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コンラッドの Lord Jim における叙述形式について

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On the Explicit Narrative Structure of Conrad's *Lord Jim*

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There have been innumerable narratives in an ostensible "storytelling" format in the history of English literature. *Robinson Crusoe*, *Pamela*, *Tom Jones* and most of the ensuing prose works belong to this category. Among them, however, Conrad's *Lord Jim* is exceptional in that it is overtly quoted in inverted commas throughout the text except in the prologue, or introductory part preceding Marlow's tale, and occasional interruptions by the overall narrator of the book. Because of its unique narrative structure and its implications, *Lord Jim* presents certain interpretational difficulties. For example, what is the relation of Marlow, who is the major narrator of the story, to the overall narrator (whom for convenience I call the general editor), to the author, and also to the audience, both inside and outside the story? What narrative conventions are assumed by the author for adopting this particular idiosyncratic narrative method? These are only a few of the questions that must be answered before any proper interpretation of the text as a whole is attempted. Since the explicit narrative structure is a predominant feature that extensively affects the novel, this paper includes analyses of Conrad's narrative style and plot structure. Although I may be overreaching myself by covering such a vast area, the assessment of the text must necessarily be comprehensive due to the ramifications of the structural inquiry.

Some narrative stories pose the reader with indeterminacy of the narrator's identity. The narrator can be the author, his created character,

a combination of both, or even none of these. However, when the author attempts to completely separate the narrator from the general narrator or author himself by the explicitness of the quotation marks as in the case of *Lord Jim*, he enters into a sort of contract with the reader or audience in which he at least formally acknowledges the narrator's independence from what Thackeray calls in his introductory message to *Vanity Fair* the pull of the strings. In *Lord Jim*, a logical consequence of this narrative autonomy is supposedly that Marlow, the raconteur, assumes only a limited and relative perspective and that he is clearly distinguished from an omniscient narrator. Marlow's limited and relative perspective results in another audience expectation. Marlow, being a subjective storyteller about Jim and actually facing a group of people within the narrative frame, cannot escape from his own idiosyncrasy and particularity; and his narrative uniformity in characterization and style is presumed to be somewhat unavoidable. Consequently, all the characters whom Marlow describes or quotes may reach the audience underdifferentiated and "*explicit* contrasts between the discourses of different characters," a type of what M. M. Bakhtin calls "heteroglossia" may not occur so noticeably (Martin 52). In this light, the insufficient development of relationship between Jim and Jewel, for example, is not a defect at all, for it is already implied in the explicit format of the direct narrative.

The narrative autonomy and Marlow's limited perspective place a special emphasis on the function of the audience. Since the narrator's assessment and perspective are subjective and limited, the audience cannot simply swallow his words but needs to deconstruct Marlow's story and reconstruct a more objective, reliable one. That is, just as Marlow evaluates characters through his contact with, and hearsay about, them, the reader needs to go over a similar process except that this time it includes Marlow, the general editor, and all the relevant (even extra-textual) infor-

mation available to the reader himself. The important role that the reader plays in interpreting *Lord Jim* is indeed corroborated by a literary tendency since the Victorian era. As a reaction to the cloying significance attached to the Romantic “I,” instanced by the prevalence of lyrical poems, Victorian writers tried to objectify their works as something independent of themselves, the process which, in terms of the history of fiction, can be grasped by Victor Shklovsky’s concept of “defamiliarization.”¹ The next step that once released from the hands of the author literary products become readers’ interpretive object is easily arrived at. Appropriately, Mark Conroy observes that “it is no longer daring, in this age of ‘reader response’ theory, to challenge the formalist premise that a work of art be autotelic, concerned only with its own inner structure,” (1) though he admits that the reader or audience is a vague entity. Furthermore, touching on the importance of audience in a letter, Conrad says that “one writes only half a book; the other half is with the reader” (Gillon 174). In fact, the existence of an audience within the direct narrative framework demonstrates Conrad’s concern with establishing this audience relationship, arousing at the same time suspicion that the explicit narrative structure is his covert attempt at defamiliarization; however, it can be his encouragement to the reader to actively participate in his work. Paul Bruss, for example, reads into the narrative and finds “patterns of metaphor and irony” (120) in Marlow’s interviews with the French lieutenant and Stein. Although it is difficult to distinguish the nature of the audiences within and without the narrative, Conrad at least suggests a link between the two by merely positing the existence of one within the text.

