists illustrate; we manage to see them from the outside and from the inside not only from the other works in the trilogy but also from within the works they dominate. Durrell, however, suggests another reply to Lubbock. Unlike Lubbock, Durrell does not think people are necessarily "distinct to see". Thus, the composite narration of The Alexandria Quartet gives us an opportunity to look at Darley from the outside, but when Pursewarden describes him, we must remember that his description also is relative:

This...is Darley, the vaguely amiable bespectacled creature who inhabits Pombal's box-room at certain times. He teaches for a living and writes novels. He has that nice round babyish back to the head which one sees in cultural types; slight stoop, fair hair, and the shyness that goes with Great Emotions imperfectly kept under control. A fellow-romantic quotha! Looked at hard, he starts to stammer. But he's a good fellow, gentle and resigned (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 479)

Pursewarden's external account of Darley is no more reliable than Darley's own account of himself: each is necessarily a one-sided and distorted account.

After establishing the central importance of Darley, it is important to recognize how characters appear in the novel because of the role they play in Darley's life. Hence, Justine's failure to integrate her traumatic memory into the texture of her life serves to underline the necessity for Darley to re-think his past; in contrast with him, she turns to others for answers, and restlessly engages in affair after affair, none of which help her find herself. Her failure contrasts starkly with his successful integration of past and present. When Darley begins writing, his memories cause him intense pain but in the process of writing, he heals himself; he dares to be alone with himself and seeks a solution to his problem from within; his art helps make him whole.

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6. Percy Lubbock, The Craft of Fiction, p. 148.

Durrell's stated intention, theme, and structure suggests that the primary narrator's role goes beyond that usual for an eye-witness. Durrell's statement during an interview for Encounter offers evidence for Darley's central position:

When you read Clea I hope you will feel that Darley was necessarily as he was in Justine because the whole business of the four books, apart from other things, shows the way an artist grows up...I wanted to show, in the floundering Darley, how an artist may have first-class equipment and still not be one.<sup>7</sup>

The Alexandria Quartet is about the writer's coming of age. This thematic concern is demonstrated structurally. Justine, Balthazar and Clea are demonstrations of Darley's artistic development. Justine, Darley's first real attempt to write, is poorly organized and somewhat scrappy as he mingles freely sections about his frame situation (the place from which he writes) and sections about his past in Alexandria. Transitions are abrupt and sometimes confusing. Although he explains his preference for the associative or impressionistic style of writing, he could have accomplished this and yet exercised greater selectivity and control to achieve a more cohesive, better unified work. Time is distorted for no significant purpose and distortion results simply from his associative approach. Nevertheless, an underlying chronology is discernible and, at times, the kind of suspense found in chronological and dramatic narrative is sustained at length - for example, when Darley suspects that Nessim, suspicious of his liaison with Justine, is plotting his murder. In fact, this thread of suspense impels the narrative throughout the whole of Part III of Justine, but the other sections have no suspenseful sections and Part III itself ends with the anti-climax of Capodistria's 'death'.

Darley's highly emotional account is, Balthazar believes, based on misinformation and a subjective interpretation of reality. Its only

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7. Kenneth Young, "A Dialogue with Durrell," Encounter, 13 (1959), p. 62.

truth lies within Darley's mind. Justine is an illustration of how the inexperienced artist orders remembered phenomena into a private reality. Darley himself is unaware of any distortion during the act of writing; indeed, one of the best sources of retrospective irony is the care with which he "documents" his narrative. Not content with his own recollections, he draws upon Justine's diary, Arnauti's novel Moeurs, a record of Nessim's madness, Clea's letters, and some notes he had previously jotted down himself. One important theme of The Quartet is the creation of fiction. This happens even when one attempts to say what is true. In retrospect, we know this happens in Justine, but this suggestion is also present on a first-reading. Moeurs is presented to us as an example of a fictional work which attempts to express the truth of Justine. The presence of Moeurs within the text of Justine reminds us that Darley is trying to do what Arnauti tried to do and that Darley's interpretation of her is also a fiction. Yet Arnauti's work (and Darley's) contains much that is true, for Darley recognizes many of her qualities and prefers to call the Claudia of Moeurs by her real name, Justine. In both works, the false and the true intermingle. The problem of separating them may be ultimately impossible.

Darley's illusion of attaining truth and objectivity in Justine is destroyed when, in Book II, he receives Balthazar's criticism of his book. After evaluating his friend's manuscript, Darley admits the probability of its truth. Dissatisfied with his first attempt to re-capture the past, he sets out anew in Balthazar (with the Interlinear to guide him) and this time uses imagination to achieve what appears, at first, to be a more objective presentation of the past. He comes to recognize that the personality of Justine, which he had tried to depict accurately, is a projection of his own illusions. Balthazar corrects Darley's impressions of Justine, explaining that she had no real feeling for him but really loved Pursewarden and used him simply as a decoy to fool her husband. He explains also that the climactic event of Justine,

Capodistria's accidental death during the duck shoot, was a planned deception to enable Capodistria to escape his many debts. Balthazar not only corrects Darley's misconceptions about the past but provides him with a wealth of new material, particularly about Leila, Nessim and Narouz so that Darley can supplement as well as re-evaluate his impressions. Darley is granted further insights into 'truth', but one wonders whether Balthazar's own grasp of reality is totally adequate. Balthazar, too, is subject to illusions and distortions. His character, too, affects his insights and his homosexuality may influence his attitude towards heterosexual love. For example, he once remarked to Nessim: "Passionate love even for a man's own wife is also adultery". (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 85) There "is something of homosexual malice in Balthazar's denigration of heterosexual relationships".<sup>8</sup> The reader of Book II should have become somewhat sceptical and hesitant about embracing this second account. Darley's writing, by this time, shows signs of having matured somewhat; he has lost his implicit trust in his own mental associations and moves from impressionism to a more tightly organized and more carefully developed description of people and events. Darley is more consciously the artist learning to distance himself from his work as he attempts to render it more objectively.

In Mountolive, Durrell shifts from first-person to third-person narration. One assumes that Mountolive is not Darley's work. Had Durrell intended to offer this work as an example of Darley's mastery of factual, chronological narrative, he would surely have been explicit about his intentions. The work, then, cannot offer any insights into Darley's technical development but, rather, its naturalistic mode serves to contrast with Darley's own style and perhaps suggests the limitations inherent in a purely factual depiction of reality. Such an approach,

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8. G. S. Fraser, Lawrence Durrell: A Study (with a Bibliography by Alan G. Thomas) (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1968), p. 144.

Durrell seems to suggest even while employing it, is simplistic as it ignores the difficulties of coming to know and offers a simple, closed solution to the complicated and multi-faceted nature of reality. The omniscient narrative approach, as employed in Mountolive, does not challenge the reader or draw him, as does Durrell's method in the other three books, into the web of illusion. Darley's use of first person compels the reader to share his ignorance and illusions: when Darley's assumptions are shattered, the reader's, too, are shattered. The reader is thereby subjected to an intense degree of participation. In contrast, in the Mountolive section, the author makes far fewer demands of the reader, both intellectually and emotionally and, hence, offers fewer satisfactions.

Darley, in Mountolive, shrinks into an insignificant inhabitant of Alexandria; no one pays him any attention or has anything good to say about him. For example, Maskelyne speaks slightly of him: "I won't compromise my net by introducing characters like that. It is not worth it. It is not secure". (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 493) Most of The Quartet deals with his development as person and artist, and his quest for truth; Mountolive places that quest in a different and diminishing perspective.

In Clea, the frame situation moves into the future so that this section is an expansion of the frame: the frame narrative now becomes the main narrative as Darley returns to Alexandria to rejoin the world of experience. Time is released as Darley resumes day-to-day living. He does not indulge in long speculative pauses; with Clea, The Alexandria Quartet ceases to be a memoir novel. Darley no longer makes extended references to the act of writing the novel but is caught up in living creatively in the present. Durrell tries to "mobilize the meaning of time and free his characters from the obsessive cycle of memories and

allow them to reach self-realization".<sup>9</sup> The pattern of Clea parallels Darley's artistic development: he rejects the past to live in the present; through perusing Pursewarden's writings, he realizes that "he had been digging about in the graveyard of relative fact piling up data, more information, and completely missing the mythopoeic references which underlies fact." (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 791)

I said earlier that The Alexandria Quartet is about Darley's coming of age. His development is demonstrated also on a linguistic level. The three books for which he is responsible demonstrate his verbal felicity. The Quartet, then, with the exception of Mountolive, illustrates Darley's development as a writer. In first-person narration, it is a convenient device for the narrator to be a writer to justify the existence of the work. This is the "simplest, and at the same time the most perfectly illusionistic, narrative device in a first-person novel - a device which in itself constitutes the answer to the question of the narrator's intention."<sup>10</sup> Darley is a writer; therefore he writes. No credibility gap exists between Darley and his writing. Durrell, however, does not simply arrange for Darley to be a writer to lend credence to his novel, for the novel is about the narrator's emergence as writer. Darley's comments on his limitations as writer are partially true:

I was suddenly afflicted by a great melancholy and despair at recognizing the completely limited nature of my own powers, hedged about as they were by the limitations of an intelligence too powerful for itself, and lacking in sheer word-magic, in propulsion, in passion, to achieve this other world of artistic fulfillment. (792)

All the points he mentions with the exception of his criticism of his "lack of sheer word-magic" are borne out in The Quartet. But one of

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9. Gérard Lebas, "The Mechanisms of Space-Time in The Alexandria Quartet," Caliban (1970), p. 89.

10. Bertil Romberg, p. 94.

the most remarkable aspects of Darley's work is his verbal artistry. Matthew Proser, one of Durrell's severest critics, says that "his facility with language is at moments amazing" and that he "exhibits a prodigious talent, even a virtuosity, in the areas of description and prose style".<sup>11</sup> And, of course, except in Mountolive, Durrell's language is Darley's language.\*

Darley's work generally lacks the kind of narrative propulsion one finds in the traditional English novel. His approach is introspective. Sometimes the organizing principle of events is that of association: he is reminded of events in the past because of present sensory associations. Darley explains his own method of structuring his novel: "What I most need to do is to record experiences, not in the order in which they took place - for that is history - but in the order in which they first became significant for me". (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 97)

Pursewarden's comment on the "n-dimensional novel" in "Workpoints" to Justine throws light on Darley's own structural method:

The narrative momentum forward is counter-sprung by references backwards in time, giving the impression of a book which is not travelling from a to b but standing above time and turning slowly on its own axis to comprehend the whole pattern. Things do

11. Matthew Proser, p. 19.

\* George Steiner, in a review, categorizes the language of The Quartet as baroque. For him, style is the "vital center of Durrell's art"; he acknowledges the "rare glitter of words" and asserts: "No one else writing in English today has a comparable command of the light and music of language". Steiner is aware that Durrell's use of language is a source of critical controversy and offers an explanation for the negative reaction:

This baroque ideal of narrative style [and The Quartet, he asserts, is in this tradition] is, at present in disfavor. The modern ear has been trained to the harsh, impoverished cadence and vocabulary of Hemingway. Reacting against the excesses of the Victorian manner, the modern writer has made a cult of simplicity...Contemporary English usage is incredibly thin and unimaginative. The style of politics and factual communication verges on the illiterate...Indeed, the twentieth century has seen a great retreat from the power of the word.<sup>12</sup>

12. George Steiner, "Lawrence Durrell: The Baroque Novel," Yale Review, 49, p. 490.

not all lead forward to other things: some lead backwards to things which have passed. (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 198)

Green seems to echo this comment in his criticism of the novel:

The primary use of language, then, is reflective, aphoristic, rhetorical-questioning, with only occasional attempts at first-hand rendering of experience; the general movement or structure is circular, recurrent, re-echoing<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, The Quartet has little variation in tone. No attempt is made to distinguish clearly between the different narrating voices. Different characters obviously have different opinions and ideas but no dramatic distinction of tone is made. This impression is deepened since different characters are often concerned with aspects of the same larger issues: love, personality, and writing. What lies behind this, again, is Durrell's use of The Book of the It which hypothesizes that the It acts itself out through people - using them as its instruments. Durrell's characters are moved by this force, changing or developing as it acts upon them.

At the opening of Justine, Darley's frame situation is established. The experiences he is about to describe happened in the recent past: they cover a two year period spent in Alexandria. Darley has isolated himself from Alexandria and her inhabitants and moved to an Aegean island; there on a "bare promontory" he proposes to "return link by link along the iron chains of memory to the city...I have had to come so far away from it in order to understand it all!" (17) He regards his retreat to the remote island as an escape; for the duration of his writing, he intends to suspend his own living, to limit deliberately any opportunities for new experiences, so that he may imaginatively relive his past and thereby heal himself: "Well, then, I have come here to

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13. Martin Green, "Lawrence Durrell: A Minority Report," Yale Review, 49, pp. 498-499.

heal myself, if you like to put it that way" (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 17) Darley explains his intention:

I lie suspended like a hair or a feather in the cloudy mixtures of memory. I spoke of the uselessness of art but added nothing truthful about its consolations. The solace of such work as I do with brain and heart lies in this - that only there, in the silences of the painter or the writer can reality be reordered, reworked and made to show its significant side. Our common actions in reality are simply the sackcloth covering which hides the cloth-of-gold - the meaning of the pattern. For us artists there waits the joyous compromise through art with all that wounded or defeated us in daily life; in this way, not to evade destiny, as the ordinary people try to do, but to fulfil it in its true potential - the imagination...I feel the confines of my art and my living deepened immeasurably by the memory of...[his mistresses, Melissa and Justine.] I want them to live again to the point where pain becomes art (20)

Darley's intention is to use his paint to create art and in the process to heal himself. Through reflection, meditation and introspection, Darley attempts to recapture the ambience of Alexandria and the character of its inhabitants and what these meant to him personally. Like the narrator of Proust's A La Recherche du Temps Perdu, Darley is engaged in a search for time lost - an important epoch in his life. Darley is a quest hero: his goal is truth; his obstacle is illusion. The major forms of illusion which Darley encounters are those of memory, personality and love but, at the same time, these are also the medium of his quest. Darley cannot avoid memory for without it, he cannot write; his own personality or self is the most important truth he seeks but he finds himself only as a result of his contacts with others; only real love can spark his creativity and transform him from a lethargic failed writer to a man of action and an artist. Therefore, a consideration of the theme of illusion is of central importance if one is to appreciate Darley's growth beyond illusion to truth.

