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CONRAD THE MORALIST: AN ESSAY ON *LORD JIM*

Yo KAWANARI

Conrad's concern was to investigate the ultimate reality of human existence. He attempted the experiment of humanity and human morality by putting man in the most difficult and extreme condition. He presented the question of what extent man can observe his own morality in such conditions, that is to say, the problem of weakness and strength lying unconsciously hidden in man, or furthermore the problem of good and evil.

The work I take up here, *Lord Jim,* is considered to have been written under such themes. The theme of man's sense of guilt and his own expiation is developed later in *The Secret Agent* and *Under Western Eyes* as well as in this novel. As for the theme of sins of man and his expiation, these works represent Conrad's idea.

Lord Jim is divided into two parts by its contents. Conrad himself says in "Author's Note" to *Lord Jim*:

> But, seriously, the truth of the matter is, that my first thought was of a short story, concerned only with the pilgrim ship episode; nothing more.... It was only then that I perceived that the pilgrim ship episode was a good starting-point for a free and wandering tale; that it was an event, too, which could conceivably colour the whole "sentiment of existence" in a simple and sensitive character.[1]

There are two points of view on the question of whether this work has an organic unity or not: F. R. Leavies censures that the latter half of it is unnecessary:

> The presentment of Lord Jim in the first part of the book, the account of the inquiry and of the desertion of the *Patna*, the talk with French lieutenant—these are good Conrad. But the romance that follows, though plausibly offered as a continued exhibition of Jim's case, has no inevitability as that; nor does it develop or enrich the central interest, which consequently, eked out to provide

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[1] Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1961), "Author's Note," p. viii.

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> the substance of a novel, comes to seem decidedly thin.[2]

In opposition to this, D. Hewitt advocates the necessity of the latter half.

> In terms of plot there are undoubtedly two parts to the story: the defection of Jim and disaster after he seems to have rehabilitated himself; certainly the second part has added. . . . It is, indeed, difficult to imagine the first part alone as a satisfactory story – certainly as a story by Conrad; the account of a cowardly leap for safety alone could hardly be enough; it demands development.[3]

I consider this work as an organic unity.

The importance of the former half of this novel lies in the contrast of Jim's defeat with the success of the French lieutenant. As we can understand by the words of the French lieutenant, man determines his behaviour by meticulous care as to other people's eyes so that he can live the life of an ordinary human being in this world, though such is not the autonomous mode of living. To explain this apparently conventional morality, Conrad contrives to bring out Stein in the latter half of this novel most impressively. Stein is a passionate and generous adviser as well as a guardian of Jim. His advice, however, is very ambiguous because he tries to keep both the romantic tendency of Jim's and the realistic one of the French lieutenant's in Stein himself. He insists on the significance of "the destructive element"[4] that helps us to interpret this novel as a whole.

In the latter half of this novel, we can see Jim's life in a proper perspective. His life in Patusan community is, far from an unnecessary addition, as F. R. Leavis asserts, an "inevitable" consequence of his failure on the Patna, since his failure awakens the sense of guilt in him and he chooses death of his own accord. While Jim's defeat aroused an inner change in Stein, which gives us a sort of key for the interpretation of Jim's life, Stein represents one of the aspects of the images of life Conrad conceives.

Conrad's alleged morality, what is to be called "decency," actually gives serious influences upon the life of an individual. Taking this point into

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[2] Frank Raymond Leavis, *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), pp. 209–10.

[3] Douglas Hewitt, *Conrad: A Reassessment* (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1969), p.31. Also F. R. Karl supports the latter half because of Stein's vividness and his destructive element. Cf. Frederick R. Karl, "Conrad's Stein: The Destructive Element," *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol III (January 1958), pp. 163–69.

[4] Conrad, *Lord Jim*, p. 214.

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consideration, it may be said that he discovered a positive significance in this apparently conventional morality that was to be condemned by the generation after the World War I, and to be revalued by those after the World War II. And 35 years after this novel, George Orwell tries to find the true value of man in the similar apparently vulgar human relationship, and, indeed, to believe in "decency," as he put it.[5] Human morality is not to be found in complicated philosophies or in religious dogmas but in the trivial daily life. On this point this novel of Conrad's played the role of the pioneer in the revaluation of human morality.

I

Jim, a son of the priest, believes himself to be "always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book"[6] and dreams of being a courageous seaman. In boyhood, when he finds himself to be incapable of doing anything in facing the actual crisis on board a training ship, he feels himself severely defeated and disgraced, because this fact means the destruction of his ideal-self that he has made for himself. And he seeks after another chance. For him, the chance is not to help others, but to glorify himself and establish his ideal-self. Therefore, his absorption in such a chance makes him blind to the cause of his failure. In short, he is too proud, too dreamy and too self-conceited to face the reality as it is.

In youth, he becomes a chief mate of the Patna so as to establish his ideal-self. He is proud of his being nobler and more courageous than other officers and fancies himself to be the very "hero in a book." He is even tired of

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[5] George Orwell uses the word "decency" or "decent" in his various works. We can see the meaning of it in the following quotations:

"This school was her school; she would work for it and be proud of it, and make every effort to turn it from a place of bondage into a place human and *decent.*" *A Clergyman's Daughter* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1960), p. 232.