The Importance of audience cannot be doubted. Once the interpretive process starts, then, it is Marlow, the central consciousness of the story of *Lord Jim*, to whom the audience takes recourse as a valuable source of information. Since Marlow has a significant influence on the reader inter-

pretations as an editor-evaluator of both characters and incidents, he needs to be carefully examined. As is expected from his role, Marlow is observant and confident of his own judgment. His method of arriving at truths—which are at best relative—is often inferential. For instance, reminiscing about a Frenchman, Marlow tries to deduce his attribute from visible, tangible particulars:

His shoulder-straps were a bit tarnished, his clean-shaved cheeks were large and sallow; he looked like a man who would be given to taking snuff—don't you know? I won't say he did; but the habit would have fitted that kind of man. (101)

Though this assumption happens to be substantiated later in the story, there is no guarantee that Marlow always proves correct. In the leap of reasoning from the particulars to the suppositions invariably lies uncertainty factors of which Marlow, as long as he remains a subjective narrator, will never be totally free. Thus, Bruss's attempt at defining each character solely based on Marlow's observations, specifically on the subtle changes in nuance produced by Marlow's expressional ambiguities, similes, and metaphors, cannot be unconditionally justified (106-20). In order to attain a most appropriate interpretation, audience should be aware of the implications of the subjective nature of Marlow's narrative.

When it comes to Jim's assessment, Marlow's reliability as a narrator is doubtful at best because of his partiality. As his recurrent phrase "he is one of us" indicates, Marlow's interest in Jim's life mostly originates in his identification of his own values with Jim's.²

There is such magnificent vagueness in the expectations that had driven each of us to sea, such a glorious indefiniteness, such a beautiful greed of adventures that are their own and only reward! What we get—well, we won't talk of that; but can one of us restrain

a smile? In no other kind of life is the illusion more wide of reality—in no other is the beginning all illusion—the disenchantment more swift—the subjugation more complete. Hadn't we all commenced with the same desire, ended with the same knowledge, carried the memory of the same cherished glamour through the sordid days of imprecation? (94-95)

Although Marlow's sympathy with Jim does not necessarily vitiate his judgment, his emotional involvement in Jim's affairs can jeopardize his narrative detachment. In his interview with the French lieutenant, for example, Marlow's intention is mainly to reconfirm Jim's recoverability from the trauma which he has suffered in the *Patna* incident. By the French lieutenant's assertion that a life without honor is not worth living, Marlow becomes upset, for he, himself being a seafaring man, essentially concurs with the lieutenant in spite of himself. However, with his paternalistic reflex Marlow responds that as long as the past indiscretion is kept hidden one can live with peace of mind. Begging for the lieutenant's agreement, Marlow concludes in a conciliatory tone: "but couldn't it reduce itself to not being found out?" (108). His desperate effort to defend Jim again forces Marlow to an awkward position in his interview with Jewel. Upon Jewel's insistence on his assurance that Jim will stay in Patusan permanently, the demand which Marlow interprets as a challenge to Jim's trustworthiness, Marlow feels obliged to utter what he himself does not totally believe. After pledging to Jim's honor and bravery, Marlow adds that "fear shall never drive him away from you" (222). However, at this point Marlow is conscious of his own duplicity, for he recognizes, at least vaguely, that fear, or whatever is antithetical to bravery, is the major cause of Jim's panic and eventual desertion of the *Patna*.

As the preceding argument shows, Marlow presents the audience with some obstacles to correctly interpreting the narrative. Then, how about Jim, Marlow's main interest? How reliable is Jim to Marlow the narrator?

Their relationship is best characterized by Jim's mishearing himself being called a cur, when Marlow has been actually referring to a prowling dog. In other words, their first encounter symbolizes the communicative gap between them that will never be overcome, though it oscillates from time to time, even at the moment of their best mutual understanding. Marlow makes a confession: "He was not—if I may say so—clear to me. He was not clear. And there is a suspicion he was not clear to himself either" (127). When Jim is not entirely a clear entity to himself, it is not surprising that Marlow cannot focus on the center of Jim's consciousness.