Memory is Darley's means of reliving, reshaping and understanding his past but he recognizes that it is also a prison; hence, his imaginative evocation of the past is simultaneously an attempt to re-capture the past and to free himself from an obsessive cycle of memories which inhibits his development and self-realization. Ultimately, he wants to

live in time present, so as to experience most fully the impact of the given moment. Memory, Darley recognizes, has both positive and negative components. An artist turns to memory to inform the present, to give his art depth; but a human being who cannot escape from memory cannot grow; in carrying his past within him, he is shackled to it; in order to live fully, he needs to be re-born in time and leave behind the dross of his old self. This is Darley's personal aim, and, to look ahead, in Clea, he is able to return to Alexandria and live freely in the present. First, however, he must make the journey through memory for until he understands the past, he cannot incorporate it into himself and, in that sense, subsume and forget it. Darley has no alternative but to turn to memory in his search for the truth about his past, his friends, and his own character, for no other guide except memory - his own and that of his friends - exists. But the nature of memory itself imposes an obstacle. What it offers is no longer real; it may be illusory or even false. It is an unsatisfactory source of truth for a number of reasons, some of which the narrative reveals. Memory is described as a "transforming screen". Gérard Lebas, in his article entitled "The Mechanisms of Space-Time in The Alexandria Quartet", is critical of "Durrell's overinsistence on the distortion of facts through memory as well as through mental, intellectual, and affective interpretation".<sup>14</sup>

The information stored initially in Darley's memory may have been incorrect: an observer may affect what he observes; (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 520) people may reveal only aspects of themselves to another. Darley realizes that "each person can only claim one aspect of our character as part of his knowledge. To every one we turn a different face of the prism". (100) Hence, Darley has only limited knowledge of characters because they reveal only part of their selves to him. In

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14. Gérard Lebas, "The Mechanisms of Space-Time in The Alexandria Quartet," Caliban, 8 (1970), p. 85.

some instances, people may have deliberately deceived him. For example, as he learns in Balthazar, Justine has made political use of him at Nessim's behest. At other times, people may have donned masks either to hide their true selves or because they have no real selves to offer: they may be unformed or unfinished and seek others to reflect themselves simply because they do not know who they are. Justine again exemplifies this. Thirdly, the problem with coding people is, as Groddeck suggests, that they are always involved in a process of change. What they are is determined by the It acting through them. Even as Darley writes about his friends, they have become something different. Darley's closing statements in Justine indicate his uncertainty about the people he has attempted to describe:

sometimes I wonder whether these pages record the actions of real human beings; or whether this is not simply the story of a few inanimate objects which precipitated drama around them - I mean a black patch, a watch-key and a couple of dispossessed wedding-rings (The Alexandria Quartet, pp. 194-195)

Many aspects of memory are included in Justine. Early in Book I, Darley presents a mosaic of images and impressions of Alexandria (27) and then acknowledges that vivid sensory details kept fresh in memory are the writer's storehouse: "One can return to them - [vivid images] - time and time again in memory, or use them as a fund upon which to build the part of one's life which is writing". (28) He re-iterates the same concept later as he thinks of a special moment with Melissa, his Greek girlfriend:

These are the moments which are not calculable, and cannot be assessed in words, they live on in the solution of memory, like wonderful creatures, unique of their kind, dredged up from the floors of some unexplored ocean. (50)

But another problem associated with memory is its converse, forgetfulness: Darley complains that his memories are already "refunding themselves slowly into forgetfulness". (194) Memories are not stored in orderly fashion nor are they always accessible at will; they may be stored unselectively: a trivial sensory impression may return to

consciousness while a significant item may be repressed. This points to another problem with memory - its inconsistency. It can haunt one when one wishes to forget, or become elusive when one wishes to remember. And at times memory is without meaning, reviving capriciously in the brain because of some chance association: "These fugitive memories explain nothing: yet they return again and again when I think of my friends as if the very circumstances of our habits had become impregnated with what we then felt, the parts we then acted." (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 118) Similarly, Arnauti, in thinking of tiresome scenes with an hysterical Justine, asks himself: "Did this sort of thing happen so often or is it that my memory has multiplied it?" (62) This example suggests how memory is not an exact recording of event, but a coding of a dominant impression - similar scenes may blend together so that Arnauti cannot depict precisely to himself the beginning and end of a discrete scene. Because Darley is involved in a quest for truth, he is dependent upon memory as his primary means of recovering the past. The nature of memory makes us question whether Darley can find ultimate truth. He draws our attention to this problem: but his awareness of the obstacles to truth does not deter him from his quest.\*

At the beginning of Darley's story, there is an ironic gap between the truth he thinks he is telling us and the reality we gradually discover. Thus, Darley's great love affair with Justine is revealed to us as part of a political gambit on the part of Justine and Nessim. As the tetralogy unfolds, Darley loses his sense of self-importance, of being at the centre of Alexandria, and becomes aware that he is only a part of

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\* While memory is an imperfect means of attaining truth, it is, nevertheless, celebrated in the person of little Mnejian, the dwarf, whom Darley describes as "the Memory man, the archives of the city". (36) He is not selective in his memories but tends to gather details of everything and everyone. His memories and their uses contrast with those of Darley who, as artist, is challenged to impose a shape upon memory.

a large and complex world. Although Durrell explores the illusory aspects of sexual love intensively, he nevertheless believes in the creative power of right love which can release one from a narcissistic concern with the self. Darley's quest for truth is through love, first with the pathetic, diseased but golden whore, Melissa; then with Justine - egoistical, narcissistic and dominant; and finally with Clea, unpossessive and wise from experience. Durrell chooses to have Darley undergo transformation by means of love because despite his many criticisms of misdirected love, he believes that "the act of love [is] the crucial affirmation of human identity and the only true bridge for the soul".<sup>15</sup> Truth is not found through reason but "in brief spells of total illumination - total sensuous absorption".<sup>16</sup> For Durrell, truth is a spiritual and sexual apprehension. He instructs us that "the soul enters truth as man enters woman, in a possession at once sexual and spiritual".<sup>17</sup> Only in the "fiery or desperate contact of the flesh...can [we] gain access to the truth of life".<sup>18</sup>

In Justine, Darley indicated with his first reference to Balthazar that his friend was more than he first appeared to be:

"in a sense he is one of the keys to the City. The Key: Yes, I took him very much as he was in those days and now in my memory I feel that he is in need of a new evaluation. There was much that I did not understand then, much that I have since learned."  
(The Alexandria Quartet, p. 70)

In Balthazar, Balthazar becomes a key for Darley when he sends him his massive interlinear, a document which forces Darley to re-evaluate his memories; indeed, the pivotal point of his reading of Balthazar's interlinear is to force him to re-assess the past in the light of new information. When he had first written, the full facts were not at his

15. George Steiner, "Lawrence Durrell: The Baroque Novel," p. 491.

16. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 491.

17. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 491

18. George Steiner, "Lawrence Durrell: The Baroque Novel," p. 493.

disposal so he had drawn, he now realizes, a provisional picture. (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 210) Darley can either ignore the new information, re-write the story of Justine using it, which would, of course, destroy the subjective truth of the experience for him, or continue the narration by re-working the past on the basis of his new data. He decides to use it but carefully to avoid "changing or irremediably damaging the contours of...[his] subjects or the solution in which...[he sees] them move." (221) His choice enables him to preserve his memories and yet question them which in turn leads him closer to the truth of his experiences. At the same time, Balthazar forces the reader to reconsider Justine. The reader realizes that Justine was not only an exploration of illusion but also subjected the reader to illusion because he had assumed that Darley was presenting the truth. After he has assimilated Darley's self-projections he finds himself forced to question and evaluate the old material and the new. He participates in an experience similar to Darley's as he gropes about for the real in the fictional world of The Quartet, subject to uneasy feelings because he knows his guide is fallible.

In Mountolive, the theme of illusion is explored in a political context. Mountolive, upon learning of his appointment as Ambassador is excited to contemplate that he, at last, is free to act. Until his promotion, his diplomatic life required above all that he keep up appearances. His reticence, charm, tact and his careful suppression of inappropriate self-expression had combined to advance his career:

His profession which valued only judgement, coolness and reserve, taught him the hardest lesson of all and the most crippling - never to utter the pejorative thought aloud. It offered him, too, something like a long Jesuitical training in self-deception which enabled him to present an even more highly polished surface to the world without deepening his human experience. (453)

Now that he has achieved the top post in his profession, he naïvely thinks he can abandon those very qualities which fitted him to his post:

Surely now, he would at long last be free to act? At last the long discipline of self-effacement, of perpetual delegation, was at an end?...He felt as if now his true personality would be able to find a field of expression in acts; and still full of his engrossing delusion he stood up and smiled (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 448)

Before Mountolive tests his freedom of action, he bargains with Sir Louis, his predecessor, for his costly dress uniform. Mountolive's decision to wear Sir Louis's clothes, although based on a concern for economy, has symbolic significance for Sir Louis has been the consummate diplomat, learning early the ceremonial nature of his role. He has mastered self-suppression and acted according to the dictates of his advisers. A perceptive man, however, he understands Mountolive's misconception that an Ambassador has power. Chuckling, he comments: "Well, anyway, David, I bet your first reaction to the news was: now I'm free to act, eh?" (450) Mountolive is startled at his insight. Sir Louis had himself learned that diplomatic rank and power do not coincide and Mountolive, too, had better learn this lesson early in his career, for learn it he must. Mountolive's eagerness to don Sir Louis's coat is ironic, for while he thinks he is getting a bargain, the reader realizes that it is also a sign that he will behave in the traditional manner and accomplish no more than did Sir Louis: he will look correctly and behave appropriately. The uniform shapes the man who wears it.

Still, Mountolive undergoes an initial period of adjustment during which he asserts himself. His adviser, Kenilworth, tells him to shed Pursewarden, but Mountolive flouts his advice only to learn that Pursewarden has carefully plotted to have himself transferred. To save face, Mountolive asks Pursewarden to stay and behave himself. His action has proved pointless. His second decision, again influenced by friendship, is equally ineffectual. Evidence has accumulated that Nessim is involved in an armaments conspiracy in Palestine but Mountolive refuses to believe ill of his friend. Again, his advisers' judgement is correct. Diplomacy cannot operate on a minority view; Mountolive, perceiving he

is only an instrument for the collective will, submits to the requirements of his role, and does what he can do best - look smart in uniform and offer his best profile for the press. He becomes the complete Ambassador when he receives the gift of a detested sausage dog from the Chancery wives; while his private self shudders with revulsion, his public self gracefully accepts the gift. No longer has he any illusion about his role.

In Mountolive, illusion is also explored in the context of love. The basis of the love affair between Leila and Mountolive is a willed illusion. Mountolive, for Leila, is not simply an individual she loves but a symbol of a country she loves - England. When Mountolive asks her the classic lover's question: "But why me, Leila?" she replies: "Why you? Because." And she continues with a quotation from one of her favourite authors:

There is a destiny now possible to us - the highest ever set before a nation to be accepted or refused. We are still undegenerate in race; a race mingled of the best northern blood. We are not yet dissolute in temper, but still have the firmness to govern, and the grace to obey. We have been taught a religion of pure mercy which we must now finally betray or learn to defend by fulfilling. And we are rich in an inheritance of honour, bequeathed to us through a thousand years of noble history, which it should be our daily thirst to increase with splendid avarice, so that Englishmen, if it be a sin to covet honour, should be the most offending souls alive.

Mountolive listened to her voice with astonishment, pity and shame. It was clear that what she saw in him was something like a prototype of a nation which existed now only in her imagination. She was kissing and cherishing a painted image of England ...she had elected to love Mountolive's England through him rather than Mountolive himself (The Alexandria Quartet, pp. 411, 412, 413)

The distance between the real Mountolive and Leila's imagined lover increases during their lengthy separation. While he is away, his reality cannot intrude upon her imagination: "in the years of writing to Mountolive...she had so to speak re-invented him so successfully that he existed for her now not so much as a real human being but as a character out of her own imagination." (260) The letters which flow between Leila and Mountolive during their long separation serve to foster

illusion as both tend to focus on their past relationship and ignore the reality of time, change and the distorting influence of memory. The impact of meeting after a long absence has both a devastating and freeing effect. Leila now no longer has anything to live for: her life is shortened simply because she loses the will to survive. But for Mountolive, severing their bond - a bond based on illusion - marks the beginning of a new life for him.