"Curiously enough the whole experience has left me with not less but more belief in the *decency* of human beings. And I hope the account I have given is not too misleading." *Homage to Catalonia* (Penguin Books, 1953), p. 220.

"In the long run – it is important to remember that it is only in the long run – the working-class remains – the most reliable enemy of Fascism, simply because the working-class stands to gain most by a *decent* reconstruction of society." *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), Vol. II. p. 260. [italics mine]

[6] Conrad, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

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the peaceful situation when the ship and the sea harmonizes tranquilly, for such a circumstance never satisfies his eagerness for adventures. The dream that he dreams attains the highest point at the safest period of his being.

It is concretely presented in the accident of the Patna that his ideal-self as a courageous seaman that he has been seeking is tested. Informed of the accident, Jim, who has his self-confidence of being noble, courageous and reliable, at once thinks about the way for the relief. Thinking of it carries him into the world of his imagination unconsciously. The world of his imagination not only makes a courageous seaman of him, but also makes up in his mind the situation where he should act.

> His confounded imagination had evoked for him all the horrors of panic, the trampling rush, the pitful screams, boats swamped — all the appalling incidents of a disaster at sea he had ever heard of.[7]

Other officers begin to prepare for their escape secretly, and their feeling of isolation and immorality are benumbed through the absorption in this immoral act. Jim glances at them with the despising eye, and does not participate in them. So, he is isolated from them. Preserving his rational judgement and admitting his own powerlessness, he is obsessed with both of two impulses: one is to keep his ideal-self firmly, and the other to fear the emergency. At that moment he hears the cry, "Jump!" from the boat. This is the moment his real world and that of his imagination cross each other.

> Eight hundred living people, and they were yelling after the one dead man to come down and be saved. "Jump! George! Jump! Oh, Jump!"[8]

Jim feels in himself the solitude that is derived from the insecurity of his judgement and also the isolation from other officers.

When we face accidental violence of nature in isolation and without any other's help, we are apt to soften and keep balance of our minds that are obsessed with our own powerlessness and our feeling of solitude, even though we abandon our spiritual idea that human beings should have. When we are forced to choose either life or death in the dimension beyond the reach of reason, and besides in the passive condition, we often irrationally select a way in which our lives can be safer. In such cases, our physical egoism overwhelms the spiritual

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[7] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

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value within us, and we lose the ability of rational and moral judgement. T. Moser remarks on this point:

> If man's isolation constantly deprives him of the support he needs to avoid moral failure, it also gives him the freedom to act in dubious ways.[9]

Jim considers his act as the one in which the circumstance betrayed him and that the act was done not voluntarily but unconsciously. He regards his impulsive act not as an immoral desertion of the ship and betrayal of the defenseless pilgrims' reliance, but rather as his loss of the chance which he has sought after since his boyhood. Moreover he is only anxious about the result, a more wretched result than the mere loss of the chance. For this reason, he is unwilling to acknowledge the disgraceful act of his jumping.

> "I had jumped . . . " He checked himself, averted his gaze. . . . "It seems," he added.[10]

Feeling his act shameful, he escapes from the community of the seamen where his past failure is well known. And he makes a journey to seek for the chance to establish his ideal-self, hunting job after job. To establish his ideal-self means merely to realize his dream in boyhood, not accompanied by the courageous effort to acknowledge his past failure or to overcome it.

During his escape-journey, he works courageously and sincerely, loved and trusted by his employers until his past is exposed. Once his past comes to light, he deserts the job for reasons which they cannot understand, giving them much disappointment and annoyance. Those who remind him of his past Jim interprets as those who force him to retrogress or insult him, regardless of their real intentions. He assumes toward them an attitude of direct evasion and objection. Still, his attitude is "like a lord" and his escape-journey is "in good order towards the rising sun."[11] This is different from the criminal's evasion of others' eye to conceal his crime in that Jim has no sense of guilt in him. This is the reason they can not understand Jim's act and why we find in him the exalted obstinacy that refuses any humble effort to have his own standpoint understood. He always keeps the relationship with others in egocentric regidity.

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[9] Thomas Moser, *Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1957), p. 30.

[10] Conrad, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

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His egoistic escape-journey from the past comes to an end in Patusan with the help of Stein. That is to say, Patusan is the place where he can escape completely from his past, and as he is isolated from the world of white people his past is awakened by nobody as has been done in the former escape-journey of his. Again he catches the chance to establish his ideal-self. Taking advantage of this chance, he acts as a splendid peacemaker in the chaotic battle at Patusan. Uniting himself to the community voluntarily, and engaged in the productive and constructive works, he comes to regard himself as an able and useful man for the people and his confidence is perfectly restored to him. Furthermore, he rises to be Lord Jim and is respected by his people. Through his excellently energetic activities and planning ability, he comes to be considered as a hero, deified with the attribute of the supernatural power. Then, he realizes his dream that he has sought after since his boyhood. Jim's behaviour is, different from that in the Patna, based on keeping his fidelity to the community. He always acts in readiness for giving his own life in exchange for his responsibility. At the crises of Patusan, he persuades people that the fidelity to the community is superior to any personal affair.