They [Doramin, Tunku Allang, Dain Waris, Tamb' Itam, etc.] exist as if under an enchanter's wand. But the figure round which all these are grouped—that one lives, and I am not certain of him. No magician's wand can immobilize him under my eyes. (233)

In addition to the illegibility of character, Jim poses some other problems as a source of information. Although Marlow's reliability depends to a large extent on the accuracy of Jim's evaluation of other characters and incidents, Jim manifests judgmental immaturity and naiveté. For example, despite Brown's overt hostility to Patusan society, Jim believes in, and hopes for, his sincerity and guarantees him an unmolested passage down the river out of Patusan. If Jim is unable to perceive Brown's transparent deception, Jim's quality as an assessor of other characters and incidents is indeed dubious. This inexperience with human relations can be also linked to Jim's romanticism which he shares with the Marlow in "Youth." By transforming mundane phenomena into what he idealistically desires, Jim tends to magnify the hiatus between "the realm of his aspirations and that of implacable facts."³ This tendency often results in his avoidance of confronting inexorable reality by escaping into the idealistic and heroic world which he has created for himself. Consequently, when actual emergencies occur,

he panics and fails to comprehend the situation. In this light, his emotionally-charged recounting of the *Patna* incident somewhat loses its credibility.

What these uncertainties in the informants impose on the reader is a formidable task of deciphering and reconstructing the story. However, the interpretive difficulties partly derive from the nature of the world in which Marlow, Jim, and the whole cast of people within the inverted commas exist. The world of *Lord Jim* is fundamentally solipsistic where the barrier that separates individuals is never removed. Echoing the Marlow of “Heart of Darkness,” Marlow in *Lord Jim* observes:

It is when we try to grapple with another man's intimate need that we perceive how incomprehensible, wavering, and misty are the beings that share with us the sight of the stars and the warmth of the sun. It is as if loneliness were a hard and absolute condition of existence. (129)⁴

The incomprehensibility of others manifests itself also as a relativity of viewpoints. Concerning the lights on the supposedly doomed *Patna*, Jim and the other crewmen of the *Patna* insist that the lights disappeared from their sight, implying their assumption of, and hope for, the sinking of the ship; on the other hand, the court finds their view impossible when the ship was in all probability floating within their range. Finally, Brierly hypothesizes that the *Patna* was simply facing away from the crew with a lowered bow. At this point the truth of the matter becomes irrelevant, lost in the relativity of the perspectives and unascertainability of the absolute truth. Another case is in reference to Jim's dislocating himself from the *Patna*. Jim's interpretation of the incident is that he was forced both by the men and the circumstances and his act was quite involuntary and unconscious as is indicated by the neutral term “jump.”

You can understand. Can't you? You see it—don't you? No harm! Good God! What more could they [the other white crew aboard the *Patna*] have done? Oh, yes, I know very well—I jumped. Certainly. I jumped! I told you I jumped; but I tell you they were too much for any man. It was their doing as plainly as if they had reached up with a boat-hook and pulled me over.” (91)

On the other hand, Marlow describes Jim's act as “clearing out” from the apparently sinking ship, implying that Jim acted voluntarily but with a proper judgment to evacuate; and the French lieutenant interprets that Jim “ran away,” or “*s'est enfu*,” with a clear intention of deserting the ship. These separate views indeed symbolize a solipsistic universe where value systems will never completely merge with one another. When Marlow's function is presumed to be evaluating and interpreting others' experience, this inability to break the insular shields of the individuals has an odd consequence. While *Lord Jim* is supposed to be Marlow's tale about Jim, at least structurally, Marlow can ultimately make only himself the object of his epistemological inquiry. Others whom Marlow attempts to comprehend become only a catalyst for his own self-realization.⁵

However, is Marlow actually restricted to the role of a pure evaluator who cannot penetrate to the core of the others' experience? Despite the audience expectations of the narrative autonomy within the inverted commas, Marlow the narrator seems to oscillate between the omniscient and the first person, making observations which do not allow for the reader's reinterpretations and those which do, or those which approach authorial statements and those which sound merely Marlow's hypotheses.