The part that memory plays in keeping alive the relationship between Leila and Mountolive may be seen as a variant on Darley's experience of memory in general and specifically on his memory-bond with Justine. Thematically, the Mountolive section has implications for The Quartet as a whole. Memory, Darley also finds, can bind people together making them its prisoners when they have outlived their meaning for each other. But people can become locked in memory so that what should be ephemeral, or integrated with other memories, dominates one's entire existence. One can become so obsessed with the past, with a wrong one cannot forgive or forget (as in the case of Dickens's Miss Havisham) that the present is only an extension of the past, and the past is the centre of one's being. Thus Miss Havisham cannot move emotionally and in memory beyond that point: she is possessed by it.\* Leila, too, cannot escape (nor does she wish to) her affair with Mountolive. The circumstances of her outward life - the Egyptian society which denies women freedom to express themselves in public life; the death of her husband; the confluent smallpox which ravages her beauty, and Mountolive's extended absence - prevent Leila from finding any real satisfaction or fulfillment in the present. She, too, becomes obsessed with the past - the happiest time she knew although it occupied only a tiny portion of time. She lives only for her letters to Mountolive: only through their extended, intimate correspondence does she find anything meaningful.

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\* Faulkner's A Rose for Emily is another memorable exploration of this theme.

Darley recognizes that he is in danger of becoming imprisoned in his past - in a life which continues to wound him - and so he deliberately stops experience, as much as he can. He suspends time in Justine and Balthazar. Without experience, he can cause time to cease to exist for him, while he confronts his past through the medium of memory in order to understand it and set himself free. He is optimistic that he can cure himself through memory and the outcome justifies his expectation. Upon returning to Alexandria in Clea,

Old memories stirred now, some bland and pleasing, others rough as old cicatrices. Scar-tissue of old emotions which I should soon be shedding. The first momentous step would be to encounter Justine again. Would she help or hinder me in the task of controlling and evaluating these precious 'reliques of sensation' as Coleridge calls them? It was hard to know. With every succeeding mile I felt anxiety and expectation running neck and neck. (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 685)

He must contact Justine again; only an encounter with her will decide his success in controlling and evaluating his memories. When they do meet, Darley finds Justine transformed into a different woman. She is no longer desirable to him, but disgusting. Her spilled perfume nauseates him and her once lovely face is now overpowdered and patched with rouge. A slight stroke has left one eyelid drooping, transforming her expression into "something like a leer". (688) The image of Justine in his memory shatters as he sees her "become a woman at last, lying there, soiled and tattered, like a dead bird in a gutter, her hands crumpled into claws". (699) Had Darley not returned to Alexandria, he would not have escaped the thralldom of memory. But the contrast between the Justine of memory and the Justine of present reality enables him to free and heal himself.

Darley's experience repeats Mountolive's experience. For years, Mountolive's emotional life had been stifled as letters from Leila kept him bound to her, to the brief affair they had in the distant past. Before he can free himself from his fascination, he must meet her again, and confront memory with reality. "Could anything as rich as memory be

a cheat? He never asked himself the question." (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 444) But upon meeting Leila after his long absence, he finds his cherished memory of her bears no resemblance to the fat, unkempt old woman he finds. There are parallels between his reaction to Leila with Darley's to Justine. Mountolive finds his love now physically revolting and is repelled by her odour - a mixture of "orange-water, mint, Eau de Cologne, and sesame: she smelt like some old Arab lady. And then he caught the dull taint of whisky." (619) The once beautiful and elegant Leila, known as the dark swallow, is now a

plump and square-faced Egyptian lady of uncertain years, with a severely pock-marked face and eyes drawn grotesquely out of true by the antimony-pencil. They were the mutinous sad eyes of some clumsy cartoon creature: a cartoon of animals dressed up and acting as human beings. She had indeed been brave enough to unveil, this stranger who sat facing him, staring at him with the painted eye one sees in frescoes with a forlorn and pitiable look of appeal. She wore an air of unsteady audacity as she confronted her lover, though her lips trembled and her large jowls shook with every vibration of the solid rubber tyres on the road. (620)

To live obsessively in memory is unhealthy. In the examples of Mountolive and Darley returning to the women who haunt them, they are freed not only of memories but also of illusions. Indeed, the themes of memory, illusion and truth are related in this example.

Before Darley's quest can end, he must return to Justine. In finding her, he realizes that he has outgrown the influence of his past obsession. Justine knows that he has always cherished a mythical picture of her and her revelations help free him. His insight marks the turning point in his development:

I was discovering that truth was nourishing - the cold spray of a wave which carried one always a little further towards self-realization. I saw now that my own Justine had indeed been an illusionist's creation, raised upon the faulty armature of misinterpreted words, actions, gestures. Truly there was no blame here; the real culprit was my love which had invented an image on which to feed. Nor was there any question of dishonesty, for the picture was coloured after the necessities of the love which invented it. Lovers, like doctors, colouring an unpalatable medicine to make it easier for the unwary to swallow! No, this could not have been otherwise, I fully realized.

Something more, fully as engrossing: I also saw that lover and loved, observer and observed, throw down a field about each other ('perception is shaped like an embrace - the poison enters with the embrace' as Pursewarden writes). They then infer the properties of their love, judging it from this narrow field with its huge margins of unknown ('the refraction'), and proceed to refer it to a generalized conception of something constant in its qualities and universal in its operation...I had only been attesting, in all I had written, to the power of an image which I had created involuntarily by the mere act of seeing Justine. There was no question of true or false. Nymph? Goddess? Vampire? Yes, she was all of these and none of them. She was, like every woman, everything that the mind of a man...wished to imagine (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 694)

In the final book, Darley finally arrives at the truth of his own personality and becomes, therefore, able to love honestly. He learns to transcend illusion and can see the real person, Clea. The wholeness of their relationship depends upon their knowing each other as individuals. Darley's previous failure in art, as in love, stemmed from his inability to believe in discrete personalities but now that he has found himself, he is free to write and to love. There are many barriers to self-knowledge and knowledge of others, and these Durrell explores in depth. They include egoism, narcissism, and will (personified in Justine); the desire to satisfy one's psychic needs by seeing others as one wishes to see them and not as they really are; reticence about oneself akin to a desire for anonymity which causes one to adopt a mask to present to the world; (Nessim's apparent change is really caused by his donning another mask); (191) lack of information and false impressions which raise barriers to the truth about others. At the same time, personality, for Durrell, is not a given attribute, possessed by all; rather, it has to be achieved. Suffering and experience, especially the experiences of love and art, may enable one to grow a personality. And, as in the case of Justine, one can always fail to find oneself. Her only self-satisfaction comes from espousing a cause - being part of some death-defying action; for this role, she dons a mask, a substitute for her unknown self. She and Nessim resemble each other in this respect. Justine explains to Darley: "You see, when he does not act, Nessim is nothing; he

is completely flavourless, not in touch with himself at any point.

Then he has no real self to interest a woman, to grip her." (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 696) Their failure to know themselves contrasts with Clea and Darley's success. Darley knows that Clea will "share everything with...[him], withholding nothing - not even the look of complicity which women reserve only for their mirrors." (730)

Darley's growth depends on his overcoming his tendency for mirror worship in art, for through memory and writing, he seeks his own reflection. Paradoxically, he must find himself to escape. One way to escape the world of reflection is through action and this is an important aspect of the "re-birth" scene in Clea when Darley forgets himself completely in his effort to save Clea. This kind of thought and concentration upon the outside world is superior to inward, obsessive thought which makes nothing happen. Clea and Darley have agreed to part for a time. On the day before he is to leave for his Greek island, Clea invites him to go swimming. At the pool occurs the central incident of Book IV - Clea's symbolic death and re-birth and Darley's emergence as man of action when his quick thought and action save her life, although at the cost of her hand. But even after her recovery, Clea decides they are still not ripe for each other and must part until they are ready: "The richest love is that which submits to the arbitration of time." (856) One assumes they will meet again but that is not relevant for their love and mutual ordeal have given them both new life and poetic illumination. They enter a world of fulfillment, of transcendent, or mythopoeic knowledge. Both Darley and Clea are now mature, independent; their union has released a creative fire to be expressed in art but more importantly in right living. Darley's successful search for truth, the truth of himself, moves him outside the world of illusion, of obsession with the past. Both enter a "temps délivré" which simply means that they have become able to live in a present which opens out on to the future instead of stagnating and being checked by the inhibitions of the

past.

Darley's story is the familiar one of a quest protagonist in search of truth through love. His preoccupation is a reflection of Durrell's. As G. S. Fraser states, Durrell in his writing is "centrally concerned with the erotic impulse but his eroticism is a total response to nature, not something narrowly sexual."<sup>19</sup> But Darley's method of attempting to arrive at self-knowledge and truth, although ultimately successful, is a dangerous one. Fraser succinctly expresses the dangers of a quest for truth through love:

And one of the chief themes of The Alexandria Quartet is, of course, that sexual obsession is a main source of error and illusion; it is as Darley slowly liberates himself from his obsession with Justine that he begins to see his experience and those of the other characters for what they really have been.<sup>20</sup>

However, Fraser's belief that Darley comes to perceive the truth about his experiences is not supported by the text. Darley knows only different versions of what really happened; through him, Durrell is raising questions about whether there is a truth.

Stanley Eskin in his article "Durrell's Themes in The Alexandria Quartet"<sup>21</sup> asserts that Durrell's work maintains that human personality is only an illusion:

'Personality' lies in the eye of the beholder and changes as the beholder changes, and from beholder to beholder. Its only reality is as a projection of the beholder's own psychic needs, drives, and responses.<sup>22</sup>

He asserts that one does not know what the characters mean to each other because

they mean different things at different times in a series of perpetually shifting relationships which dissolve the concept of

19. G. S. Fraser, Lawrence Durrell: A Study, p. 34.

20. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 20.

21. Stanley G. Eskin, "Durrell's Themes in The Alexandria Quartet," Texas Quarterly, 5, No. 4 (1962), p. 43.

22. Stanley G. Eskin, p. 47.

individual personality and reveal it as an evanescent illusion.<sup>23</sup>

Justine is a perfect illustration of this. She is every man's darling: that is, she serves as an object upon which men project their illusions. She cannot find herself and reflects back what they desire. At the end of her relationship with Darley, she explains to him: "You see a different me...but once again the difference lies in you, in what you imagine you see." (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 692) Continuing with her post-mortem of their affair, she suggests: "We are after all totally ignorant of one another, presenting selected fictions to each other." (693) Justine accuses Darley of preferring his "own mythical picture, framed by the five senses, to anything more truthful. But now, then, tell me - which of us was the greater liar? I cheated you, you cheated yourself." (693) Later, she expresses an idea recurrent in The Quartet:<sup>\*</sup>

We are all in the grip of the emotional field which we throw down about one another...Perhaps our only sickness is to desire a truth which we cannot bear rather than to rest content with the fictions we manufacture out of each other. (698)

One reason for the presence of Arnauti's fiction in Justine is to call attention to the fact that Darley, too, is engaged in creating a fiction. If both Darley and Arnauti are just producing fictions, then the existence of Arnauti's fiction raises the question whether Darley's view is any more valid than Arnauti's. All the fictions contained in The Alexandria Quartet bear the imprint of their creators and bear, too, the distortions of the minds producing them so that in terms of the

23. Stanley G. Eskin, p. 48.

\* Her comment as she sits before the multiple mirrors at the dressmaker's is suggestive:

"Look! Five different pictures of the same subject. Now if I wrote I would try for a multi-dimensional effect in character, a sort of prism-sightedness. Why should not people show more than one profile at a time?" (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 28)

search for truth\* in fiction they lead us to ask if truth can be reached. That is the tacit question concealed beneath the exploration of individual fictions which purport to be truths. Pursewarden's role in the novel draws attention to this problematical connection between experience and fiction: his comments may help us decide whether truth may indeed be reached. He is one of four writers Durrell includes in his novel. He argues for the importance of art not as an end in itself but as a means of self-discovery. Pursewarden says the object of his art is to help him achieve himself "by shedding the work, which is of no importance, as a snake sheds its skin". (The Alexandria Quartet, p. 381) Like Justine, Clea and Darley, Pursewarden is caught up in the quest for self, but inconsistently, doubts the validity of personality altogether, considering it an illusion:

And as for human characters, whether real or invented, there are no such animals. Each psyche is really an ant-hill of opposing predispositions. Personality as something with fixed attributes is an illusion - but a necessary illusion if we are to love.  
(210)

In a conversation with Balthazar, he had discussed this idea about the constitution of the psyche:

I regard it as completely unsubstantial as a rainbow - it only coheres into identifiable states and attributes when attention is focussed on it. The truest form of right attention is of course love. Thus 'people' are as much of an illusion to the mystic as 'matter' to the physicist when he is regarding it as a form of energy. (306)

His comment in both instances is in line with Groddeck's view of people as existing not so much as discrete egos but as expressions of the "It" or life-force.