> When he got his idea he had to drive it into reluctant minds, through the bulwarks of fear, of selfishness. He drove it in at last.[12]

However, since this world of his realized dream is the necessary condition of his escape from the past, he is unable to conquer his own fundamental weakness in it. One night, he is attacked by rascals. Then he is rescued by his native wife Jewel. A conversation between Jewel and Jim:

> ". . . They know you are awake now – they know you are big, strong, fearless . . ." "If I am all that," he began, but she interrupted him. "Yes – to-night! But what of to-morrow night? Of the next night? Of the night after – of all the many, many nights? Can I always watching?" A sobbing catch of her breath affected him beyond the power of words.[13]

Facing his personal crisis, he finds that his weakness survives in him yet. He manages to get out of the crisis with his wife's help with difficulty. Jewel becomes for Jim a person who helps him and removes his feeling of solitude at his crisis, while her love for him is her whole life and she is devoted to him, even

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[12] *Ibid.*, p. 261.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 299.

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ready to sacrifice herself. On the other hand, the world of love is only a part of Jim's life. He is a man of responsible position in Patusan. He has to fulfil his responsibility in order to keep his fidelity and the world of his realized dream. Therefore, in spite of Jewel's blindly devoted love for him, he cannot absorb himself in the world of love but sticks to his own egocentric world. The accident discloses the difference between his attitude toward love and that of hers, and also the fact that he is nothing but a coward. Accordingly his solitude becomes something irrepressible for him even in this world.

The invasion by Gentleman Brown who comes from the very country of the white that Jim has evaded with the utmost care because people there know his past life tests the firmness of his ideal-self and his fidelity to the community in reality. Faced with Brown, Jim is forced to confront his two positions contrary to each other; one is his public position with responsibility and the other the personal one in which he keeps his ideal-self made up in escaping from the past. The dialogue between Jim and Brown:

> "Who are you?" asked Jim at last, speaking in his usual voice. "My name's Brown," answered the other, loudly; "Captain Brown. What's yours? " and Jim after a little pause went on quietly, as if he had not heard: "What made you come here?" "You want to know," said Brown, bitterly. "It's easy to tell. Hunger. And what made you? "[14]

Jim cannot give his proper name. For Jim his proper name "James" symbolizes all his past that he wants to wipe out. This is the name used at the official Inquiry of the Patna, and as the son of his real father. Therefore, to evade his proper name means for him the evasion of all of his past.

> To the white men in the waterside business and to the captains of ships he was just Jim — nothing more. He had, of course, another name, but he was anxious that it should not be pronounced.[15]

So far as Jim is only called Jim, he is in the world where he can seek after his ideal-self. However, once anyone calls him James or he calls himself James, it reminds him of his shameful and disgraceful past. In the ordinary and common conversation with Brown, Jim's confidence is shaken by the root. That is, he cannot but recognize the fact that he is a disgraceful man, which he has hidden from himself by escaping from the past. Now, Jim is

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 380.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

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enlightened not by Brown's ill will but the fact that Brown happens to be one of the white man. In other words, Jim is, at this stage, a mere fugitive from his own past and does not have any sense of guilt for his betrayal on the Patna.

In spite of his real situation, when Jim knows that Brown is such a villain, he feels pride in being different from Brown who comes to Patusan for the purpose of plundering while fleeing for fear of being cast in prison. Brown tries to justify the act of plundering and asks Jim;

> . . . whether he himself – straight now – didn't understand that when "it came to saving one's life in the dark, one didn't care who else went – three, thirty, three hundred people" – it was as if a demon had been whispering advice in his ear.[16]

Brown's commonplace justification as a villain points out that the plunderer is a victim or a betrayer of circumstances. This way of Brown's justification is the same as Jim's as to his acts on the training ship and the Patna. This justification allows Brown to commit crimes on one hand, and allows Jim to be blind to the fact of his immoral act on the other. Brown takes the justification on trust straightforward and gets provisions of his life through the justified act, while Jim, though subconsciously having some hesitation in judging whether the justification is allowable or not since the failure on the Patna, has consciously evaded his past failure as shameful and disgraceful, and devoted himself to establishing his ideal-self. Brown's justification enlightens the subconscious and unsearchable world of Jim's, and Jim becomes aware of the guilt of his betrayal in his shameful past failure. In other words, Jim is hinted at "common blood," "common experience" and "common guilt"[17] in himself with Brown, and cannot but recognize such common elements between Brown and himself. After all, for Jim to judge Brown's conduct means to judge himself. Jim's appearance in this condition is, according to what Brown says;

> "He very soon left off coming the righteous over me. He just stood there with nothing to say, and looking as black as thunder – not at me – on the ground."[18]

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[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 386–87.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 387.

