SEA, CITY AND JUNGLE

IN THE WORKS OF JOSEPH CONRAD

A Study of the Relationship between the Images of Sea, City and Jungle in the Works of Joseph Conrad

by

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CONTENTS

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Note

All page references to the novels and short stories of Conrad are to Grant's Edition The Works of Joseph Conrad in Twenty Volumes (John Grant, 1925).

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Abstract

The intention behind this thesis is to demonstrate that the major settings, sea, city and jungle, as they operate throughout Conrad's works, are always inter-related and to show that they acquire their full reality only when they are considered in relation to each other. An approach to these three images as separate and entirely distinct entities tends to limit not only their implications, but also the scope of the author's themes in general, and his vision of reality in particular. It is in this light that the main consideration of this thesis has been to show the intersections of the three locations as well as the demarcations between them.

Four major aspects are examined to show the

importance of the interaction of sea, city and jungle and to allow an increased awareness of their deeper implications. First, when the three settings are considered in their literal sense they are shown as distinct elements. Secondly, the area of their conjunction is the focal point of this study and here the interest lies in the way the three settings function as metaphors, and thus exhibit significant common features. Thirdly, there is an examination of other subordinate images, symbols and themes which pertain to the interrelationship under scrutiny, in order to elucidate the implications of the three images. Fourthly, the technique adopted by the author – mainly his particular manipulation of the point of view, and irony – regulates the inter-relationship between sea, city and jungle, and thus despite their close intimacy they remain distinct throughout the works.

It will be seen that the interrelationship between these three images as they function in Conrad's writing allows new insights into his mind and art. The regulating technique which prevents the three locations

from becoming interchangeable or confused, confirms a certain order at the heart of a universe inherently chaotic. Finally, the writer's manipulation of this interrelationship gives his works a unified structure and defines his moral vision.

INTRODUCTION

Early in his life, Joseph Conrad left his native town of Berdyczew to accompany his father and mother to exile in Russia. At the age of eleven he became orphaned and continued his studies under the guardianship of his uncle Thaddeus Bobrowski. As a child he read history books, accounts of sea-voyages and novels by Fenimore Cooper, Captain Marryat, Dickens and others.

Through his readings he became fascinated by adventure, the sea and exotic countries. His first sight of the sea occurred during his summer holidays with his uncle at Novofastoc, and in 1872, not very enthusiastic about school, he tried to persuade his uncle to allow him to go to sea. Two years later he finally convinced him and obtained permission to join the French merchant navy, determined to fulfil his youthful ambition. Later in his life he admitted that his imagination was always stirred by his readings about the sea, especially Hugo's Travailleurs de la Mer and the tales of other adventure-writers. However, under the supervision of a young philosophy student from the University of Cracow, Conrad also read "the serious writers of the century, the children

of light, Comte, Mill, Darwin, Spencer." The combination thus produced is described by Martin Green as "a paradigm of nineteenth-century education in Europe; a layer of adventure images, upon which in higher education a layer of almost opposite ideas was laid."[1]

His career at sea began at the age of seventeen when he went to Marseilles to become a seaman in the French merchant navy. From Marseilles he had the opportunity to sail all over the world and visit different far-away countries on various voyages.

Four years later he decided to become an English master mariner. He transferred from the French navy to the British merchant navy and arrived in London where he was offered a berth as an ordinary seaman on the Duke of Sutherland, running between London and Sydney. After spending a couple of years in the British merchant service, he passed his examinations for third mate, mate and, finally, for master mariner.

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1. Martin Green, Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1980), p. 300.

From 1888 to March, 1881 he was in charge of the Otago and sailed to the Far East, becoming familiar in particular with the Malay Archipelago which became the main setting for many of his early novels and short stories.

As a child he had loved to pore over maps and locate places which he intended to visit when he grew up, and at the age of thirty-one he was able to fulfil some of those childhood dreams. He found employment as captain of a steamer in the Congo through the Société Anonyme Belge pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo. This African episode was an experience that had a great impact on his vision of the human condition and, incidentally, on his health. In Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography, Jocelyn Baines wrote that "his Congo experience devastatingly exposed the cleavage between human pretensions and practice, a consciousness of which underlies Conrad's philosophy of life."[2]

Back from Central Africa, ill and without a job,

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2. Jocelyn Baines, Joseph Conrad: A Critical Biography (Weindenfeld and Nicolson, 1959), p.119.