He was not afraid of death perhaps, but I'll tell you what, he was afraid of the emergency. *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.* He might have been resigned to die but

I suspect he wanted to die without added terrors, quietly, in a sort of peaceful trance. (67 italics mine)

Logically, the italicized part cannot be but Marlow's conjecture; however, the tone which he assumes almost transforms it into an absolute fact. In a sense, Marlow the narrator becomes Marlow the creator, i.e., creator of Jim's story. From the author's perspective, on the other hand, Marlow can be regarded as an agent to cause Jim's adventures to come into existence, or "a medium for the actionable" in Michael Seidel's words.⁶ For example, Marlow unwittingly enters into an abortive business deal with Chester, an inexorable profit-seeker, in which the latter proposes to send Jim to a desolate island to supervise guano mining. And most of all, Marlow is ultimately responsible for Jim's settlement in Patusan.

Indeed, without Marlow's intervention. Jim might have been able to recover from the trauma and thus acquire immunity against a man like Brown, forestalling crucial episodes of Jim's life as a result. Stein says,

A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns—nicht wahr?... No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up. (152-153)

If this enigmatic observation is applied to Jim—indeed, the sea image is appropriate—it can be read that as long as Marlow deprives Jim of opportunities to work his own problems out himself, i.e., without the process of self-discovery and solution, Jim can never escape from the nemesis of his own conscience. In Sartrean terms, he is immersed in a state of *en soi*, the avoidance of making free choices and facing their consequences. Stein's obsession with butterflies can be also a metaphor to elucidate the Marlow-

Jim relationship. As butterfly specimens, objects of Stein's possessive greed, once caught and pinned down lose their luster and freedom, so does Jim his existential freedom to a certain degree by Marlow's intervention. However, there is an authorial quandary here. If Marlow does not interfere with Jim's affairs, Jim's story would not take place as it does, or, at least Marlow would not be able to delve into Jim's mind with such facility and legitimacy, for being not an omniscient narrator, Marlow would encounter an infinite number of obstacles to reach the core of Jim's experience, especially in the solipsistic world that is set within the framework of Marlow's direct narrative. It also means that Marlow would have to go through a staggering number of intermediaries, causing the loss of literary economy and impact, while overburdening Marlow's editorial capacity.

Marlow's overall function as the author's important agent to trigger the whole chain of events arouses a suspicion that Marlow is simply "Conrad's mouthpiece," or even Conrad in disguise.⁷ Bernard Meyer, for one, notes that though Conrad is veiled in his works, he reveals a desire to appear in the foreground (3). Indeed, there are significant historical and autobiographical echoes in the story that indicate the degree of the authorial presence in, and control over, Marlow's narrative. For example, the *Patna* incident resembles what actually happened to a 993-ton steamer called *Jeddah*. *Jeddah* sailed from Singapore for Mecca with about 900 Moslem pilgrims aboard in 1880 and during a storm all white officers except one abandoned the ship, but the ship did not sink. Biographically, some of the similarities between Jim and Conrad include that both are sailors and both are injured by a falling spar, necessitating a prolonged stay in a hospital in an Eastern port, and both keep a letter similar in content, Jim's sent from his father and Conrad's from his uncle Thaddeus. Although the historical and biographical information does not necessarily establish the identity between Conrad and any of the characters in the story—without this recognition I would be

committing a flagrant positivistic fallacy—it at least suggests the existence of a certain amount of the author’s purposive re-creation and self-projection within *Lord Jim* to privatize the narrative and reduce in to his own personal story. In fact, Gustav Morf points out the phonological resemblance between the name Patna and Polska (Poland) and links *Patna’s* rescue to the traditional Polish belief that “they must ever look for deliverance to the French.”⁸ If Morf is justified in connecting the rescue of *Patna* to the Polish belief in the French salvation of Poland, it is similarly possible to interpret the *Patna* incident as a symbolic representation of Conrad’s desertion of Poland. In this context, Conrad’s transformation of the historical *Jeddah* incident to an important thematic crux can be seen as proof that the authorial intentionality and encodings exist in Marlow’s narrative.