[18] *Loc. cit.*

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Up to the present, Jim evades the fact that he is coward and disgraceful, he cannot admit this very fact and in addition that he is also a betrayer. He has thought himself innocent of guilt, but in fact he has the same element of evil as Brown. At last he comes to perceive that all human beings including himself are fallible and imperfect. After the conversation with Brown, the dialogue of Jim and Jewel:

> "Are they very bad? " she asked, leaning over his chair. "Men act badly sometimes without being much worse than others," he said after some hesitation.[19]

Though his people are preparing for the fight against the villains, Jim decides to set Brown free. For Lord Jim to set Brown free is based on these two desires of Jim's: one of them is his humanistic feeling that since man is imperfect, all human begins should be tolerant to each other and non-violent; the other is to set himself free from the fact of a betrayer. Although in his mind Jim puts more importance upon the latter desire, he makes use of the former as the excuse to persuade the people. This humanistic feeling, which serves for the persuasion of the people, directs his mind only to the very act of letting Brown go free and covers up his more fundamental intention of the act unconsciously.

At this stage, he is not Lord Jim who is the leader of the community but Jim who is trembling with fear and fleeing here and there, with an abominable past. Considering that Brown's stay with him may be dangerous for the maintenance of the world of his realized dream, Jim chooses his standpoint of rather personal and egoistic side than the public standpoint. That is to say, Jim chooses the way only to maintain the world of his dream, though Brown hints him the sense of guilt. Now the motivation of every act of Jim is for the maintenance of his dreamy world, so he fears the very destruction of the world far more than the misfortune of the people in Patusan. In such a way he unconsciously loses his fidelity and betrays the people. Nevertheless he dares to assert:

> "Let them go because this is best in my knowledge which has never deceived you."[20]

The one who asserts oneself is not the stainless Jim he used to be, but

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[19] *Ibid.*, p. 394.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 293.

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Jim, the betrayer of the people. In the end, Dain Waris and some people are killed through the betrayal of Brown and Jim's father-in-law. Dain Waris's father takes vengeance for his son's death and Jim is killed.

II

Such an ironic catastrophe that a betrayer is betrayed is found in the relation between father and son. The Patna is a pilgrim ship and follows "the path of souls towards the holy place, the promise of salvation, the reward of eternal life."[21] By steering the ship Jim can direct himself, as one of its seamen and also a human being, as well as the pilgrims on board, to the holy place, the eternal life. It is a noble and honourable vocation like that of the priest, the servant of God on land. Here Jim plays the part of not merely a seaman but also of the son of a pious parsonage. Jim receives a letter from his father before he gets on board the Patna in which he reads:

> Who once gives way to temptation, in the very instant hazards his total depravity and everlasting ruin. Therefore resolve fixedly never, through any possible motives, to do anything which you believe to be wrong.[22]

When Jim resolves an act to take and starts to fulfil it, then the letter comes to his mind and he is aware that the advice of his father affects every act of his. The view of life written in the letter insists on immortality of man's guilt and has a stoic and strong attitude toward evil. However, this advice was crushed by the world of Jim's immoderate imagination and could not move him. Jim's desertion of the Patna is against his father's advice, and through this act Jim betrays the adviser and also denies "the eternal life" which seems to me suggestive of the tragic catastrophe of "everlasting ruin."

The French lieutenant who actually rescued the ship is the one who "reminded you of one of those snuffy, quiet village priests."[23] The fact that the image of him resembles Jim's father may suggest that in place of Jim's father the French lieutenant steers the Patna safely which the son's act against his father's advice puts into crisis. By saving the ship he keeps Jim's act from giving troubles to others and leaves Jim to his conscience so that he may find

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[21] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 341–42.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

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the solution of it for himself. So, the French lieutenant here might be said to act as a father who knows man's weakness. Jim feels remorse to his father not because he acted against his father's advice but because he fears to be refused his father's love as he is unworthy of it.

> "He has seen it all in the home papers by this time" said Jim. "I can never face the poor old chap.". . . "I could never explain. He wouldn't understand."[24]

Jim escapes from the parsonage because of his act of betrayal and before apologizing to his father for it he arrives at Patusan, where he is forced to liquidate all of his past on account of the betrayal of his father-in-law. His liquidation is done by his death, which appears to be manly indeed superficially. His last scene is:

> They say that the white man sent right and left at all those faces a proud and unflinching glance. Then with his hand over his lips he fell forward, dead.[25]

Externally his last scene has a look of self-sacrifices as the death of his own choice through admission of responsibility for Dain Waris's death, by which he seems to expiate his guilt and rehabilitate himself with dignity.

But I can't agree to such an opinion. To set Brown free is, as I mentioned above, caused by his fear that his realized dream may collapse. Jim might not be able to forsee Brown's betrayal because the evasive insight of Jim's nature into himself keeps Jim from discerning correctly to what extent Brown can be villainous and cold. This evasive insight of his is caused by his way to seek after his ideal-self ignoring reality. In seeking his ideal-self, he merely feels chagrined at losing the chance without recognizing his failure modestly and investigating its causality. After the failure of the Patna and before he affirms that he jumped;

> "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 by pain.[26]

The failure on the Patna, which follows him all through his life though a mere momentary act of his, is what Jim can hardly help doing as a human creature.