Conrad finished his first novel Almayer's Folly and, encouraged by Edward Garnett, he went on writing a series of novels and short stories. Thus, after he gave up his career at sea and his journeys to distant countries, which provided him with a wide range of experience, he launched into a literary career.

Throughout his writings he made much use of his journeys and experiences, enabling him to call up a rich variety of locales. The diversity of setting both defines and gives colour to his stories and contributes to the expansion of his themes as well. His characters are usually travellers portrayed moving from one area to another in a perpetual search for a meaning to their existence; exposed by their author to different social and geographical environments, so that their performance and reactions may be studied. Thus, the journeys of his characters, whether considered metaphorically or literally, link different places, which are metaphors too. From the sea to the land, from the world of so-called civilisation to primitive and exotic areas; such are the general movements of Conrad's characters and the background against which he explores

his themes and tries to convey his vision of life in general. This variety of setting confers upon his themes an amplitude and universality which greatly enhance his stature and identify him as a writer of the first importance.

The three major settings Conrad uses to give his stories a kind of locale are the sea, city and jungle. However, no one locale is allowed exclusive dominion over the stories or novels as he almost always invokes the others, interweaving them in so intricate a way that they come to constitute an organic scenic pattern which is the story's real and comprehensive locale or setting. Hence, in any discussion of the setting in Conrad's fiction it is important and even necessary to examine the way in which these three major settings interrelate with each other and the implications they acquire in this context.

Most of the critics who comment on Conrad's geographical milieux seem to have overlooked the significance that lies in this very interrelationship. Instead, in any study where they consider them, they do

so as separate entities, exploring them as symbols or settings independent of each other: an approach which greatly limits their implications and function, and obscures the value of the writer's work as a whole. For this reason some critics go even further and divide his works into three groups according to the prevalence of one of the three major settings.

For example, in Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline, Mr. Thomas Moser argues that the significance of scene in the Malay novels, which is very largely the tropical jungle, resides in its sexual overtones. According to him, the forest as it functions in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands is equated with the idea of destructive femininity, of fertility and death. In short, life in the jungle is equated with woman. In his approach to Heart of Darkness, Mr. Moser also underlines the importance of the description of the jungle, this time equating it with the vitality of the African natives as opposed to the hollowness of the white men. A propos of The Secret Agent, a novel with a completely different physical setting, he observes that Winnie

"though she has a home.... strikes us as an utter stranger in the jungle of London."[3] His reference to the jungle is however every bit as casual as it sounds: he neither develops his analysis nor relates it to the other settings. He does not explore how this "jungle" or city is connected with, differs from or resembles, the tropical forest in the Malay novels: in other words, the moral significance of the image remains largely unexplained.

In The Sea Dreamer, a biographical study, Gérard Jean-Aubry stresses the importance of the sea in Conrad's fiction, and examines the question of the extent to which his personality as a sea-captain is reflected in his characters. Regarding the character of Almayer, for instance, Mr. Jean-Aubry makes the following remark:

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3. Thomas Moser, Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1957), p.91.

> The outward appearance of this man [Almayer], what [Conrad] had heard of him and, above all, the pathetic contrast between his dilapidated condition and the enormous ambitions which he still cherished, made a deep impression upon the novelist's sensitivity just then awakening in Captain Conrad's consciousness. Here he suddenly found himself confronted with an unusually eloquent example of the discord between the power of the imagination and the weakness of human resources. This was to form the basis, the dominant theme - heroic, brave and at the same time desperate - of the whole of his work.[4]

Mr. Jean-Aubry's analysis of Conrad's biography and references to his fiction are mainly concerned with the element of the sea. But while Conrad's experiences at sea are indeed central to his works, it would be unfair to judge him simply as a sea-writer or even to dwell too much on the element of the sea without relating it to the other areas where Conrad extends his themes.