If Marlow’s narrative is indeed Conrad’s well-camouflaged personal story, does it not constitute the authorial usurpation of the narrative autonomy contrary to the audience expectation that the explicitness of quotation marks releases Marlow’s tale from authorial control and entails it with complete narrative independence? In order to answer that question, it is necessary to fathom the complexities of Marlow’s role and understand the dual interpretational level of *Lord Jim* that is pertinent to this paper. From now I would like to examine Marlow’s narrative from a stylistic perspective and then summarily cover the plot structure of *Lord Jim*. As expected from the unique narrative structure of *Lord Jim*, Marlow often assumes a more or less straightforward and lucid conversational tone. One example of this is the following description of Jim.

Thrown back in his seat, his legs stiffly out and arms hanging down, he nodded slightly several times. You could not conceive a sadder spectacle. Suddenly he lifted his head; he sat up; he slapped his thigh. “Ah! what a chance missed! My God! what a chance missed!” he blazed out, but the ring of the last “missed” resembled a cry wrung out by pain. (63-64)

On this narrative level, Marlow as a raconteur maintains only a minimal narrative distance from the audience, as the addressing term “you” in the excerpt indicates. In other words, Marlow manifests his attempt to establish a communicative relationship with the audience. When he stays on this narrative level, moreover, stylistically there appear relatively few adjectives as in this passage; and syntactically, Marlow’s narrative approaches the oral storytelling. Marlow’s colloquial tone is usually most salient when he is directly quoting other characters.⁹

“They called out to me from aft,” said Jim, “as though we had been chums together. I heard them. They were begging me to be sensible and drop that ‘blooming piece of wood’. Why *would* I carry on so? They hadn’t done me any harm—had they? There had been no harm . . . No harm!” (91)

Conforming to the oral narrative expectations, the excerpt distinguishes itself by its short and monosyllabic words. In terms of linguistic verisimilitude, Marlow also satisfies audience expectations of the explicit narrative structure. The French lieutenant’s quote below is punctuated with numerous French expressions and dashes, clearly suggesting his foreignness.

He drank carelessly . . . “Brave—you conceive—in the Service—one has got to be—the trade demands it (*le metier veut ça*). Is it not so? . . . *Eh bien!* Each of them—I say each of them, if he were an honest man—*bien entendu*—would confess that there is a point—there is a point—for the best of us—there is somewhere a point when you let go everything (*vous lâchez tout*). And you have got to live with that truth—do you see?” (106)

In like manner, the *Patna* captain’s quote is filled with German phonetic and syntactic features.

"You Englishmen are all rogues," went on my patriotic Flensburg or Stettin Australian, . . . "What are you to shout? Eh? You tell me? You no better than other people, and that old rogue he make Gottam fuss with me . . . That's what you English always make—make a tam' fuss—for any little thing, because I was not born in your tam' country. Take away my certificate. Take it. I don't want the certificate. A man like me don't want your verfluchte certificate. I shpit on it." He spat. "I vill an American citizen begome," he cried. . . (35)

However, paradoxically enough, Marlow's narrative is very often barely conversational despite the implications of its distinctive format. When his speech reaches to the metaphysical level, which is often the case, Marlow is particularly oblivious of his supposed narrative role of communicating with the audience. In the following excerpt, the narrative tone indicates Marlow's gradual retreat from the audience.

He was not speaking to me, he was only speaking before me, in a dispute with an invisible personality, an antagonistic and inseparable partner of his existence—another possessor of his soul. These were issues beyond the competency of a court of inquiry: it was a subtle and momentous quarrel as to the true essence of life, and did not want a judge. (70)

Sometimes Marlow's tendency toward abstraction is so extreme that the audience almost disappears from his narrative.

Over the lives borne from under the shadow of death there seems to fall the shadow of madness. . . . It is as if the souls of men floating on an abyss and in touch with immensity had been set free for any excess of heroism, absurdity, or abomination. Of course, as with belief, thought, love, hate, conviction, or even the visual aspect of material things, there are as many shipwrecks as there are men, and in this one there was something abject which made the isolation more complete—there was a villainy of circumstances that cut these men off more completely from the rest of mankind, whose ideal of conduct had never undergone the trial of a fiendish and appalling joke. (89-90)

Such passages which hover in the limbo between obscurity and profundity might have provoked E. M. Forster's derisive comment that "the secret task of Conrad's genius . . . contained a vapor rather than a jewel."¹⁰