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[24] *Ibid.*, p. 79.
[25] *Ibid.*, p. 416.
[26] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

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In fact, the French lieutenant who steers the Patna safely says that, since even a brave man is after all coward and weak, man has only to know that he has no other mode of living than to live by deciding his behaviour always with scrupulous care as to others' eyes. Therefore, the opinion of the French lieutenant is that man, like Jim who cannot observe his father's severe view of life to the end, can do nothing but know his imperfection and put up with it. To me, Conrad seems to give a suggestive answer to the solution of Jim's failure by presenting these two characters who resemble each other in their images but different in their views.

> Man is born a coward (*L'homme est né poltron*). It is a difficulty – *parbleu*! It would be too easy otherwise. But habit – habit – necessity – do you see? – the eye of others – *voilà*. One puts up with it.[27]

But, Jim himself is wholly frustrated by the failure on the Patna. He worries himself about it extremely and evades it, not trying to turn his eye towards the future of more positive direction.

Therefore, he extends the distance between his real-self and his ideal-self, and his heart is always too full of frustration and loneliness. Jim's appearance when he tells Marlow as to his failure:

> 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.[28]

Accordingly the motivation of all his acts is only to establish his ideal-self that he seeks after too intensely. He ascribes egoistically all the good results of his acts to his personal satisfaction. His appearance when he realized his dream with good success in Patusan is described thus:

> He looked with an owner's eye at the peace of the evening, at the river, at the houses, at the everlasting life of the forests, at the life of the old mankind, at the secrets of the land, at the pride of his own heart.[29]

In Patusan, he can only live vividly in his realized dream and the world of his ideal-self by fulfilling the actual demand of keeping his fidelity. In short, his

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[27] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 247.

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allegedly balanced world has already vanished, and only by affirming the real world, he can live in his dreamy world which is actually realized. Still, he wants to live in it more than anything else. It is testified by his words that Jim tells to Marlow when he knows he can realize his dream of going to Patusan, the place to escape from his past failure.

> "Slam the door!" . . . "I've been waiting for that. I'll show yet . . . I'll . . . I'm ready for any confounded thing. . . . I've been dreaming of it . . . Jove! Get out of this. Jove! This is luck at last. . . . You wait. I'll . . ."[30]

So long as he is free from his past and his dreamy world is wholly safe, he can observe his fidelity in Patusan.

At the moment of its crisis, he loses even the concern with his fidelity. He betrays his people so as to free himself from the fact that he was a betrayer in the past. He doesn't perceive his act of betrayal till he faces the concrete testimony of Dain Waris's death after failing to be revenged on Brown, and losing his people's reliance. It seems quite unnatural that the sense of guilt as to his betrayal of his people is never awakened in Jim until he is forced to face that fact, when Brown induced him to realize the guilt of betrayal long before that. Accordingly, I think that Jim cannot evade any more, and is forced to recognize, the guilt of his betrayal of the people by facing the fact. The expiation for his guilt of betrayal is, in his way of thinking, his death, which is the only way of solution to him.

Certainly he is tormented by the pangs of conscience, and yet I don't think that he intends to die solely for his expiation. In my opinion, there is another element of his which connects his alleged act of expiation straight with his death: self-indulgence in the vain glorious act of death. The gravity of his guilt is too heavy for him to endure, and he finds himself in such a disgraceful situation by the collapse of his dreamy world he made for himself that he loses all the courage and passion for making efforts to overcome it. This total loss of self-confidence is caused by his immoderate romantic and exalted egotism, which he has had from boyhood. Such a feeling or way of thinking of his which has hindered himself from examining his real-self, makes him able to dream of a glorious image of himself even after his failure. In boyhood after his failure in a training-ship;

> He exalted with fresh certitude in his avidity with adventure and in a sense

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[30] *Ibid.*, p. 235.

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of many-sided courage.[31]

Therefore, I think that he seeks the chance to glorify himself and to show his courage after the failure just as his past several trials. In compensation for his death, it becomes possible for him to show once again the heroic behaviour to his people as the testimony of his invincibility. So, his death is rather the emancipation from the disgraceful figure of his real-self than the expiation of his guilt, which has been his unchangeable mode of living since the failure of the Patna.

> His incognito, which has as many holes as a sieve, was not meant to hide a personality but a fact.[32]

This, after all, means a mere evasion from reality and shows his own weakness. He knows that by his death the Patusan community will return to the former chaotic condition without its leader, and that by his refusal of the love of his faithful wife he will leave her to live the rest of her life in sorrow.

Such death of his means his betrayal of his wife, his people, and even himself, while it makes him in the end possible to live in his dream that he has sought eternally. I think that the words of his faithful wife shows the inner truth of his death.

> ". . . He went away from me as if I had been worse than death. He fled as if driven by some accursed thing he had heard or seen in his sleep. . . ."[33]

Jim's defeat signifies that what makes a dreamy man evade from the real world and leads him to death is not only the failure in seeking his dream for the evasion from reality but also the lack of the strict attitude to face straight the weakness hidden in himself and his own evil derived from that weakness of his.