In the African tales, as in the Malay ones, the jungle is generally considered to be the main symbol and setting, blotting out the significance of the other settings used beside it. Critics are easily

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4. Gérard Jean-Aubry, The Sea Dreamer: A Definitive Biography of Joseph Conrad, translated by Helen Sebba (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1957), p.123.

tempted to focus on the jungle as the main element which informs the stories with ideas and implications to the detriment of all others. For example, in The Literary Symbol, William York Tindall, commenting on Heart of Darkness, observes that "more than the place and goal of the quest, the forest is the symbol that, attracting additional body from supporting elements, embodies all."[5] Although there is no doubt as to the jungle being the predominant setting and symbol in Heart of Darkness, it is by no means the only one the writer refers to, and to ignore the reference to other settings is certainly to reduce the value of the implications of the jungle itself as well as the depth of the whole story. Very significantly, when Mr. Tindall comes to The Secret Agent, he remarks, regarding the setting, that "in place of the forest [Conrad] used for his tale of the Greenwich Observatory, as he tells us in the "Author's Note", the image of a great city."[6] In this comment on The Secret Agent, the connection

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5. William York Tindall, The Literary Symbol (Indiana University Press, 1967), p.92.

6. Ibid., p.92.

between the two apparently different settings, jungle and city, is noted but again not developed, and the two elements are therefore studied separately.

However, Mr. Jacques Berthoud in Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase gets much closer to the way the three major settings interrelate with each other. For instance, Mr. Berthoud regards Heart of Darkness, a tale principally based on life in the African jungle, as a continuation of The Nigger of the "Narcissus", one of Conrad's "exclusively sea books".[7] Mr. Berthoud also raises the question of the relationship between life in the community or the city on the one hand and life in the jungle and at sea on the other. However, his analysis of this kind of relationship is not carried any further.

Similarly, F.R. Karl and Donald C. Yelton draw attention to the relationship between the different settings in Conrad's works. F.R. Karl observes that

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7. Joseph Conrad, The Mirror of the Sea and A Personal Record, Vol. nine, "A Familiar Preface", p.xvi.

the scene in the Malay novels is transformed into the urban landscape in The Secret Agent; however, the ramifications of the interrelationship between the two settings, jungle and city are not explored. Mr. Yelton, on the other hand, examines in rather greater detail the use of the jungle and sea as metaphors against the background of the city in The Secret Agent; but again he stops short of an adequate analysis of the function of the city-symbol.

The importance of the environment in Conrad's works is perhaps better defined by Leo Gurko in his book, Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile. Two of his chapters offer a comprehensive definition of the setting in Conrad's fiction in general: Chapter IX, "The Ecology of Art", and Chapter X, "Dark Vision of Megalopolis". In the former, he concentrates in particular on the jungle in Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands and Heart of Darkness. Concerning the jungle in the Malay novels, he summarises its meaning as expressed through its impact on Willems's life and personality:

> It [the jungle] embraced Willems's two characteristics, a blind sensuality and a struggle to the death for a place in the sun. As a result the three great events of his life take place in the jungle: he sees Aissa for the first time in a jungle glade, discloses Lingard's secret river passage to the Malays (another of his racial betrayals), and is killed there.[8]

In a previous chapter, "The Struggle with Nature", Mr. Gurko also studies the themes of Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands in the light of their physical environment, the tropical forest. Of the two principal characters, Almayer and Willems, he says that they "both stifle in the fecund jungle of Borneo, whose tropicality and profusion sap their vitality and leave them gasping in vain for spiritual air."[9] The nature against which Conrad explores these early novels provides him with thematic meanings and reflects the mood of the story and characters. Mr. Gurko goes on to comment that "[nature] was beautiful and varied;

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8. Leo Gurko, Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile (Frederick Muller Ltd., 1962), p 167.

9. Ibid., p.62.

it had texture; it appeared to have 'philosophical meaning!'"[10] Thus explaining the character of Willems in the light of the physical environment, which defines and limits the story, he points out that "the corrupt and corrupting jungle becomes the perfect ecological setting for Willems' fall."[11] The moral and physical decline of Willems is represented in terms of a gradual withdrawal from the city to the jungle: "For Willems's journey in the novel is from man to animal, from the large city of Macassar and the smaller but no less human settlement of Almayer to the dark enclosure of the Malay jungle."[12] Mr. Gurko, moreover, refers briefly to the link between East and West, between civilisation and the wilderness in Heart of Darkness:

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10. Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile, p.65.