Another feature that contradicts the reader expectations is that stylistically Marlow and the general editor are hardly distinguished from each other. First of all, both of them capitalize abstract nouns. Compare the passages from Marlow's narrative that include capitalized words with those from the general editor's: "It seemed to me I was being made to comprehend the *Inconceivable*—and I know of nothing to compare with the discomfort of such a sensation" and "Trust a boat on the high seas to bring out the *Irrational* that lurks at the bottom of every thought, sentiment, sensation, emotion" (70-90); and "A water-clerk need not pass an examination in anything under the sun, but he must have *Ability* in the abstract and demonstrate it practically" and "Afterwards, when his keen perception of the *Intolerable* drove him away for good from seaports and white men, . . . added a word to the monosyllable of his incognito" (9-10 italics mine). Secondly, both Marlow and the general editor tend to juxtapose long lists of modifying words, phrases, and clauses in a sentence or cluster of sentences. Examples from Marlow's and the general editor's are respectively:

"The tears fell from her eyes—and then she died," concluded the girl in an imperturbable monotone, which more than anything else, more than the white statuesque immobility of her person, more than mere words could do, troubled my mind profoundly with the passive, irremediable horror of the scene. It had the power to drive me out of my conception of existence, out of that shelter each of us makes for himself to creep under in moments of danger, as a tortoise withdraws within its shell. (221)

There are many shades in the danger of adventures and gales, and it is only now and then that there appears on the face of facts a sinister violence of intention—that indefinable something which forces it upon the mind and the heart of a man, that this complication of accidents or these elemental furies are coming at him with

a purpose of malice, with a strength beyond control, with an unbridled cruelty that means to tear out of him his hope and his fear, the pain of his fatigue and his longing for rest: which means to smash, to destroy, to annihilate all he has seen, known, loved, enjoyed, or hated; all that is priceless and necessary—the sunshine, the memories, the future, —which means to sweep the whole precious world utterly away from his sight by the simple and appalling act of taking his life. (14)

Thirdly, Marlow's similes are as elaborate and literary as, or occasionally more so than, the general editor's.¹¹

And on my side his few mumbled words were enough to make me see the lower limb of the sun clearing the line of the horizon, the tremble of a vast ripple running over all the visible expanse of the sea, as if the waters had shuddered, giving birth to the globe of light, while the last puff of the breeze would stir the air in a sigh of relief. (91)

The ship moved so moothly that her onward motion was imperceptible to the senses of men, as though she had been a crowded planet speeding through the dark spaces of ether behind the swarm of suns, in the appalling and calm solitudes awaiting the breath of future creations. (22)

Fourthly, as expected from literary overtones of the similes and capitalization of words, Marlow's narrative rhythm is often as deliberate and metrical as the general editor's.

I saw it vividly, as though in our progress through the lofty silent rooms amongst fleeting gleams of light and the sudden revelations of human figures stealing with flickering flames within unfathomable and pellucid depths, we had approached nearer to absolute Truth, which, like Beauty itself, floats elusive, obscure, half submerged, in the silent still waters of mystery. (154)

Such were the days, still, hot, heavy, disappearing one by one into the past, as if falling into an abyss for ever open in the wake of the ship; and the ship, lonely under a wisp of smoke, held on her

steadfast way black and smouldering in a luminous immensity, as
is scorched by a flame flicked at her from a heaven whiout pity.
(18)

A similar vacillation between narrative levels occurs in the plot structure of *Lord Jim*. More specifically, there are features which seem more appropriate in the oral narrative context and those in the literary narrative context. Regarding the former features, I deduce their presence by arguing for the consistency of reading *Lord Jim* on the oral narrative level. If Marlow's narrative is considered as an independent oral tale, the random introduction of events and characters into the story, of which *Lord Jim* is often accused, cannot be regarded as a fault, for the structural convention of oral stories does not require strict causality and plausability, as Mark Conroy observes in his *Modernism and Authority* (94-95). Thus, the obvious narrative convenience of gathering Tamb' Itam and Jewel at Stein's house at the end of the story, eliciting information from such a cunning man as Brown on his deathbed, and clumsily introducing Jim's father's letter, (which fortuitously elucidates Jim's tormented conscience,) is reconcilable in oral discourse. Even the criticism that has been levelled at the book since its publication can be at least partly refuted. For example, if the cause of Jim's guilt is insignificant, or does not appear serious enough to entail his adventures, it does not have to be so to justify the *raison d'être* of *Lord Jim* considered as an oral tale; if "the story . . . is told by an outsider, a tiresome, garrulous philosophising bore," the story nonetheless does not lose its validity because of his volubility; and if Marlow constantly wanders from one episode to another, he cannot be blamed for his spontaneity.¹²