Balthazar is a spokesman for ultimate order. He attributes to the

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\* Darley's awareness that more than one pathway leads to truth leads him to offer multiple facets of motivation for Pursewarden's death. Three explanations are presented: he killed himself from general bitterness and disillusionment; he did it because he could not tolerate the conflicting demands of duty and friendship which Melissa's revelations of the Nessim conspiracy imposed upon him; he died to free Liza from her psychological bond with him and thereby give her marriage a real chance for success.

psyche an

ability to perceive an inherent order in the universe which... [underlies] the apparent formlessness and arbitrariness of phenomena. Discipline of mind...[can] enable people to penetrate behind the veil of reality and to discover harmonies in space and time which...[correspond] to the inner structure of their own psyches. (Alexandria Quartet, p. 85)

Darley, in *Justine*, first perceives the self as "a huge, disorganized and shapeless society of lusts and impulses", (84) but later, in the same book, realizes: "Somewhere in the heart of experience there is an order and a coherence which we might surprise if we were attentive enough, loving enough, or patient enough". (178) His statement suggests that ultimate truth and order may exist but to know them is difficult. Truth and order may be assumed to be subsumed in Groddeck's "It" so that his influence upon Durrell and upon The Quartet is pervasive, his ideas being disseminated among the important characters.

## CHAPTER SIX

## (i) Preface to the selected Fowles's novels

In an interview with Stephanie Nettell, John Fowles affirmed his preference for first-person narration, the mode he chose for The Collector, The Magus and much of Daniel Martin:

Authenticity is a problem, you know. I can't imagine ever writing in anything but the first person...The first person is the only satisfactory narrative, especially for a modern novelist - I can't stand the "He thought to himself" business.<sup>1</sup>

The three Fowles's novels discussed demonstrate different facets of first-person narration. The Collector is an example of composite narration in which two people - captor and captive, and different in sex, class and temperament - display contrasted reactions to a given situation. The first-person form is especially effective in generating sympathy for the psychologically disturbed and unreliable captor while Fowles's choice of diary form for the captive's story gives immediacy to her plight and maximizes our concern and tension.

In The Magus, the reader is compelled to share with the narrator his illusions and misinterpretations of people and events. The narrator's role is similar to Darley's: for both, love leads to self-knowledge and increased maturity.

The protagonist of Daniel Martin resembles the narrator of The Magus in his search for the right woman. Technically, however, the novel is quite different. Fowles experiments with disunity of form in both person and tense to create special effects relevant to his themes.

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1. Stephanie Nettell, "Strange Smell of Success," (An Interview with John Fowles), Books and Bookmen, 8 (June, 1963), p. 19.

(ii) The Collector

In his first-published novel, The Collector, Fowles makes antiphonal use of first-person narration. The book is divided into four sections: the first, third and fourth sections are narrated by Frederick Clegg and the second section by Miranda Grey. As the interview with Stephanie Nettell suggested, Fowles uses first-person narration to create plausibility in a story of unusual happenings. But there is a further justification for first-person narration in this case. Peter Wolfe makes this telling point about Fowles's narrative method:

This intimate self-disclosure is necessary, for a third-person narrative about someone as repellent as Clegg would set so much distance between him and us that he would come to us a caricature or a monster. The memoir's mad, twisted logic, flat, colorless voice, and autobiographical data cohere as a self-portrait.<sup>2</sup>

The immediacy, intimacy and sense of identification one has with Clegg, the primary narrator, intensifies the horror of the story as the reader is drawn into a mad psyche which gradually becomes so familiar that he is partially lulled into accepting Clegg's own estimate of himself as normal while yet another part of his mind recognizes and condemns this acceptance. Clegg's language contributes to one's dichotomous reaction for his madness co-exists with a concern for facts and logic. He respects order and neatness and is apparently careful to distinguish between fantasy and reality:

I can't say what it was, the very first time I saw her, I knew she was the only one. Of course I am not mad, I knew it was just a dream and it always would have been if it hadn't been for the money. I used to have daydreams about her, I used to think of stories where I met her, did things she admired, married her, and all that. (The Collector, p. 10)

As Laughlin suggests: "his simplistic reasoning is perfectly logical within his own terms".<sup>3</sup>

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2. Peter Wolfe, John Fowles, Magus and Moralist, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1976), p. 77.

3. Rosemary Laughlin, "Faces of Power in the Novels of John Fowles," Critique, 13 (1972), p. 91.

Part of the success of the book may be attributed to the contrasting personalities and styles of the two protagonists. For example, Palmer suggests: "By means of juxtaposed first-person narratives that focus on the same events...Fowles create [s] a psychological tension between the opposing male and female views".<sup>4</sup> Bagchee also comments: Miranda and Clegg's "narrations rhetorically illuminate each other. Together they present a complex drama of conflict, tension, clash of personalities, as well as intimate insights and unexpected emotional reactions".<sup>5</sup> In Walker's words, the intersecting monologues "give rise...to striking contrasts and ironies".<sup>6</sup> Rosemary Laughlin, too, has discussed the advantages of Fowles's basic structure of alternating the narratives of captor and captive over the same period of time:

Thus he can halt the action at a crucial moment and tease the reader's curiosity about its outcome until he has given the second party's version...But he achieves more than suspense with this device. With the behavior and motives of each participant both personally described and also analyzed by the other, the struggle between Clegg and Miranda gains psychological value.<sup>7</sup>

Walker takes our consideration of Fowles's handling of first-person narration a stage further:

If the first-person narrative stresses that for every tale there must be a teller whose relationship with it is essential, intersecting first-person narratives drive home the fact that for every teller there is a different tale, however closely shared the common pool of referential experience may be. The 'reality' behind the narratives remains distanced and problematical; in the end, the only accessible reality is that created by the structures of perception which the text presents.<sup>8</sup>

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4. William J. Palmer, The Fiction of John Fowles (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1975), p. 16.
  5. Syhamel Bagchee, "The Collector: The Paradoxical Imagination of John Fowles," Journal of Modern Literature, 8, No. 2 (1980-1981), pp. 221-222.
  6. David H. Walker, "Subversion of Narrative in the Work of Andre Gide and John Fowles," Comparative Criticism: A Yearbook, 2 (1980), p. 196.
  7. Rosemary Laughlin, p. 72.
  8. David H. Walker, p. 198.

The plot of The Collector is a simple one: a lower-class rates clerk wins £70,000 on the football pools - enough to make him attempt to capture a "princess lointaine". After purchasing a seventeenth-century country-house and converting its underground Catholic chapel into a prison, he chloroforms and kidnaps his dream-girl. In her crypt-like prison, she can have all the comforts she wants except sunlight, fresh air, freedom, her family and friends. Clegg's intention is to win Miranda's love but although captor and captive share fleeting moments of empathy, their differences in class, education, taste and temperament preclude any real rapport. Also, Rackham points out: "That he cannot treat Miranda as an object possessed and also as a human being is what Clegg never learns".<sup>9</sup> Suspense revolves around Miranda's safety: Will she escape? Will she survive? What will happen to her?

Clegg does not say why he writes but one may infer that his story exists to explain and exonerate himself and his actions. What he does not perceive is the disparity between what he thinks of himself and our impression of him. Many of his comments invite an opposite response. For example, when he says, "Of course I am not mad" (The Collector, p. 10), we do not agree. When he expresses his sense of moral superiority, we perceive instead his self-righteousness:

If you are on the grab and immoral like most nowadays, I suppose you can have a good time with a lot of money when it comes to you. But I may say I have never been like that, I was never once punished at school. (13)

Walter Allen observes Clegg's

appalling consciousness of his own rectitude which is the rationalisation of the sense he has of his many inadequacies; he is, as it were, a Wells character, a Hoopdriver, a Kipps or Polly, gone sour but clinging still to his awful lower middle-class respectability.<sup>10</sup>

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9. Jeff Rackham, "John Fowles: The Existential Labyrinth," Critique, 13 (1972), p. 91.

10. Walter Allen, "The Achievement of John Fowles," Encounter, 35 (August, 1970), pp. 64-65.

Like Kipps and Polly, Clegg comes from a dreary, deadening world. Wells describes those who people this world in The History of Mr. Polly:

Nothing can better demonstrate the collective dullness of our community, the crying need for a strenuous intellectual renewal than the consideration of that vast mass of useless, uncomfortable, undereducated, undertrained and altogether pitiable people whom we contemplate when we use that inaccurate and misleading term, the lower middle-class.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, whereas Kipps and Polly break free of their environment and achieve a degree of happiness and freedom, Clegg's good luck only increases the dreariness of his existence. The longing for beauty engendered by their background is distorted, in Clegg's case, into the idea of the collector. His collector-mentality had at first satisfied itself with butterflies, but money makes him ambitious to capture the "Pale Clouded Yellow" Miranda.

Clegg is withdrawn and antisocial, without friends. Lonely and alienated in a stagnant existence, his only pleasure comes from a retreat into a fantasy world - harmless until money gives him power to enact his fantasy. Ronald Binns suggests that

Clegg's social liberation leads...only to an intensification of his narcissistic sensibility, a pathological descent into self-fabricated fantasy with a fatally destructive impact on the innocent victim of his delusions.<sup>12</sup>

Clegg's description of his family background and upbringing - his father's death, his mother's desertion, the loveless and dreary domestic world with Aunt Annie and his cousin Mabel, the loss of his Uncle Dick - his friend and male role model - and the negative attitudes which lower-class life engenders - all these factors mitigate against our revulsion for him. Miranda is an obvious victim but so, too, is Clegg. He is imprisoned in his ugly selfhood, the ultimate victim of a society which largely made him what he is. At the same time, Fowles does not minimize

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11. H. G. Wells, The History of Mr. Polly (New York: The Press of the Reader's Club, 1941), p. 199.

12. Ronald Binns, "John Fowles: Radical Romancer," Critical Quarterly, 15 (Winter, 1973), p. 319.

his ugliness; he is a classic villain - the beast who makes beauty his prey, a Caliban to Miranda.

To be loved by the beautiful and bourgeois Miranda would confer upon Clegg a coveted higher status. Being loved by her would also counter his own nothingness, his "nemo".\* But juxtaposed with his admiration and longing for the ideal, unattainable maiden, is a hatred and envy of her membership in a higher class. As Karl suggests:

His desire for Miranda, which he cannot consummate sexually, is clearly a need to humiliate...By controlling Miranda, he gains revenge on every slight he has suffered - and continues to suffer - as a result of class.<sup>13</sup>

Beneath Clegg's delusion of his love for Miranda is a desire to destroy her. Miranda's attempt to humanize Clegg by seducing him releases his repressed hatred. Both his humiliation at being impotent with her and his lower middle-class self-righteousness combine in his resentment of all she represents.

Palmer stresses the symbolic implications of Fowles's choice of a collector as protagonist:

The image of the collector possesses great potentiality for symbolic or representational expansion. It represents all the forces in contemporary society that take away individual freedom or stifle self-expression, that force conformity by placing people and things in arbitrary categories and grouping them under general headings such as "enemy" or "subversive" and that shrink life up into the safe, closed enclaves of connoisseurs who muster under the coats of arms of their exclusive clubs, societies, and organizations. Clegg is but the extreme representation of the modern cultural diseases of conformity and exclusiveness, which are always a threat to those who try to reach the limits of the art of life.<sup>14</sup>

In his introduction to The Aristos, Fowles speaks of the Few - his term for a moral and intellectual elite, and the Many - the unthinking,

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\* Fowles defines the "nemo" in The Aristos: By this I mean not only 'nobody' but also the state of being nobody - 'nobodiness'. In short, just as physicists now postulate an anti-matter, so must we consider the possibility that there exists in the human psyche an anti-ego. This is the nemo. (The Aristos, p. 46)

13. Frederick Karl, p. 35.

14. William J. Palmer, p. 36.

conforming majority.<sup>15</sup> Fowles discusses The Collector as a confrontation between those two groups:

Clegg, the kidnapper, committed the evil; but I tried to show that his evil was largely, perhaps wholly, the result of a bad education, a mean environment, being orphaned: all factors over which he had no control. In short, I tried to establish the virtual innocence of the Many. Miranda, the girl he imprisoned had very little more control than Clegg over what she was: she had well-to-do parents, good educational opportunity, inherited aptitude and intelligence. That does not mean that she was perfect. Far from it - she was arrogant in her ideas, a prig, a liberal-humanist snob, like so many university students. Yet if she had not died she might have become something better, the kind of being humanity so desperately needs.<sup>16</sup>

Fowles elaborates on this:

The Collector is a parable; It's symbolic; it's an allegory. The girl represents good humanity, hope for the future, intelligence and love. The young man represents the opposite...The generous versus the mean.<sup>17</sup>

Speaking of The Collector as an allegory, Paul Pickrel suggests:

Frederick represents the unimaginative British public that enslaves and breaks the creative spirit; by winning the football pool he becomes identified with the new affluence that enables the masses to turn their sullen resentment of imagination into militant and triumphant philistinism. The story of the art student is the tragedy of the artist driven to the grave by an uncomprehending public.<sup>18</sup>

Thus Miranda describes Clegg in her diary as one of the "New People":

the new-class people with their cars and their money and their tellies and their stupid vulgarities and their stupid crawling imitation of the bourgeoisie. (The Collector, p. 207)

Frederick Karl offers a commentary on this:

In a literal sense, Miranda becomes a captive of the new values, the bad furnishings, the tasteless art objects, the pathetic attempts at smart decoration, the inability to enter any kind of aesthetic experience. This representative of the "new society" can offer every material comfort, convenience, indulgence of her needs and whims - but it is an impotent progress based on shame of feeling...Clegg's inability to feel is part of his prudishness; he places restrictions on anything that falls outside of

15. John Fowles, The Aristos (Reading: Triad Paperbacks Ltd., 1980), p. 9.

16. \_\_\_\_\_, p. 10.