11. Ibid., p.71.

12. Ibid., p.72.

> The combination of the east and west underlines the universality of [Conrad's] themes, linking the Thames and the Congo, Africa and Europe, the ancient Romans and the latter-day British, streets in Brussels and mud paths in the heart of the wilderness.[13]

In dealing with the stories about the sea, Leo Gurko significantly observes that "they are not 'sea' stories in the sense that they are primarily about life at sea; they are primarily about life, and Conrad was properly irritated when because of them he was regarded as a 'sea' writer."[14] Concerning the image of the ship, he interprets it as "the shield and the vessel by which its cargo of humanity survives in and even occasionally triumphs over a hostile and dangerous world."[15] However, his interpretation of the sea remains limited to this element and he hardly refers to the relationship between it and other settings.

In his approach to The Secret Agent, Mr. Gurko focuses on the city as the principal subject of the

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13. Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile, p.172.
14. Ibid., p.79.
15. Ibid., p.80.

novel. He draws attention particularly to the impact of urban life on the emotions of the individual and the themes that derive from it, such as the struggle of man to assert his identity "amid the anti-human pressures of the great city."[16]

The same critic makes interesting observations regarding the setting, or what he calls the "ecology", of Conrad's fiction and its wider meaning in relation to theme and character. Nevertheless, his study generally deals with the three major settings, sea, city and jungle, as separate elements, without developing the pertinent interconnection between them. He summarises his views of the use of the setting in Conrad's works in these words:

> Of the great modern novelists, [Conrad] developed to the fullest an ecological mystique. The sea was more than a broad expanse of water, more than an exciting physical arena, more than the stage on which the human drama was

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16. Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile, p.193.

> played out. It was also an agent whose powers and qualities made it possible for human beings to behave in certain ways and drew from them particular responses. The same is true of rivers, and the rivers on which Lingard, Kurtz, Marlow and Lord Jim sail place their stamp on the ultimate experiences of these men. The same is true of islands (Axel Heyst lives on one in Victory), of mountain masses ("The Secret Sharer" and The Shadow Line are brought to their climax by them), of the jungle (the sexual corruption of Willems in An Outcast of the Islands occurs there), and of the great cities of the Western world. The impact and spiritual infusions of the physical environment, whether natural or man-made, have always been strongly felt in the reading of Conrad, but little explored.[17]

The study which follows will go well beyond what has been suggested by these critics and in the process a closer examination will be made of certain individual elements. But I am not primarily concerned with the three major settings in Conrad's works, namely the sea, city and jungle, as separable entities. It is, rather,

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17. Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile, p.191.

their interrelationship and the implications they acquire by virtue of their impact upon each other in the context of the story and in the totality of the author's writing which will receive most of my attention. For this reason the examination of the interrelationship in question in Conrad's fiction will be a comparative study of his novels and short stories with different settings. Although this thesis will be undertaken from what might be regarded as a somewhat narrow perspective, it will allow us a greater understanding of the author's manipulation of the setting; for the three images get and communicate their full reality only in the way they interact and partake of each other.

To focus on the area where the three elements interrelate with each other, rather than to study them separately, is more rewarding and exposes deeper layers of meaning in each element as it operates throughout the writer's fiction. Furthermore, in the light of a comparative study of several works with different physical scenes, it will be demonstrated that the three settings usually function side by side amplifying each

other's implications. It will also be seen that the novelist himself makes great use of their inter-relationship, showing less concern with them as separate entities.

This interrelationship between the three settings is either implicit or explicit in all Conrad's works but never absent. For example, even when the writer seems to concentrate on one setting, he keeps referring to the others thus opening up an even richer range of allusion and comparison, frequently winning for himself in the process more scope for his favourite literary device of irony. Indeed, irony is a basic element in the study of the interrelationship in question; among other functions it serves the writer as a means of its regulation. Wayne C. Booth in A Rhetoric of Irony asserts that "being ironic is itself the controlling purpose."[18] Mr. Muecke also affirms the regulating function of irony, in a mode that is very appropriate to Conrad: "The object of this ironic procedure [juxtaposing, without comment, opposite or merely

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18. Wayne C. Booth, A Rhetoric of Irony (The University of Chicago Press, 1972), p.228.