In order to expiate our guilt, though criticized as an opportunist, there is no other way left us, human beings, than to face it squarely, to accept "the destructive element" as the element within us, to endure the severe and eternal antinomy within us and to make efforts to overcome it in the real world, without relying on God or resigning ourselves to the fate.

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[31] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 4.

[33] *Ibid.*, p. 349.

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Jim's tragic end is nothing but the fruitless death of his escapism, his solution of that severity which was awakened by his own romantic and exalted idealism. His romantic idealism is partly given rise to by the morality and courage in his father's idea. The idealization of his acts inevitably leads to the ironic result that he betrays, and revolts against, his father with his romantic idealism. The French lieutenant who has the similar image of Jim's father indirectly shows Jim his concrete advice and act, though he never meets Jim. Accordingly, the relationship between father and son is to be sound and complete only by uniting French lieutenant and Jim's father. To be more precise, this relationship between Jim and his father shows unsound and one-sided in the civilized world that has profound philosophy and religious dogma. On the other hand, the act of Dain Waris's father signifies that the correspondence of his idea and act is shown in his own behaviour, done for his deceased son as a father. That is to say, an ironic effect is found in that Jim who betrays and deserts his father is accused by the justice derived from the sound relation. Therefore, Jim's death can never be glorious nor heroic.

Conrad writes Jim's life in which he realizes his dream and is defeated in the end in his escape from the past. On the other hand, Conrad presents us a different and affirmative solution of Stein's in his life in which he also lives a life of escape from the past in a different way.

III

Stein is an entomologist and learned collector of butterflies and beetles who, on the other hand, is a rich and respected merchant. He sends Jim to Patusan and provides a kind of key to the interpretation of meaning of Jim's life. The episode of the rare specimen of a butterfly in his youth shows his mode of living. When he, a young man, was assaulted by the rascals by treachery, he instantly made them effective retaliation with much calmness and bravery. He killed them, and as he looked without emotion at the face of one of them for any sign of life,

> I observed something like a faint shadow pass over his forehead. It was the shadow of this butterfly.[34]

This description of the contrast between life and death implies two

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[34] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

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images, the immortality of the butterfly as opposed to man's mortality and the rebirth of man from death by the butterfly. Since then the butterfly plays the role of his spiritual supporter in the whole of his life. When he got the butterfly he was in such an excitement that;

> . . . my head went round and my legs became so weak with emotion that I had to sit on the ground.[35]

This episode suggests us that he sought after his own dream more eagerly than his real life, and at the same time that his ability to see the reality simply and act on it, always being prepared to face the unexpectedness, without being disturbed by any imaginative fear made it possible for him to live successfully in the real world. He had the ability to respond both to the reality and to the dream at the same time, which enabled him to walk on the street of his life with unflinching foot.

In the past he sought his own dream as a collector running after butterflies and now he is in the balanced world of the realized dream and the reality. For he is a prosperous merchant as well as an entomologist who does not run after the butterfly but only makes the specimen. Charmed by butterflies, he makes the specimen just to bear the grief of the death of his beloved. The subject of his love changed from a human being to the butterfly, and he comforts himself by replacing man's mortality with immortality of the butterfly as specimen.

Therefore, he regards the butterfly not entomologically but as the one to be compared with man.

> "Look! the beauty – but that is nothing – look at the accuracy, the harmony. And so fragile! And so strong! And so exact! This is Nature – the balance of colossal forces. Every star is so – and every blade of grass stands *so* – and the mighty Kosmos in prefect equilibrium produces – this. This wonder; this masterpiece of Nature – the great artist."[36]

The butterfly forms by itself a world of eternal balance, living in it with harmony not against the outer world at all. This remark of Stein's is ironically contrasted with the man expressed in praise of man in *Hamlet*.[37] Man, on the

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[35] *Loc. cit.*

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[37] Shakespear, *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark* II ii 316 – 321. What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! (The Globe Edition)

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other hand, is not so perfect as the butterfly, but still should live in the balanced world of realized dream of himself and the reality. This is his view of life.

He is consulted by Marlow about Jim. He understands that Jim is an imperfect man who only seeks his ideal romantically and wants to wipe out his past failure. And he gives Marlow an ambiguous advice as to Jim's life:

> ". . . 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. So if you ask me — hot to be?[38]

And he succeeds:

> "And yet it is true — it is true. In the destructive element immerse." . . . He spoke in a subduced tone, . . . "That was the way. To follow the dream, and again to follow the dream — and so — *ewig — usque ad finem.* . . ."[39]

Stein's advice means this: because man is imperfect and unstable, different from the butterfly, he would not live in harmony with the outer world seeing what the reality is without any intention, but is apt to shut his eyes and imagine the figure of himself in his dream. However, man should not have such imagination in his dream, for when awakened from his dream he finds himself not strong or clever enough to realize that he cannot make his dream come true. So even if the world itself may be a heap of dirt, and consist of "the destructive element," he should live in this very world, eternally trying to make his dream come true. Here, "the destructive element" means the real world in the concrete, ignoble act of betrayal by Jim, as opposed to the balanced world. That is to say, he asks Jim to live his life pursuing the realization of his own dream eternally, on the recognition of his betrayal. It is Stein's practical idea to let Jim rise again in new surroundings, that sent him to Patusan in order to mature Jim's dream into reality. In fact, Jim's dream is sought and come true for him and he comes to have a balanced world in Patusan.