17. "John Fowles," Current Biography, 38, No. 3 (1977), p. 161.

18. Paul Pickrel, "Review of The Collector," Harper's, 227 (29 August, 1963), pp. 95-96.

his lower-class materialism. The emerging New People, and those who imitate them, have rejected every value that Miranda embraces as life-giving. Based on sadism, the narrative works out in a conflict between life-in-death and death-in-life.<sup>19</sup>

That Miranda is an artist is not merely coincidental. She is associated with art - and in herself, in her physical and spiritual beauty, she is a work of art. And the collector is not just a butterfly collector. Like Hickson, the art collector in The Horse's Mouth, Clegg is enemy to the artist. Envious and impatient, he cannot aspire to make anything of beauty but tries to satisfy himself with the products of art. Miranda has a double function in being both art work and artist. Her capture and death imply the end of not just her life but her art as well. The beautiful and good are impotent against evil. The banal, the trite, the blind and the unbecoming - all embodied in Clegg - destroy the delicate and beautiful.

Clegg's narrative is interrupted at a point when Miranda's life is in apparent jeopardy. She has caught a cold which has - so she tells him - developed into pneumonia; she is flushed; her breathing has become laboured and her words are blurred. The final outcome is suspended while Miranda gives her account of her captivity. Her re-telling the story of her imprisonment while factually confirming Clegg's narrative is not repetitious for her reaction to the given data makes something quite new of them. Her narrative is not confined like Clegg's mainly to the present but she re-explores her past and, through imaginative exploration and analysis, grows from the terrified victim of the opening pages into an intellectually and emotionally richer person. In contrast, Clegg's lack of self-esteem makes his growth impossible: he is a finished person - locked in his narrow and immoral world.

The switch to Miranda's narration comes as an escape to the reader from the suffocating surface logic of Clegg's mind. Miranda's language

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19. Frederick R. Karl, A Reader's Guide to the Contemporary English Novel, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), p. 359.

is colourful; it has a verbal and imaginative freedom absent from Clegg's drab, simplistic factual account:

A lovely night-walk. There were great reaches of clear sky, no moon, sprinkles of warm white stars everywhere, like milky diamonds, and a beautiful wind. From the west. I made him take me round and round, ten or twelve times. The branches rustling, an owl hooting in the woods. And the sky all wild, all free, all wind and air and space and stars.

Wind full of smell and far-away places. Hopes. The sea. (The Collector, p. 182)

Miranda's story is told in diary form, a plausible pretext for her writing at all. Miranda's diary effectively contrasts with Clegg's narrative and makes the story of her captivity and death poignant and haunting. The two stories emphasize the reality of human loneliness and the awful difficulty in communication. Because the diary form, like the epistolary technique, intensifies intimacy and immediacy, Miranda's account has slightly greater impact than Clegg's, especially when in her final delirium, her account uses fragmentary language bordering on stream-of-consciousness, the technique which most closely imitates the natural, chaotic flow of ideas in the mind. At other times, Miranda's style is impressionistic: she does not artificially order her thoughts but describes associated topics:

All the way down here in the van it was nightmare. Wanting to be sick and afraid of choking under the gag. And then being sick. Thinking I was going to be pulled into some thicket and raped and murdered. I was sure that was it when the van stopped, I think that was why I was sick. Not just the beastly chloroform. (I kept on remembering Penny Lester's grisly dormitory stories about how her mother survived being raped by the Japanese, I kept on saying, don't resist, don't resist. And then someone else at Ladymont once said it takes two men to rape you. Women who let themselves be raped by one man want to be raped). I know now that wouldn't be his way. He'd use chloroform again, or something. But that night it was, don't resist, don't resist. (118)

Miranda writes her diary, Rosemary Laughlin suggests, to "counter her own despair at her helplessness in...[Clegg's] physical power over her".<sup>20</sup> It records "her hopes, her aims, her memories and frustrations

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20. Rosemary Laughlin, p. 73.

...and accentuates the claustrophobia of the obsessional captivity".<sup>21</sup> Although frightened by her plight, she reveals herself courageous, determined and optimistic. Although she harbours no illusions about Clegg, she feels at times sympathetic towards him. Her morality is tested by her predicament: she refrains from killing Clegg with the axe because doing so would cost her her own authenticity. Her decision to make love to him is partly to ensure her escape and partly as a desperate effort to communicate with him. This marks the turning point in the story for Clegg is offended by her overtures and loses all respect for her.

While Clegg's narrative deals mainly with the present situation, Miranda re-lives in memory some key events of her normal existence and dwells especially on the person who most influences her, the artist, George Paston. Although Miranda's diary reveals her many good qualities, an unexpected fault links her with Clegg, for Miranda, in her relationship with George, has been collecting her mentor's ideas and making them her own. The older man's influence upon her is natural given the age difference, the sexual attraction and his artistic background, yet in the context of the novel Miranda's espousal of George's ideas is ominous. Rackham criticizes this tendency in her:

She has collected G. P.'s ideas, catalogued them, frozen them, so that what were only superficial and flighty butterflies of trivia in the first place are now locked dead in the drawer of her mind.<sup>22</sup>

The motif of male domination over the female is thus continued in George and Miranda's relationship. George's means of achieving dominance over Miranda is both subtle and successful. Despite her awareness of his faults - his arrogance, cynicism, promiscuity and marital failures - she respects him as an authority figure. So even in the comparative freedom of the outside world, Miranda subjects herself to a benevolent but

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21. Times Literary Supplement, 17 May, 1963, p. 353.

22. Jeff Rackham, p. 94.

dominating male. Walker draws attention to "Miranda's position as potential victim of G. P. as well as of Clegg: the two are complementary aspects of predatory masculinity, as Miranda is well aware".<sup>23</sup>

Many of Miranda's attitudes are typical of her class. But while we may fault Miranda for her clichés, her occasional prejudices, and for playing Emma to Clegg, she remains a sympathetic figure. Her tragedy is that Clegg's interference has destroyed all chances of her realizing her full human potential although in her prison she does exhibit her capacity to mature.

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23. David Walker, p. 198.

(iii) The Magus

The Magus,\* Fowles's second-published novel is again a thriller, but this time only on a psychological level. Much of its success may be attributed to Fowles's choice of first-person narration. Its narrative drive results largely from the mysteries, problems and illusions confronting the protagonist-narrator. Nicholas Urfe is writing retrospectively, but conceals his knowledge of past events so that his uncertainty and groping maximizes mystery. First-person narration, too, deepens the mystery of the happenings on Phraxos. The reader, like Nicholas, is uncertain of Conchis's intentions. The omniscient method would produce a straight-forward account of Conchis and his band and destroy mystery and intrigue. The use of the limited viewpoint assures the reader's vicarious participation in the "godgame": subject to the same ignorance, assumptions and false conclusions as Nicholas, the reader, too, moves from illusion to illusion. Fowles controls the relationship of reader and narrator with remarkable skill. The reader is drawn into the web of intrigue and depends upon Nicholas for his interpretation of events.

Nicholas's function in the central section of the novel thus resembles that of the Time Traveller. Indeed, although the specific incidents of The Time Machine and The Magus bear no resemblance to each other, they both present strange and unrealistic happenings in a remote setting. Like the Time Traveller, Nicholas tries to find rational explanations for the mysteries he confronts. Again, as in Wells's novel, first-person narration is used to make unusual experiences credible for the reader. Roberts Rubenstein indicates the precise method Fowles uses:

one can acknowledge that Nicholas's experiences, unlikely though they are, are acceptable to the reader because of the tone through which the story is told: Nicholas is a skeptical rather than a gullible reporter of the often fantastic series of

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\*References are made to the revised version of The Magus.

masquerades and charades through which he passes. Hence, the reader's tendency to incredulity is effectively neutralized by the narrator's similar response to these events and experiences.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, both Nicholas and the Time Traveller are involved in heuristic narration, but, whereas the Time Traveller is a "flat" character who functions primarily as a device, Nicholas's role is more complex: he is a developing protagonist engaged in a quest for self-awareness and understanding.

Structurally, the novel is divided into three parts and each reveals Nicholas in a different stage of development. The first section, which may be thought of as an extended frame situation, is set in the Bloomsbury area of London. Nicholas describes his uninitiated self - a crass, egocentric, manipulative Don Juan just down from Oxford. He expends most of his energy exploiting women. He has a deep-rooted fear of emotional involvement and commitment: he prides himself on his sexual prowess but is careful not to pay the price of "freedom" which he assumes is predicated upon avoiding marriage. Nicholas shuns responsibility; he is an escapist who prefers a fantasy future to a real present. Crucial to the story is that we like Nicholas despite these glaring faults: first-person narrative is used to secure empathy and identification with the protagonist. One has immediate access to the flow of his ideas and his emotional response without any author-imposed commentary.

Part II takes place on the Greek island, Phraxos, where Nicholas accepts a teaching position. Most of the narrative, however, concerns his week-end visits to Bourani where Conchis arranges a psychodrama whose end is to transform the callous youth into a humane, understanding and responsible adult. Nicholas is enticed into playing Conchis's game partly because he is impressed by his wealth, knowledge, rhetoric and people; by vicarious identification, he can enjoy his friend's wealth. More obviously, he enjoys the prestige of being chosen. He feels special, distinguished, set apart from the other teachers and the

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23. Roberta Rubenstein, "Myth, Mystery and Irony: John Fowles's *The Magus*," *Contemporary Literature*, 16 (Summer, 1975), pp. 334-335.

villagers. Ironically, his qualification for being invited is that he is a rough, unformed youth with no more to offer than his naïve American successor. Another attraction at Conchis's house is the elusive Lily. Curiosity, sexual excitement and a sense of being in a fantasy world draw Nicholas to Bourani, as he decides to miss nothing the adventure promises

In short, if it was her role in the charade to seduce me, I should be seduced. I couldn't do anything about it. I was both a sensualist and an adventurer; a failed poet still seeking resurrection in events, if not in lives. I had to drink the wave, once offered. (The Magus, p. 202)

In London, Nicholas had been in control as the exploiter but on Bourani he finds himself in the position of "a mouse before a cat". (234) He is wary and suspicious of Conchis and his intentions. Fictions proliferate making him uncertain of reality. Thus, when he is finally granted Lily's body, he discovers it is only as part of the game, and immediately afterwards he is captured and taken to a mock trial. Humiliated, he is forced to hear himself psycho-analyzed. He is criticized for being asocial, resentful of authority, and for preying sexually and emotionally on young women:

His method is...to stress and exhibit his loneliness and unhappiness - in short, to play the little boy in search of the lost mother. He thereby arouses repressed maternal instincts in his victims which he then proceeds to exploit with the semi-incestuous ruthlessness of this type...In every environment he looks for those elements that allow him to feel isolated, that allow him to justify his withdrawal from meaningful social responsibilities and relationships and his consequent regression into the infantile state of frustrated self-gratification. (509-510)

Similarly, Part II ends with the re-appearance of Alison whose "death" Conchis had staged as part of Nicholas's education. Nicholas feels disturbed and betrayed to find Alison in collusion with Conchis. The one reality to which he had clung has been part of the elaborate fiction.

In Part III, Nicholas is back in the world of ordinary experience. He first visits Leverrier in a monastery not far from Rome in order to find out his reaction to Conchis. Leverrier, however, tells him nothing. Nicholas then flies to London to continue his research. Some of

Conchis's stories and characters prove fictional; some appear true and others unverifiable. This final section is dominated by Nicholas's quest for Alison. A most important contact is Lily de Seitas who is mother to Lily and Rose, colleague of Conchis and friend to Alison. Nicholas feels a surge of confidence and power at the success of his investigation but, once again, he discovers he is being manipulated, and his education continues. Lily also has some important truths for Nicholas. One "truth" Nicholas has to learn is that there is no God - no one looking to praise or punish man. Nicholas's confusion of art and life has often led him to perform for an imaginary audience: he still has to learn to do what is right simply because it is right. Lily de Seitas also explains that her daughter had made love to him to teach him that "physical pleasure and moral responsibility are two very different things". (The Magus, p. 662) Nicholas needs to learn this for, throughout the novel, he has consistently confused love and sex. Nicholas tries to live up to Lily's most important commandment, "Thou shalt not inflict unnecessary pain" (641) but in his friendship with Jojo, the unkempt Scottish girl, he fails. He is honest with Jojo in defining their relationship but he does not give her enough information about himself and his feelings about Alison for Jojo to realize he is not free. Nicholas, however, has matured: he has tried to behave humanely and is sorry for hurting her. When Alison now re-appears in a banal London setting, Nicholas recognizes that all his journey has been to return him to his beginnings so that he knows "the place for the first time". (650)

As this suggests, the focus throughout the book is upon Nicholas's sexual relationships. Fowles chooses to explore Nicholas by demonstrating how he copes or fails to cope in love relationships not only because he believes in the primacy of personal relationships but because love can lead to self-knowledge. Perhaps, it is this aspect of love - the insight into self - that Nicholas unconsciously fears as well as the mundane reality that often accompanies love - a family of four, a steady

job, a mortgage - the limitations and frustrations which marriage imposes upon the freedom-seeking self.

The Magus tells the story of a young man's initiation - his rite of passage. The novel resembles, in some respects, Durrell's The Alexandria Quartet. Both narrators are teachers, exiles from England, and aspiring writers. Love is an important motif in both novels: in The Alexandria Quartet, it brings about Darley's emergence as a writer; in The Magus, the moral implications of sexual liaisons are explored. Nicholas's experiences in Bourani help him distinguish between sex and love. When his own feelings are toyed with and he is deliberately duped and sexually humiliated, he realizes at last that his favourite past-time of playing emotional games with women is reprehensible.