While these are features which are better suited for oral narratives, there are others related to the plot structure which indicate another narrative level. This level is linked to what can be called the surfacing of the author's intentionality. For example, there are passages that are obviously

encoded with double meaning. On one level, they function as the characters' simple statement. On another, however, they often reflect the authorial intention as a factor that is tied to the thematic element of the book. The following excerpts from Egstrom's and Brown's quotes, respectively, can be best understood in this vein.

You haven't as much sense as a rat; they don't clear out from a good ship. Where do you expect to get a better berth? . . . This business ain't going to sink. . . . (139)

There are my men in the same boat—and, by God, I am not the sort to jump out of trouble and leave them in the d—d lurch. (269)

Both function as “devices” to set off Jim's reactions by echoing his past, the former causing Jim to go on an endless wandering and the latter leading to his eventual suicidal death. The authorial intentionality can be also detected in the thematic and structural balance. For example, if *Lord Jim* is schematically simplified, it can be divided into two parts. The first part, *Patna* section, is about betrayal of his own ideal self, and the second part, the Patusan section, regaining of his romantic and idealistic self, or in Kenneth Simons' words:

The first half of the novel is excentric and instinctually dissociative; it pries Jim away from his ideal and immerses him in “bad conscience.” The second half of the book reintegrates Jim and is egocentric, giving him nearly unlimited power to act. (80)

Simons' analysis, seen as an X-ray of *Lord Jim*'s plot, indeed exposes its conformity to Northrop Frye's *mythos* of romance, thus further revealing the author's presence in the story. True to Stephen Land's observation that the Conradian universe is filled with finely balanced dualistic forces, *Lord Jim* is also rife with contrasting characters with Jim as a fulcrum. On the

one hand, there are the two Malays at the helm, who do not desert the *Patna*, Bob Stanton, a small man who dies of drowning in an attempt to save a woman much larger than himself, and the French lieutenant, who remains on board the *Patna* for thirty hours while it is being towed to a port. And on the other hand, Chester, an unscrupulous man of greed and action, who almost sends Jim away to a desolate guano island, and Brown, evil incarnate, who brings about Jim's downfall.¹³ On a more subtle level, the author's presence behind Marlow's narrative is still being felt: Brown with his suggestive remarks becomes Jim's alter ego and Judge Brierly with his enigmatic death becomes a secret sharer of Jim's guilt. Since the authorial intentionality implies the authorial control over the story and encroachment upon Marlow's narrative independence, this narrative level, appropriately called literary, clearly distinguishes itself from the oral narrative level.

Contrary to audience expectations, the narrative levels do fluctuate in *Lord Jim*. If the historical and biographical echoes in the story indicate the extent of authorial control in *Lord Jim*, there is even a possibility that Conrad never completely releases the tale from his possession and Marlow is nothing but his mouthpiece. Accepting this, the interpretational difficulties that arise if Marlow is considered as an independent storyteller with only a limited perspective are resolved. However, how do we account for the explicit narrative structure, i.e., manifestation of inverted commas, which so obtrusively frame the story almost in its entirety, seemingly investing Marlow's tale with narrative autonomy? Considering Adam Gillon's statement that "Conrad's is a most personal art," I hypothesize that the explicit narrative format may have been Conrad's defamiliarizing strategy to create a narrative version of persona or mask in order to avoid being drowned in the quagmire of subjectivity and thus escape from historicity and particularity.¹⁴ Sharing Walter Pater's concern in an age when there was a shift in the concept of audience from the one which was

supposed to partake of the writer's total experience to another which was essentially solipsistic and isolated, Conrad might have come close to the view of Oscar Wilde that there was a need to communicate with the audience through the use of mask or persona, which helps bridge the reader and the writer by enabling the latter to assume a multiplicity of personalities.¹⁵ For Conrad, who experienced sudden dramatic turns in fortune and was virtually a psychological exile in England, attaining permanence and establishing communication with audience by formally objectifying, and thus externalizing, his work might have been indeed existentially urgent. However, Conrad's attempt to hide himself behind a veil fails not only because externalization turns our attention back to the focal creative subject but also the act of inscribing a story perpetuates the author's presence in it. After all, the explicit narrative structure interpreted as Conrad's strategy to extricate himself from the story ends in *aporia*, impasse.