different points of view] might be to achieve a balanced all-round view, to express one's awareness of the complexity of life or the relativity of values".[19] One of Conrad's ironic methods related to the inter-relationship between city and jungle, for example, rests on a revealing juxtaposition of these two apparently opposite elements. This is exactly that other type of irony Muecke speaks of, an irony less familiar than the one "contrasting reality and appearance", and "which consists of a juxtaposition of equal and opposite propositions, situations, or values."[20]

In this view, we can expect a comparison of two novels with different physical settings such as Almayer's Folly, whose background is mainly the Malay jungle, and The Secret Agent, where the city of London is the predominant scene, to be particularly rewarding. Although the former is more concerned with the jungle

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19. D.C. Muecke, Irony (Methuen Co. Ltd., 1978), p.24.

20. Ibid., p.31.

as the background against which the story is explored, the city is present through the leitmotif of a European city being always in the mind of the protagonist; and thus it becomes a significant frame of reference closely connected, in one way or another, with the jungle. Similarly, in The Secret Agent the recurrent images of sea and jungle interweave with the texture of the urban environment and furnish it with deeper and wider implications.

Throughout this study of the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle it is also hoped to discuss their function in the writer's works in general. Their significance in relation to each other is deeper than might be expected and is central to Conrad's vision of mankind. Besides, considered within the framework of their interrelationship, the three elements acquire further meaning which would not emerge if each were to be considered in isolation.

The term "interrelationship" clearly implies concentration on the mutuality and affinity between the three elements under consideration. However, although

this aspect of their relationship will be the focal point of the study, in order to arrive at more significant results the other facet of this relationship, that is to say, the area where they differ from each other, will also receive attention. Thus, the method which will be followed in exploring the interrelationship divides roughly into two stages.

First, the area where the three elements contrast with each other, mainly where they are taken in their literal meanings: in this sense, the sea is the large expanse of water, the jungle is the wild and savage land, and the city is the distinctive form of civilisation, a centre of learning and light. Metaphorically, too, the sea and jungle, which can be seen to stand for the mystery of life embodying its contradictory aspects and the chaos that lies in the universe, seem to be presented in sharp contrast with the city, the symbol of apparent order man creates to regulate the dark powers in the "wilderness".

Second, their similar aspects or the areas where they overlap. In a deeper metaphorical sense, the

jungle and the sea, or ectopic nature in general, take on a moral significance representing the chaos within man's own nature. Similarly, the city becomes associated with the hostile forces of universal chaos, while the order it may symbolise is an illusion rather than a reality. It is this second aspect of the interrelationship between the three images that will be underlined in my thesis. For the simplifying contrasts between the three elements is very often transcended in Conrad's writings. The polarity between wilderness and city manifested in ancient literature is not justified in Conrad's symbolism of landscape. In his study of the psychology of landscape in early epics, Paul Piehler, explores this polarity: "the founding of a city is primarily the work of the active rational consciousness. The society the city makes possible is the essential of any ordered conscious life, a repository for traditional wisdom and a frame of reference for thought and speculation." While outside the city "lie forest and ocean, not merely symbols of the vast powers of the unconscious, but in early

periods at least, the very place of their operation."[21]

Along with these two stages, three aspects of Conrad's writing will be examined in order to establish and clarify the way the images of sea, city and jungle interact with each other, and to explore fully their ramifications. First, I shall analyse a few important images and symbols which are relevant to the three settings. Second, references to themes and sub-themes which either highlight or emanate from the inter-relationship between the three elements will be examined. In his treatment of this interrelationship, Conrad actually deals with several related themes. Man is shown in perpetual conflict with the environment (whether natural like the sea or jungle, or man-made like the city), with his fellow men and with himself. This latter conflict reveals man's struggle with the "internal jungle" and his endeavour to control it,

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21. Paul Piehler, The Visionary Landscape: A Study in Medieval Allegory (Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd., 1971), p.73.

raising, in other words, the psychological question of conflict between the conscious and unconscious workings of the mind. The journey between city and jungle and across the sea also weaves together the three elements.