The basis of Nicholas's misconceptions is suggested by his comment about his reading of French existentialist novels while at Oxford. The members of his small club

argued about being and nothingness and called a certain kind of inconsequential behaviour 'existentialist'. Less enlightened people would have called it capricious or just plain selfish; but we didn't understand that the heroes, or anti-heroes, of the French existentialist novels we read were not supposed to be realistic. We tried to imitate them, mistaking metaphorical descriptions of complex modes of feeling for straightforward prescriptions of behaviour. (The Magus, p. 17)

At another point, Nicholas says: "all my life I had tried to turn life into fiction, to hold reality away". Scholes writes: "he uses his misreading of literature as an excuse for mistreating life as if it were art".<sup>24</sup> As I suggested earlier, The Magus is a composite novel. In Part II, Conchis creates many fictions in order to teach Nicholas about himself and life: some of these fictions are in the form of teaching-stories. These include Conchis's story of his capture during the invasion of Greece when he is given a choice of either clubbing two

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24. Robert Scholes, "The Orgastic Fiction of John Fowles," The Hollins Critic, 6, No. 5 (December, 1969), p. 4.

guerrillas to death to ensure the release of eighty villagers or refusing and being manipulated into feeling responsible for their deaths. The purpose of this story is to teach Nicholas that even in a situation without apparent choice, freedom does exist - the freedom to refuse. Conchis will not violate his own integrity by killing and he refuses to feel responsible for the atrocities the Germans commit. Nadeau comments: "Conchis chose a course of action in the face of a circumstance in which all alternatives are absurd, but affirms his ability to make free choices nevertheless".<sup>25</sup> Nicholas needs to be educated about the meaning of freedom for in the context of his own life - particularly in his dealings with women - he confuses insulation, selfishness and non-involvement with freedom. But freedom is a more complex idea: it can co-exist with commitment to another. One has freedom to be involved, both personally and socially. Berets points out that:

In this lengthy and most pertinent passage of the novel, Conchis ...illustrates for Nicholas that man's whole struggle is concerned with the annunciation of personal freedom and individual choice even in the face of death.<sup>26</sup>

Nicholas is educated through Conchis's fictions. But Conchis's fictions are not just the tales that he tells: there is also the "godgame" which dominates Part II of the novel. As Michael Boccia explains:

We may perceive the godgame as an educational process which functions through the use of art and is intended to teach people their responsibility to act in humane ways.

The rhetoric of art works so that we become convinced, not by logic and argument, but by experience.<sup>27</sup>

Nadeau interprets the godgame in this way:

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25. Robert L. Nadeau, "Fowles and Physics: A Study of The Magus: A Revised Version," Journal of Modern Literature, 8, No. 2 (1980-1981), p. 271.
26. Ralph Berets, "The Magus: A Study in the Creation of a Personal Myth," Twentieth-Century Literature, 19 (April, 1973), p. 91.
27. Michael Boccia, "'Visions and Revisions': John Fowles's New Version of The Magus," Journal of Modern Literature, 8, No. 2 (1980-1981), p. 237.

The intent of the godgame, to use Fowles's terms, is to assist Nicholas in the process of curing himself of the condition of "nemo" and preparing to live as a member of the "elect" or the Aristoi. In doing so, he learns to assimilate and understand the role of "magus" or magician.<sup>28</sup>

Fleishman, too, discusses the godgame:

In The Magus, a man has grasped that god...leaves man free but that men insist on erecting a divine governance in order to escape from their own possibility of freedom. This man decides to play god for the men of his day, commanding them to be free by first asserting and then gradually withdrawing his control of their lives. That is the God-game, as played in the novel. It rests on the notion that a man can teach another man to be free by playing god to him and then revealing that he is not a god, that there is no god, that each man must be his own god.<sup>29</sup>

Nicholas undergoes much pain and humiliation in the process of this discovery but this is an inevitable part of the learning experience. Conchis inflicts only necessary pain. Because art and life are deliberately confused in the godgame, Nicholas's escapist tendencies diminish and he becomes hungry for reality.

Conchis's use of Lily to teach Nicholas is appropriate for in his relationships with women, in particular with Alison, Nicholas's ignorance, selfishness and lack of moral responsibility were most in evidence. Being duped as he had formerly duped others is a painful but enlightening experience. He is forced to acknowledge that Lily is not a real person for him but only the sum of his imaginary projections. Alison, however, is real and if he is ever to know happiness, he must find and win her.

The Magus ends ambiguously for we are uncertain what Alison's decision will be. Indications that she will accept Nicholas include her past love and loyalty and her lack of illusions about him. The ending makes us question whether Nicholas has changed. To expect a total transformation is unrealistic. (He admits that Lily still allures him.)

28. Robert L. Nadeau, pp. 266-267.

29. Avrom Fleishman, "The Magus of the Wizard of the West," Journal of Modern Literature, 5 (April, 1976), p. 300.

But Nicholas has changed in one important way: he is now willing to accept Alison and assume responsibility for her happiness. No longer does he seek a fantasy world but is willing to accept reality. Barry Olshen's comment is relevant to the ending:

Conchis preaches that answers are a form of death, and the fact that the novel leaves the reader with a question suggests that its structure is designed to enact the truth it proclaims. The emphasis of the novel is quite clearly on beginnings, not endings; on the moment of choice which initiates action, not on the natural or determined outcome of that action. It is the quest that the novel promotes, not the destination; living in the labyrinth, not finding a way out.<sup>30</sup>

Nicholas habitually assumed that all events were capable of rational analysis. He, therefore, reduced the mysteries and complexity of life. He needed to learn that the underside of ordinary experience is mystery; thus, Conchis offers him the story of Henrik, the blind man who meets and converses with God. His experience is private and unverifiable but the most important part of his reality. Another fiction Conchis relates to Nicholas has a similar message. The story of the Prince and the Magician, like the story of Henrik, supports the primacy of psychological or subjective truth. Berets discusses its meaning within the novel:

It functions to demonstrate the necessity...of accepting the mystery without feeling the additional need to prove its reality, since ultimately reality, as defined by the novel, is a psychological...construct...

This tale suggests that when confronted by the reality of death as the only truth, man will choose illusion...The Prince...like Nicholas...chooses to believe in the imaginary constructs of his and his culture's myths, rather than confront the reality which he is supposedly seeking...

Nicholas begins to accept the idea that perpetuating mystery is the primary impetus leading him to the future...[his] whole quest after...truth has really provided him with a meaningful experience even if the goal he had been seeking is still nowhere to be found. What he learns to accept is the multiplicity of the universe, rather than its dualistic either/or posture.

Roberta Rubenstein has drawn attention to the way in which Nicholas's

30. Barry Olshen, p. 919.

31. Ralph Berets, pp. 91, 93, 94.

experiences mirror the reader's, and Nicholas's relationship with Conchis represents the reader's relationship with Fowles -

Nicholas's skepticism at what is happening to him, his constant attempts to de-mystify the unusual incidents by explaining them, and his relation to Conchis (the magus/magician) parallel the reader's attitude towards the events described, his attempt to make sense of them, and his relation to Fowles (the magus/author). Though the narrative is told from Nicholas's point of view, he discloses only the information he knows at any given time, so the reader cannot get much ahead of Nicholas in deciphering the meaning of the strange experiences. Fowles handles this aspect of the narrative consummately: each time the reader thinks he has outguessed Nicholas in understanding what is happening, Fowles turns another corner, and the reader finds himself as mystified as Nicholas is.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, Cory Wade argues that The Magus is "a study in manipulation of the protagonist by the masquers and of the reader by Fowles":

The first-person technique of The Magus...creates a bond of sympathy through shared experience between the reader and the protagonist. We undergo the same shocks and confusion he does, and are never guided in our response by any behind-the-scenes clues. [This]...technique is...dangerous, since it involves the possibility of muddling the audience in the process of immersing them in the protagonist's bewilderment. There is a great risk of our becoming seriously confused as we experience with him his seriously confusing plight. This is such a delicate balance that only genuine wizardry and superb manipulation can prevent a novelist from slipping from this narrative tightrope. Fowles manages it, but barely. Though The Magus continues to hold in abeyance the audience's impulse toward explanation, the serious reader will succeed in putting together enough pieces to glimpse the final shape of the puzzle...Discernment, as well as tenacity, is needed to strip away the cloak of obscurity which so tantalizingly drapes the fiction.

Usually an audience watches a questing hero from some distance. Here the audience undergoes the hero's trials with an intensity and an empathy which result from Fowles's sense of the novel as theatre. Again, conventional distinctions between those who enact the ritual and those who witness it vanish. The protagonist in The Magus can't determine whether he is a participant in the Bourani drama or an observer...And the reader, drawn in by narrative technique and held out by narrative content, can't tell either.<sup>33</sup>

The last chapter of the novel begins and ends in the third-person.

This deviation serves to provide a brief, distanced view of the

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32. Roberta Rubenstein, p. 330.

33. Wade Cory, "Mystery Enough at Noon: John Fowles's Revision of The Magus," Southern Review, 15, p. 718.

protagonist's problem. The paragraph also draws attention to the novel qua novel by touching upon the idea of an ending and questioning its artificiality: "An ending is no more than a point in a sequence, a snip of the cutting shears". (The Magus, p. 645) This ending then has a further appropriateness: its mystery is one with the mysteries which pervade the work. Fowles forces the reader to participate in fiction making: he has to weigh the alternatives and choose. Had Alison accepted Nicholas with the novel, their future would still remain indeterminate: they would still have to renew their promises from day to day.

(iv) Daniel Martin

In The French Lieutenant's Woman, John Fowles plays games with the reader with an intrusive author and three separate endings for his novel. In Daniel Martin, Fowles plays similar games. This time, he plays with the reader's traditional expectation of consistency of viewpoint. The first chapter is told in the third person up to its closing paragraphs when a boy who participates in the harvest ritual is brought into prominence in relation to a first-person narrator. The following passage at the end of Chapter One demonstrates Fowles's shift in person:

He sits with his back to a beech-trunk, staring down through foliage at the field. Without past or future, purged of tenses; collecting this day, pregnant with being. Unharvested, yet one with this land; and that was why he had been so afraid. It wasn't death, the agony in the mower's blades, the scream and red stumps...but dying, dying before the other wheat was ripe.

Inscrutable innocent, already in exile.

Down, half masked by leaves. Point of view of the hidden bird.

I feel in his pocket and bring out a clasp-knife; plunge the blade in the red earth to clean it of the filth from the two rabbits he has gutted; slit; liver, intestines, stench. He stands and turns and begins to carve his initials on the beech-tree. Deep incisions in the bark, peeling the grey skin away to the sappy green of the living stem. Adieu, my boyhood and my dream.

Close shot.

D. H. M.

And underneath: 21 Aug 42. (Daniel Martin, p. 16)

This excerpt illustrates the complexity of the narration. A shift of viewpoint is implied in the fourth line: "Unharvested, yet one with this land; and that was why he had been so afraid." The first half of the sentence gives a distanced view of the boy while the second half is more subjective, suggesting the narrator feels an empathy with the boy and understands his feelings. The shift in the fourth paragraph: "I feel in his pockets" clearly shows and problematises the relationship between the narrator and Daniel Martin, the character, who exists in the memory of the narrator. There is no first-person narrator until this

point. Then it appears he is re-entering a significant scene from his youth. The vivid imagery gives new life to the past making it seem tangible in the present.

Shifts in tense occur before a narrator is brought in. Hence, different perspectives on the boy exist before the narrator says "I feel in his pocket". Narrator and character merge again with "Adieu, my boyhood and my dream"; we also sense the collapse of time. The phrases "Point of view of the hidden bird"<sup>\*</sup> and "Close shot" look forward to Daniel's participation in the film world and the narrator's viewing of self.<sup>\*\*</sup> On a first reading, they are puzzling, but are explained later when we discover the narrator is a film-script-writer. These phrases do not imply objectivity; instead, they point to a different way of narrating. They make the narration self-conscious. They relate to the discussion of film-writing versus novel-writing that comes later and the different narrative conventions the novel exploits.

A number of assumptions may be posited about Daniel Martin in retrospect though not from a first reading. One may assume that John Fowles is the narrator of the first chapter who talks about himself in both first and third person. Later, one discovers that 'Daniel Martin' is thinking of writing a novel about himself while one reads a novel about him, that is, there is a tendency to collapse together the novel being read with the novel he is writing. With the collapse of the subject into the narrator, the reader may recognize that he is being teased about what connections may exist between the fictive Daniel Martin and John

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\* "Martin" is a bird and Daniel is associated throughout the novel with bird imagery.

\*\* Simon Loveday writes of the "larger thematic concerns" implicit in this first chapter: "firstly, the continuity or discontinuity of the self; secondly, the gap between unself-conscious action and self-conscious reflection; and thirdly, the loss and recovery of time."<sup>34</sup>

34. Simon Loveday, "The Style of John Fowles: Tense and Person in the First Chapter of Daniel Martin," Journal of Narrative Technique, 10, p. 204.