Stein's appearance before Marlow tells him Jim's life is:

> One fancied that at twenty he must have looked very much like what he was now at threescore.[40]

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[38] Conrad, *op. cit.*, p. 214.
[39] *Ibid.*, pp. 214—15.
[40] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

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This shows that he has satisfaction and confidence in his balanced world. It is a sort of life with no question in one's inner world. However, his advice comes from his past experiences as adventurer or dreamer, as is expressed in "That was the way," and not from his present life. While he was advising, his confidence in the advice began to be shaky, and after the advice was given he returned to his present realized dream, i.e., to the butterflies. Stein's way of pursuing his dream is so ruthlessly inhumane that he can do both the act of pursuing butterflies and that of observing the death of those whom he himself killed. He may have felt ashamed of himself for his past life of seeking after his dream. His advice is inconsistent with his practical idea. His idea is to have Jim escape his past failure and pursue his dream, which cannot be the solution of Jim's fundamental mode of living. His appearance when he met the sorrowful Jewel and knew Jim's defeat in Patusan is:

> Stein has aged greatly of late. He feels it himself, and says often that he is "preparing to leave all this; preparing to leave . . ." while he waves his hand sadly at his butterflies.[41]

This change of Stein's signifies not only his disappointment in Jim's defeat but also the change in his present attitude toward life itself. Stein understands this: even in the balanced world of Jim's his defeat does not allow himself to forget his own past. The life Jim led trying to realize the dream so as to forget the past soon falls away when he is confronted with his own past. He has no power at all before the actual crises. After the defeat of Jim, Jewel has such a deep sorrow that any word, even those of Stein's that Jim was faithful to himself, has no power to comfort her who has lost her beloved. Jewel's attitude of refusing any comfort suggests to him that man should accept the actual sorrow as it is and should not ask for any comfort. The dream Stein formed when he had little feeling of humanity is powerless and even treacherous to truly humanistic agony and sorrow, and Jewel's attitude is truer as a human being. As the result of it, to take leave of the butterflies, his ultimate ideal, means for Stein to separate from the balanced world made by himself and immerce himself in the actual reality. This world is a severe one without any comfort and also is full of what he says "the destructive element." Stein becomes aware of his dishonest life of himself, and changes his mode of living based on the denial of his past life into such attitudes as to affirm his own humanistic standpoint, in

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[41] *Ibid.*, p. 417.

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spite of his imperfection and limitation that human being has, and moreover, tries to find out some positive significance in man's life in the real world. On the other hand, Jim adheres too much to the realized dream and the dishonest life, which caused him to be defeated in the real world and to die. In other words, by denying the world of escape from the past Stein can make himself reborn in the real world, while Jim, by affirming it, selects death of his own accord.

The reason why Conrad made Stein change as above is this: the real world in harmony with one's ideal cannot exist in this world, and if it can, it may be nothing but the evasion from the reality to find some idle comforts. To be immersed in such a world is a self-deceit leading to defeat. However meaningless and absurd the real life of ours may be, we human beings, even after taking such to be our life, should endure it and live our daily life honestly without asking any compensations or any comforts in it.

IV

Conrad regarded fidelity as the highest of all morals that man has. This stoic morality he got from the solidarity of the sailors' community in which the members must struggle against nature with perfect unity and the duty of each one has serious effects on lives of the whole community members. In "A Familiar Preface" to *A Personal Record*, he says:

> Those who read me knew my conviction that the world, the temporal world, rests on a few very simple ideas; so simple that must be as old as the hills. It rests notably, among others, on the idea of Fidelity.[42]

In an ordinary circumstance, this morality can be observed by man. But, to hold fast to true fidelity under any circumstances, we need to have such courage as never makes way for our thinking power or imagination. He tested it in *Lord Jim* setting a man and nature in severe contrast. He thought that by inflicting some suffering upon a man who lives his life on board, a sort of closed world, his response to the trial could be obtained in a genuine form because of the closed world.[43]

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[42] Joseph Conrad, *A Personal Record* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1961), "A Familiar Preface," p. xix.

[43] We have here, in fact, a hint of his method that we can see to be implied in his passage from his letter to Henny S. Candy on 7 April, 1924:

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His view on nature is;

> 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 fatigue and his longing for rest.[44]

For him, nature is beyond man's power and has hostilities to man. This is an exceedingly pessimistic view of nature. And for him, man unconsciously has inevitable weakness in him.

This struggle of man against nature is the battle of man's spirit against nature. When man, left to be alone, is put to the test in an extreme situation which threatens him with death, his spirit tries to overcome such a situation, working his ability of thinking and imagination, which, however, cannot help awakening the weakness hidden secretly in man. For Conrad, "Imagination is the enemy of men, and the father of all terror"[45] and "Thinking is the great enemy of perfection. The habit of profound reflection, ... is the most pernicious of all the habits formed by the civilized man."[46] Those who can win a victory in this battle must act without imagination and thinking – not the intellectual, not the romantic, nor the idealists. They can hold fast on their fidelity. The typical character of them is the French lieutenant in this novel. But he says that man is born a coward. Conrad thinks that even such a person as the French lieutenant has cowardice in himself and needs patience

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"But the problem that faces them is not a problem of the sea, it is merely a problem that has risen on board a ship where the condition of complete isolation from all land entanglements make it stand out with a particular face and colouring." George Jean-Aurbry, ed., *Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters* (London: Heineman, 1927), Vol. II, p. 342.