Notes

¹ "Defamiliarization" can be interpreted as the development of narrative techniques to make stories plausible. That is, according to Shklovsky novelists are motivated to conceal the factitiousness of fiction in order to hide their own voice. See Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 47-50.

² Kenneth Simons argues that "Marlow's growing sense of an identity between Jim's values and his own" is an important ingredient in the Marlow-Jim relationship. See his *The Ludic Imagination: A Reading of Joseph Conrad* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1985), 45-46.

³ According to Stephen K. Land, *Conrad and the Paradox of Plot* (Hong Kong: The Macmillan Press, 1984), 92, "*Lord Jim* deals with an 'imaginative'

and 'romantic' hero who is destroyed by an ultimately unbridgeable gulf between the realm of his aspirations and that of implacable facts."

⁴ Compare to Marlow's remark in "Heart of Darkness" (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 39: "it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence—that which makes its truth, its meaning—its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream—alone ...". In "Heart of Darkness" Marlow, the narrator, is barely visible to the intratextual audience—most of whom are, significantly enough, asleep—symbolizing the difficulty of establishing communicative relationships in a solipsistic world.

⁵ In his *Conrad's Early Sea Fiction*, 87-92, Bruss interprets *Lord Jim* as a novel about Marlow's self-discovery and self-realization.

⁶ Michael Seidel in his *Exile and the Narrative Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986) argues that Marlow is "Jim's voice-over; he is even a medium for the actionable, that is, he arranges for the very incidents he narrates, though he does not determine their results" (66).

⁷ The term is from Jecelyn Baines, *Joseph Conrad* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1960), as quoted in the critical supplement to *Lord Jim* (London: Pan Books, 1976), 298.

⁸ See Meyer, 61-63. Meyer draws upon Gustav Morf, *The Polish Heritage of Joseph Conrad* (London: Sampson Low, 1930), 163-64.

⁹ Although one tends to presume that quoted passages should naturally be colloquial, Marlow's narrative, which is within quotation marks throughout the story, does not necessarily sound conversational, as I will demonstrate shortly.

¹⁰ E. M. Forster's remark in *Abinger Harvest* summarized by Adam Gillon in his *Joseph Conrad*, 75.

¹¹ The general editor's topical simile is cosmological, to be exact, but it is literary as opposed to colloquial.

¹² Each criticism is respectively from an unsigned review in *Academy* (November 10, 1900), an unsigned notice in *Sketch* (November 14, 1900), and W. L. Courtney's review in *Daily Telegraph* (November 7, 1900), which appear in Norman Sherry, ed., *Conrad: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 114-18.

¹³ On Land's view of the Conradian universe, see his *Conrad and the Paradox of Plot*, 4-5.

¹⁴ See Gillon, 1: "Conrad's is a most personal art, woven out of his intimate memories and transmuted by his artistic conscience and labor into the final product."

¹⁵ On discussions about Pater and Wilde in relation to the development of the concepts of Mask and Persona, see Carol T. Christ, *Victorian and Modern Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 30-33. Regarding Walter Pater's concern, see his *The Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1900), 235. From *The Renaissance* Christ quotes that experience

is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world (30).

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コンラッドの *Lord Jim* における叙述形式について

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コンラッドの *Lord Jim* はそのユニークな叙述形式—narrative structure—の故に様々な解釈上の問題を生じてくる。私はこの小論文で主な叙述者、マーロー、と総合的な叙述者の関係、そして彼らの作者との、そして読者との関係を調べることによりコンラッドの特殊な叙述形式の妥当性とその含蓄する問題点を検討してみた。先ずこの考察を始めるにあたってコンラッドがどのような叙述の convention を踏襲しているのかという問題から出発したのであるが、この叙述形式は物語を最初から最後まで統御するという意味で *Lord Jim* の解釈に全般的な影響力を持つという観点から私はコンラッドの narrative style と plot structure の分析をも試みてみた。