Fowles, the person. One clue to the linking of Martin and Fowles is the anagram S. Wolfe which Jenny suggests he might use as a pseudonym. Barry Olshen examines the closeness between author and character:

This is Fowles's first novel whose title is the same as the name of its hero, suggesting how thoroughly the character's life is the subject of the book. Furthermore, in terms of thought and feeling, Fowles is probably closer to Daniel Martin than to any of his other protagonists...At a crucial point about two-thirds through the book (at the end of the chapter entitled "In the Orchard of the Blessed"), Daniel gets the first glimpse of what he must do with his novel. Nowhere is the blending of character and author clearer or more significant than in the moral and aesthetic declaration that follows this recognition: "To hell with cultural fashion; to hell with élitist guilt; to hell with existentialist nausea; and above all, to hell with the imagined that does not say, not only in, but behind the images, the real." Perhaps the most persuasive symbol of the reciprocity between character and author in Daniel Martin is the proposed name of the hero of Daniel's planned novel: S. Wolfe, an anagram of Fowles.<sup>35</sup>

Two kinds of dislocation are apparent in Daniel Martin: dislocations in time and dislocations in viewpoint. The first three chapters suggest the different time planes: for example, Chapter One, "The Harvest", takes us back to Dan's boyhood; Chapter Two, "Games", exists in his Hollywood present; Chapter Three, "The Woman in the Reeds", presents a scene from his university days at Oxford. What these juxtaposed times have in common is Daniel Martin. Fowles chose the technique of time dislocation rather than chronological presentation not simply to highlight key events in Dan's life but primarily for thematic reasons. A major theme is Dan's imaginative journey to the past to give his life a sense of meaning. He engages in a process of re-discovery, re-evaluating both himself and his roots because he experiences a sense of loss, of being stranded and isolated in the present. When the phone call summons him to Oxford in time present, Dan finds himself journeying as well to his own personal past; later, when Jane and he travel in Egypt they engage in a symbolic journey into humanity's past. Sensing the enormity

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35. Barry N. Olshen, John Fowles (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1978), p. 112.

of time and space, they turn to each other, finding comfort in love which helps combat the terrible vastness of time and space. Countering the inevitable loss of time - the constant erosion of the present into the past - is the suggestion of ritual and recurrence in, for example, the opening chapter, "Harvest", and in the coming to fruition of Jane and Dan's "Acte Gratuit" many years into the future. Another reason for using time dislocations is that in human memory and imagination, the past co-exists with the present. Specifically, scenes from Dan's past such as the afternoon with Jane and the time spent with his first love, Nancy, continue to exist in Dan's mind. The complexity of the narration thus exists because Fowles wishes to make time horizontal, to make all past present in the mind - so that Daniel Martin, and all his awareness, knowledge and perceptions are contained in the present. Fowles writes in The Aristos: "Art best conquers time, and therefore the nemo. It constitutes that timeless world of the full intellect". (Daniel Martin, p. 174)

Recurrent dislocations in viewpoint are also a feature of Daniel Martin. For example, Chapters Two and Three are narrated in the third person; Chapter Four is one of Jenny's first-person contributions. Chapters Five and Six are again narrated in the third person; from Chapters Seven to Thirty-Five, first and third-person narrative - shifts occur - sometimes between paragraphs and sometimes within a single sentence. The last eleven chapters, however, are consistently told in the third person. Fowles's decision to vary viewpoints may be based partly upon the autobiographical element mentioned earlier: that is, the first person, in this novel, may signal a partial identity between author and character. More significant to the central issue of the novel - Daniel Martin's development - is the variation of person to signal his uncertainty and inner division; when he finally arrives at a sense of completion in the latter part of the book, his narrative becomes consistently third person. Thus, Dan's desire to achieve 'whole sight' appears

to be realized in the book's objective final section. Susan Klemtner comments:

As his sense of the opposition between his past and present dissolves in a final understanding of their unity, so does his "split personality" finally merge into wholeness. The last eleven chapters of the novel, presenting the trip to Egypt and return, use only the third person. Dan's confrontation with subjectivity and his assimilation of his past in the middle of the novel allow his assumption of a more honest objectivity at the end. While the consistent third person of Chapter Two is clinical, cinematic and external, the equally consistent third person of Chapters Thirty-six to Forty-six is personal, interior, and novelistic. In its progressive movement toward a perspective that fuses the subjective and the objective, the narrative itself mirrors the narrator's growth toward 'whole sight'.<sup>36</sup>

The last eleven chapters complete the movement of the novel from fragmentation to integration both in terms of consistency of person and narrative viewpoint and in terms of the characters' development. Jane realizes that her rigid religious and political commitments have been a retreat from reality while Dan learns to accept himself and the truth of his needs. Instead of continuing in his self-absorption, he learns to see himself as part of the world. Outward expressions of this include joining the Labour party and marrying Jane. This is a marked change in Dan for almost the entire novel is an expression of his obsession with his personal life: self-awareness, self-analysis and quest for personal happiness. Linked to this theme of self-absorption is the theme of freedom. Earlier, he had remarked "that freedom, especially the freedom to know oneself, was the driving force of human evolution". (Daniel Martin, p. 559) The movement of the book supports this attitude. In his search for self-knowledge, Dan realizes his need for Jane and, when united with her, he finds personal freedom. The theme of freedom and commitment on which The Magus ends is echoed in Daniel Martin. Both novels suggest that one achieves the greatest freedom when one is committed to another.

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36. Susan Strehle Klemtner, "The Counterpoles of John Fowles's Daniel Martin," Critique, 21, 2, p. 65.

Some critics have found the time and person shifts disconcerting and even jarring.\* One critic who does appreciate Fowles's technique in Daniel Martin is Patricia Boomsma. She comments:

Both the structure and point of view of Daniel Martin emphasize changing perspectives. The structure builds on the shifting perspective of scenes which focus on the past, follow plot time, or appear written by someone who knows the effects of what happens. The point of view of the narrator moves between the third person Dan the author to the third person Dan the participant as well as to Dan in the first person. Fowles is not being simply experimental; these shifts in time and point of view contribute to the philosophical framework of "whole sight" by placing Dan in the context of his and his culture's past and by showing Dan's shifting view of himself.<sup>37</sup>

What happens to Daniel Martin is like what happens to Darley in The Alexandria Quartet. Both are involved in a process of re-interpreting their lives as part of a search for truth.

Before making an aesthetic judgement upon Fowles's variations of time and person, one needs to ask why they occur. The novel's tension results from thematic dualities and it is appropriate that thematic dualities\* are reflected by the use of dual viewpoints - that is, the first and third person. Because Daniel Martin attempts to find his past in the present, a technique which makes us aware of time is appropriate. Associated with the idea of time is, as Huffaker mentions, that of the continuity and discontinuity of the individual. The variation in person suits this theme.

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\* These critics criticize Fowles's experiment with person: E. S. Duvall, "Short Reviews" (A review of Daniel Martin in Atlantic), 240 (October, 1977), p. 105.

John Hofsess, "Fowles on the Twentieth-Century Rack," Books in Canada, 7 (February, 1978), p. 23.

Elizabeth Stone, "Put on a Happy Face," Village Voice, 22 (September 12, 1977), p. 41.

37. Patricia J. Boomsma, "'Whole Sight': Fowles, Lukacs and Daniel Martin," Journal of Modern Literature, 8, No. 2 (1980-81), p. 336.

\* These include the contrasts between America and England, past and present, the sacred combe and the end of the world, film and novel, nature and artifice.

Daniel Martin is a memoir novel covering approximately thirty years. It traces the life of an Englishman from his youth in Devon during the late 1930's through careers as a playwright in London and screenwriter in California and his return to Devon to write a novel - presumably this one. As the title suggests, Daniel Martin is the novel's protagonist.

The novel begins with Dan's search for self-knowledge, for 'whole sight'. While involved with Jenny, he feels a sense of guilt, unease and dislocation. He needs to be "put together". (Daniel Martin, p. 19) As we gradually discover, he is living with the wrong woman, doing the wrong work and living in the wrong place. Much as he likes Jenny, their relationship can have no future for he resents the generation gap between them and its incestuous taint. More importantly, with her, he is cut off from his past. He longs metaphorically to go home.

Living with Jenny has been, for him, an evasion of self. As his surcharged reactions to both Barney and Anthony show, what counts most for him lies in England and stems from his own English generation. (39)

Dan is sick of screenplays. Jenny suggests he write a novel and Dan engages in a lengthy process of deciding whether he should. Before he can become an artist, however, he needs to complete himself as a person.

Imagery is used to suggest that Dan is in transit. Both he and Jenny describe him as luggage. Jenny says: "I shouldn't call him a smart leather suitcase. He's really an old split parcel, done up with fifty thousand clumsy knots." (39) And, en route to Oxford after the phone call which begins the process of integration for him, Dan says: "I did feel like a suitcase with illegible labels, safe for as long as I was locked". (104)

The scenes from Dan's Oxford days juxtaposed against those of his life in Hollywood prepare us for the impact Jane will have on him. Emphasis is given to their acte gratuit and Dan's reaction to her voice on the phone many years later indicates the power she still has over him: "Then a voice; and unbelievably, as in a fiction, the door in the wall

opens". (Daniel Martin, p. 124) When he encounters Barney Dillon on the flight to London, Dan acknowledges: "I finally knew that day in Oxford did not want to die". (106)\* The woman Dan meets in Oxford is not the vital, exuberant girl he had known in University. Although her style of dress is flamboyant and stagy, Dan misses her "ancient vitality - that mute electricity, disturbance, poetry with which she had always charged even the most trivial meeting". (165) She lacks the warmth he remembers and has become deeply reserved. From Anthony, Dan learns that their marriage has been a failure; his influence led her to suppress "all the instinctual side of her nature". (188) Regretful at damaging her true nature, Anthony hopes that Dan "might one day find time to help disinter the person Jane might have been from beneath the person he now is". (191)

Dan's observation of Jane confirms Anthony's report of her but her capacity for right feeling surfaces at times: for example, in her relationship with Caro. In the Tsankawa chapter, Dan remembers the men who once lived there envying them their "totality of consciousness that fragmented modern man has completely lost". (353) Gradually, he realizes that Jane's presence has power to give him a sense of wholeness and completion: "But I knew something in Jane's presence satisfied some deep need in me of recurrent structure in both real and imagined events; indeed, married the real and imagined; justified both". (442) She

was someone whose spirit remained not quite like that of any other woman he had ever known; that there are some people one can't dismiss, place, reify...who set riddles one ignores at one's cost; who, like nature itself are catalytic, inherently and unconsciously dissolvent of time and all the naturalist tries to put between himself and his total reality. (440-441)

Dan is aware of what he seeks in Jane:

Above all he had to distinguish his real self from his putative fictional one; and though his training in an adamantly

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\* The sound of Barney's footsteps had interrupted Dan and Jane the memorable afternoon after they had discovered the body in the reeds.

third-person art and angle of vision might seem to facilitate such auto-surgery, he felt deeply unsure about it. There too he had an apprehension that Jane could help - that the 'making him think' was essentially a making him look at himself through her eyes. And through her opacity...it struck him that she was also unique in not mirroring him clearly; did not reflect what he saw in the less thinking, less perverse and perhaps less distorted glass of more ordinary minds. (Daniel Martin, p. 441)

This passage suggests that Fowles is talking about a fictional presentation of himself. As in The Magus, he is again manipulating the reader, making him question what is truth and what is fiction.

Dan's trip to Oxford clarifies his need for Jane and makes him realize that she needs his help. Before their trip to Egypt, however, he had not consciously decided against Jenny. Nevertheless, it is obvious to the reader that their relationship is transient. An indication of this is that the similarity between himself and Barney Dillon in their love affairs is odious to him. Inadequacies in his relationship with Jenny include her failure to understand him completely; with her, Dan's sense of self is guilty and incomplete. Dan, too, has an overwhelming sense of place. This, as the Tsankawi section reveals, Jenny lacks. Jane, he feels, can share the place he loves, Thorncombe, where he plans to live and also act as a catalyst for the novel he plans to write. Jenny, on the other hand, could never be content in his rural retreat.

On the Egyptian tour, Dan finds that, after an initial mutual shyness, he and Jane still retain a sense of communion. Very soon, they find they can communicate without words. This is shown when they are in the company of other tourists, particularly the American couple, as well as when they are alone. Towards the end of the trip, Dan acknowledges his need for Jane: "he would miss this daily closeness, mind, intuition, shared age and experience, the restoration of the old empathy". (562)

But winning Jane is not easy. Her life with Anthony has led her to severely repress her natural instincts, forcing her to the edge of a psychological breakdown. Although she feels a deep affection and desire for Dan, she both fears love and doubts her capacity to feel love. Not

until "at the end of the world" when she is touched by the plight of two puppies whom she believes to be abandoned by their mother does she find emotional relief. She identifies with their loneliness, isolation, abandonment, and their need for love. Perhaps, too, she is thinking of Dan's need for her and is moved to look after him. The incident reveals her capacity to feel sympathy and emotion. Afterwards, she can open herself completely to Dan. Love brings them both a sense of wholeness and completion.