[44] Conrad, *Lord Jim*, pp. 10–11.

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 11. Also we can find that imagination deals man a fatal blow in *Under Western Eyes* and *Nostromo*. For example:

"There are evil moments in every life. A false suggestion enters one's brain, and then fear is born – fear of oneself, fear for oneself. Or else a false courage – who knows?" *Under Western Eyes* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1961), pp. 379–80.

[46] Joseph Conrad, *Victory* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1961), "Author's Note," pp. x–xi. And also we can see the similar description in *The Nigger of the "Narcissus."* For example:

"On men reprieved by its disdainful mercy, the immortal sea confers in its justice the full privilege of desired unrest. Through the perfect wisdom of its grace they are not permitted to meditate at ease upon the complicated and acrid savour of existence." *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1961), p. 90.

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to keep the courage that is necessary for the observation of his fidelity. And yet, this patience comes not from his inner demand but from his sensitivity to other people's eyes. Therefore, it is doubtful whether he can maintain even the patience consistently or not. Conrad rather seems to think that ordinary man cannot.

Conrad analyzed humanity through the analysis of Jim who was defeated in the engagement with nature. He chose that path, for he believed that in such conditions most of men were to be defeated and that, when defeated, true human nature was to be revealed.

> The truth can be wrung out of us only by some cruel, little, awful catastrophe.[47]

Man desires to be a spiritual being that can surpass the sway of nature with his own free will, but once attacked by some power which negates his physical being, he is carried away by the natural and bestial impulse that denies the former being of his and affirms the latter. At that moment man is defeated. In the case of Jim, he is defeated on account of this inevitable weakness of his and lost fidelity to his community. Conrad comments on human weakness:

> It is from weakness unknown, but perhaps suspected, as in some parts of the world you suspect a deadly snake in every bush – from weakness that lie hidden, watched or unwatched, prayed against or manfully scorned, repressed or maybe ignored more than half a lifetime, not one of us is safe.[48]

Man's weakness lies hidden unconsciously, and it does not remain in the state of weakness but goes to the problem of evil in man. That is to say, in Jim's case, his loss of fidelity through his weakness means the betrayal of himself. And when he can no longer justify his own betrayal by regarding himself as a victim of circumstance, that betrayal arouses the sense of guilt in him. To the question whether it is possible to expiate his guilt or not, he answered in the affirmative by his own death. However, Conrad seems to answer the question in the negative. Sins that are committed by men will never be wiped out. In addition, man is not strong or perfect enough to protect himself from sins. Besides, in the midst of temptations to sins, he can not be aware of the evil being

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[47] Conrad, *Lord Jim*, p. 235.
[48] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

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hidden in himself, and is easily united to the sins.

> We are snared into doing things for which we get called names, and things for which we get hanged, and yet the spirit may well survive – survive the condemnations, survive the halter, by Jove! And there are things – they look small enough sometimes too – by which some of us are totally and completely undone.[49]

Moreover, Conrad admits the tendency of man toward evil in his description of evil overcoming good. For this reason he demands man to face what is evil in himself as it is and to have the severe attitude to oneself.

In case the ideal conception of one's own personality is threatned by "the destructive element," if one cannot get through it even by ignoring it as Jim or Razumov in *Under Western Eyes* or Nostromo in *Nostromo* does, one must admit the element in oneself that is correspondent with "the destructive element," accept it and conquer it. The narrator in *The Secret Sharer* and *The Shadow Line* and Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* could win the victory by assimilating this element with themselves. When man commits a sinful act, he must, though criticized as an opportunist, live without looking for comforts, without escaping, and with the will for expiation of his sin. In other words, there is no other way left for man than to immerse himself in "the destructive element" and live honestly to his morality and his evil, enduring the severe antinomy eternally existing in himself. This is Conrad's idea.

In his idea, loneliness is not merely the isolation felt by the characters in his work when they have contact with the outer world, but also the solitude caused by the uneasiness that they cannot restrain the conflict of the two world of their inner life. Therefore, this loneliness of his always exists as the condition of man, firmly rooted in man's ontological uneasiness.

Throughout this novel, Jim is always lonely and Marlow, the narrator, emphasizes on calling him in such a situation "one of us."[50] or he does not call Jim by his proper name but as the incognito. These signifies that the events in this novel may apply to anyone and the human loneliness and weakness that Jim has belongs to any human beings.

Conrad is a moralistic novelist who never lost an interest in the world that lies unsounded in man's inner life; and pursued it on the level of humanity, never relying on the transcendental Being.

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[49] *Loc. cit.*

[50] *Ibid.*, "Author's Note," p. ix.