Fowles refers to Daniel Martin as an emotional autobiography: "I wanted to write a book about my Englishness and my generation".<sup>38</sup>

Fowles's use of "my" is significant. It draws attention to his personal involvement in the work and to two of its important themes - the quality of Englishness and its portrayal of a period of social history from approximately 1930 to 1980. In this respect, the novel resembles Wells's Tono-Bungay and Cary's To Be A Pilgrim, both of which are period novels. Fowles captures the quality of Englishness by contrasting it with "Americanness". The shallowness and artificiality of American culture is suggested by Dan's opinion of the American film industry; he makes no mention of successful films but feels the industry deliberately produces junk designed to appeal to the masses and win commercial success. Yet the presence of Barney Dillon in the novel suggests that Britain is being influenced detrimentally by American values: Barney's success is meaningless for, he, like Dan, panders to the commercial world. In the context of Fowles's definition of the Few and the Many, Barney and Dan both fail for they adulterate their talent for money. Dan's search for

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38. Lawrence O'Toole, "Fowles' Maddening Books, an Escape from an Ugly World," Globe and Mail, (1 October, 1977), p. 44.\*

\* They took themselves, or their would-be moral selves, so seriously. It had indeed all been summed up by the mirrors in his student room: the overweening narcissism of all their generation...all the liberal scruples, the concern with living right, were not based on external principles, but self-obsession. (Daniel Martin, p. 630)

meaning and his decision to turn to novel writing indicate his turning away from the commercial world and the Many to do something which brings artistic and human fulfillment.

Kerry McSweeney criticizes the lack of distance between author and character:

Dan is treated by his creator with an utter indulgence most glaringly instanced in the prolix, meandering pace at which he is allowed to tell his story and elaborate his feelings and thoughts. There is no irony, no distance, between reader and central character<sup>39</sup>

The larger issue implicit in this criticism is whether a first-person narrator can present himself objectively. In the case of Daniel Martin, this is complicated by Fowles's use of mixed narrative modes. Although Fowles and Dan have been shown to resemble each other, and Fowles does treat Dan and his problems sympathetically, he also takes pains to establish distance between himself and his character. He does this by introducing other characters' commentaries, reactions and conversations: for example, we have Jenny's first-person contributions and Dan's conversations with Jane and Anthony to broaden our impressions of Dan. Fowles's awareness of the problem of distance is indeed reflected in his use of juxtaposed first and third person to achieve a neat balance between closeness and distance. On this basis, my value judgement differs from that of Kerry McSweeney who appears unaware of the author's intention. Fowles has played a brilliant and tantalizing game with the reader about the degree of similarity between himself and his character and the degree of subjectivity and objectivity in his presentation. The mixed mode serves, on one level, as a major clue to his intentions. In trying to determine whether Dan succeeds as a fully-developed character, one need only recall Remington of The New Machiavelli; in comparison with him, Dan cannot be dismissed as flat. And technically, Fowles's

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39. Kerry McSweeney, "Withering into the truth: John Fowles and Daniel Martin," Critical Quarterly, 20 (Winter, 1978), p. 32.

novel is more complex and intriguing.

By choosing to cast Dan as a writer, Fowles is able to draw attention to the act of writing. In the second chapter, Dan confesses to Jenny the impossibility of expressing the "real history of what I am" (Daniel Martin, p. 20) in drama or film. He criticizes the artificiality of the medium:

'It's such a soft option. You write, Interior, medium shot, girl and man on a couch, night. Then you walk out. Let someone else be Jenny and Dan. Someone else tell them what to do. Photograph them. You never really stake yourself. Let it be no one else. Just you.'... 'That's all, Jenny. I don't really want to start a new career. Just a way of saying I'm sick of screen-plays.' (20)

References to novel writing become meaningful in retrospect as one realizes that Dan and Jenny, while appearing to speak conjecturally about a mythical novel - a novel Dan would like to write, in fact discuss the novel we are reading. Jenny begins by suggesting Dan should write his memoirs:

'I've invented quite enough paper people without adding myself to the list.' He added, 'Anyway, libel. I couldn't make reality honest.'

'Then write a novel.' He sniffs. 'Why not?'

'I wouldn't know where to begin.'

'Here.'

'Idiot.' (20-21)

One has to realize that Dan is doing just this to appreciate the subtlety of much of this chapter. Much of their conversation simply draws attention to what Dan is doing - writing his novel. The end is contained in the beginning as Jenny speaks of their future separation. Although this prediction is correct, the novel sometimes corrects her, as when she comments:

'But you can't use your own name in a novel. Anyway, it's so square. Who'd ever go for a character called Daniel Martin?' (23)

Dan's Oxford room contained many mirrors - a symbolic suggestion, not of his narcissism, but of his artistic need. As the narrator says

in "Passage":

a love of mirrors may appear to be only too literally prime facie evidence of narcissism, but it can also be symbolic of an attempt to see oneself as others see one - to escape the first person, and become one's own third. (Daniel Martin, p. 68)\*

The narrator continues with some ironic criticisms of the novel, particularly in the first-person form:

In his already rather low valuation of the novel (a dismissal Daniel knew perfectly well was on the one hand a cheap conditioning of his métier and on the other a product of the lazy assumption that he was long past finding in himself, poor asthmatic cripple, the athleticism of imagination and long wind the form must need) he reserved an especially, and symptomatically, dark corner for first-person narration; and the closer the narrative I approximated to what one could deduce of the authorial I, the more murky this corner grew. The truth was that the objectivity of the camera corresponded to some deep psychological need in him; much more to that than to the fundamental principle of aesthetic (and even quasi-moral) good taste that he sometimes pretended lay behind his instinct here. (68)

Other passages in the novel share this quality of literary self-consciousness. For example, his discussion of the play which alienates him from Anthony and Jane is used to raise the literary point of how far one is justified in using personal experience and real life people in art, a point which is relevant to Daniel's and Fowles's relating his own life story. Similarly, at the end of the novel, attention is drawn to the kind of task Dan has confronted. He stands before Rembrandt's self-portrait. Although he has created his own self-portrait in the medium of the novel, he still feels dwarfed "in his century, his personal being, his own art". (667) The portrait reminds him that even the greatest art - and the self-portrait is an example - is inadequate to capture human reality. Yet, his experiences have prepared Dan to be an artist in the essentials suggested by the Rembrandt: he has learned to choose and feel.

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\* This idea also finds expression in the pervasive mirror imagery of The Alexandria Quartet. Although this imagery has multiple meanings (for example, narcissism and the reflection of one's projections upon others), it also suggests Darley's reason for writing: to reflect both himself and the Alexandrian world - to encompass reality in art.

Finally, Jenny's fiction of sex à trois with her co-actor and their mutual friend, Kate, in "A Third Contribution", the letter Dan receives just prior to his visit to Egypt, makes us question the fictiveness not only of her fiction but that of the novel as a whole. We may first assume her story is true but, in retrospect, after she denies its truth and Dan declares he never believed it, we, too, accept it as fiction. While Dan's fiction is supported inside the novel, we remind ourselves that it really is fiction until we remember the many links between Fowles and Dan and wonder where fact and fiction meet.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## CONCLUSION

The novels I have considered range from the late nineteenth-century works of Wells and Conrad to contemporary novels by John Fowles. Romberg has dealt adequately with earlier works, particularly the epistolary novel. (He also deals with one modern work, The Alexandria Quartet, which I have also selected.) However, my own approach emphasizes the role of the narrator and its thematic implications whereas Romberg is more interested in technical considerations.

The novels and stories analyzed demonstrate a variety of first-person narrative effects. Wells uses first-person narration in his scientific romances as an authenticating device and, more generally, as a way of uniting the "novel of ideas".

In The Time Machine and The Island of Dr. Moreau, the narrators are not themselves intrinsically interesting; as characters, they are only simple types chosen to give plausibility to strange, indeed, incredible events. Their task is to facilitate the suspension of disbelief so that, at least for the duration of the stories, the fantastic becomes the norm. Each romance has two narrators, a primary narrator and a secondary. The primary narrator makes a brief but important appearance: his task is to provide a framework for the secondary narrator's story to enhance its credibility and prepare the reader for bizarre happenings. Further, in The Time Machine, Wells makes use of a framework, an outer situation, which is related to the central events told by the secondary narrator. This expands their significance and relates the fantastic events to the contemporary world: his narrators serve to shorten the distance from

the romantic, other world depicted and the world of everyday.

Tono-Bungay and The New Machiavelli are both examples of memoir-novels in which the narrator tells his life story. In both, the narrator acts as protagonist. Of the two, Tono-Bungay is more successful. The New Machiavelli illustrates Lubbock's criticism of the first-person as protagonist: for Remington, while functioning effectively in looking outward at his world, is not judged himself. The fault is perhaps derived from Wells's close identification with the narrator. Instead of an objective appraisal, Remington offers self-justification and rationalization, and the author's voice is either silent or one with Remington's.

The three Conrad novels selected for analysis, Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim and Chance, appear at first glance to fall into the category of witness-narrator first-person novels, although upon intensive analysis, it becomes apparent that in the first two novels, Marlow's role is more complicated. In Chance, however, Marlow is unquestionably an observing narrator. In all three novels, he is a gifted raconteur, a keen observer of human nature, and a moral analyst - qualities which make him an excellent witness. In Heart of Darkness, as Marlow reflects upon the assumed protagonist, Kurtz, he simultaneously reveals himself. Indeed, critics have argued whether Marlow or Kurtz is the central figure. At what point does the story of Kurtz become the story of his effect upon Marlow? Ultimately, they are inseparable. This instance illustrates Romberg's point that "often the information which the narrator gives unconsciously about himself is of greater interest than the information he conveys as part of his conscious purpose".<sup>1</sup>

In Heart of Darkness, Marlow is involved, because of his experience with Kurtz, in a process of self-discovery. But in Lord Jim, his interest is aroused by the moral paradox Jim represents: he feels that Jim

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1. Bertil Romberg, p. 63.

possesses much goodness yet he has committed an unpardonable act of betrayal. Marlow indirectly asks if one is right to judge a man simply by his acts. Conrad uses Marlow not only to explore Jim but also, through him, the problem of good and evil. His task is to understand the contradictory aspects of Jim's character.

Conrad's choice of the witness-narrator form is appropriate since Jim is too simple and inarticulate to understand and communicate his difficulty. He cannot justify himself. Through Marlow, however, Conrad is able to attain the exact balance of sympathy and criticism, central to the meaning of Jim and his failure.

In Chance, Marlow is not only a witness narrator, but also a creator of fiction for his knowledge is limited and, at times, based only on hearsay. Chance is a celebration of the storyteller's art, a synthesis of the real and the imagined. Critics of Chance too often failed to appreciate the purpose of Conrad's complex structure - his use of the Chinese box device to involve a number of different narrators to present the inner story. Because of this, he was accused of needlessly complicating his narration. However, my study of Chance exonerates Conrad from this criticism and clarifies how his technical innovations are chosen deliberately to show how a fiction is created. Marlow never does gain access to all the information, but his own observations in addition to those of the other narrators provide him with sufficient information to create a convincing, if incomplete, story.

Cary's first-person narrators are contrasted with those of Wells and Conrad. Cary, unlike Wells, is interested in character rather than idea. And unlike Conrad, morality is not the central issue for him. What would, in a Conrad novel, be a central issue - for example, Gulley's attack upon Sara - is but a casual incident in The Horse's Mouth.

Cary's trilogies were selected for analysis because they reveal how first-person narration may be used effectively in a group of novels. The usual first-person limitation of being confined to a single

viewpoint is overcome because while each novel provides a single impression of a narrator, the trilogy format enables us to see them not only as they portray themselves but as they appear to others. Because a character's view of another is refracted by his own personality, a multifaceted portrayal of each major character emerges. Associated with Cary's technique of trilogy presentation is the common theme of the multiplicity of reality and the relativity of truth.

None of the major characters in either the art or the political trilogy develops. Cary's concern is to define them and their idiosyncratic outlooks fully. Because each character is unique, each book has its own style and tone. In terms of incident, however, the separate novels of both trilogies tend to be episodic. This structural flaw is offset by Cary's use of first person for it serves as a unifying factor.

Durrell's The Alexandria Quartet involves a developing narrator who achieves maturity by imaginatively re-living his past and finding that the quest for truth is far more difficult than he first anticipates. Although we are far more aware of the Alexandrian scene - its citizens and their passions, intrigues and conflicts - than we are of Darley, yet, in retrospect, Darley is seen to be the novel's focus of interest. The novel, itself, is an expression of his development: its experiments in form attest to his struggle to attain truth. And while the characters - for example, Justine, Balthazar, Mountolive and Clea - are interesting in themselves, it is their impact upon Darley as artist and human being which is ultimately important.

As a first-person narrator, Darley, like Marlow in Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim, plays a complex role. And yet, the effects Durrell wishes to achieve - the struggles of the aspiring artist - are well suited to first-person narration. The reader, after sharing Darley's dismay at the distortions of Justine, can better appreciate the difficulty of his quest for truth in art.

In both The Magus and The Collector, Fowles shows how a clever use

of first person generates suspense. In The Magus, the narrator's quest for love leads him from one illusion to another. The reader shares in Nicholas's illusions because he depends for his information and attitudes upon a narrator who can provide only limited insights. The Collector shows how effective the first person may be in a thriller; for half the book, we rely on a psychotic narrator and share his demented logic while, in the latter half, we share the feelings of his victim. The structure of the novel presents two opposed versions of the same reality.

Daniel Martin, while thematically commonplace, is an interesting experiment in form. While we may ultimately react against Fowles's challenge to unity of person (and time), we must accept his right to question traditional practices in art. Daniel Martin reminds us that while novelists have achieved a variety of interesting effects in first-person narration, the possibility for something new continues to exist. This thesis, as a whole, however, demonstrates that much has already been accomplished.

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