The third aspect to be examined will be the point of view and its function in the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle. Along with the device of irony, Conrad's manipulation of the point of view is highly effective in controlling the evaluation of this interrelationship. This aspect consists of studying the characters and their different views of, and responses to, the three settings, and the author's own attitude vis-à-vis the interrelationship in question. This latter aspect will deal particularly with the discrepancy and/or consistency between the perception of author and character with respect to the three elements of the interrelationship. The author's attitude and the different voices in the story, or what Wayne C. Booth calls the "reminders of the author's

controlling hand"[22] will be stressed to reveal the extent to which sea, city and jungle can coexist without becoming confused or interchangeable. What Conrad gains by the use of different points of view and the device of irony is a sort of "objective distance", which shows the limitations of the character and the great disparity between his illusion and his actualities. These two rhetorical techniques also allow Conrad to present the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle, with its inherent contradictions, in a controlled way.

One of the main purposes of this study is, then, to show how the writer, in handling the three settings, despite their paradoxical meanings inherent in his vision of the whole human situation, maintains a remarkable control and equilibrium in the treatment of their interrelationship. The development of his technique and in particular the device of irony allows him to resolve, to a large degree, the ambiguity - with

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22. Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p.18.

its attendant risks of obfuscation and confusion - at the centre of the interaction between the three major settings. The main aim, however, of the following examination of selected novels and short stories and their comparison with each other in the light of the interaction between sea, city and jungle, is to demonstrate the importance of studying these three settings, not as separate elements, but as they operate in relation to each other and so allow us new insights into Conrad's mind and art.

CHAPTER I:

THE IMAGE OF THE CITY IN THE MALAY NOVELS

The action of Conrad's early novels is set in the world of the jungle, and the protagonists are mainly European adventurers in pursuit of wealth. Almayer's Folly, his first novel and An Outcast of the Islands have both setting and characters in common. While these two novels explore life in the Malay jungle, "An Outpost of Progress" and Heart of Darkness deal with European traders and colonisers in the African jungle in Central Africa. In all these stories, Conrad makes use of the three major images to convey his themes, and closer scrutiny of them reveals a concentration on their interrelationship. In what sense, then, are these images related to each other and with what implications?

In the novels about the Malay jungle, Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, the image of the jungle is predominant and provides the principal field within which the protagonist moves. The image of the city is overshadowed by the jungle, which makes the city a secondary setting. In general, however, although the image of the city remains in the background, it is by no means unimportant, in that

it enlarges the scope and implications of the story as a whole. The idea of the city enters the world of the jungle in different ways: it is either present in the mind of the white man or actually represented by small white communities and their trading companies' settlements which house the equipment and furniture brought from the 'civilised' world.

Although, on the whole, the city in these early novels is representational, standing for western civilisation, it sometimes becomes specific and concrete. Thus, while the main events in these works are depicted in the world of the jungle, the city-image remains a constant frame of reference; whatever the protagonist does or whatever happens to him is not defined only by the jungle. In order to have something other than a partial grasp of the significance of these stories, both jungle and city have to be given their due. And the third image of the sea, which links the world of jungle and city, will assert itself as the study progresses, coming together with the other two to offer us a mode of access, not otherwise available, to Conrad's vision of the general human situation.

In Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands the world of the jungle is first presented to the protagonists, Almayer and Willems, as a place of wealth and opportunity. They think of the jungle merely as an object to be used to acquire money to enable them to realise their aspirations for wealth and social position among their own people in Europe. More importantly, both Almayer and Willems have a European city in mind, which comes to be their dream and their ideal world. In a sense, the jungle and city are mentally linked in the minds of the two white men. The egocentricity and the thirst for gold that motivate Almayer and Willems are, so to speak, always directed towards the world of the city, but these qualities and appetites are to be manifested in the jungle. Thus, Almayer dreams of going back to Amsterdam, which his mother spoke of as his home, and Willems longs to become a member of a bourgeois class, particularly, perhaps, to become an urban bourgeois who goes to church and to Sunday card-parties.

Almayer in Almayer's Folly, being possessed by his dream of going back to Amsterdam, finds life in the jungle very difficult to stand, but at the same time,

this dream helps him to withstand his sufferings and hardships in the hostile wilderness. He gradually realises the dangers of the jungle but he is blinded by the material value he thinks it will offer him. Thus, the life of the jungle comes to take two different and even conflicting shapes in Almayer's mind: the gold it hides in its bosom, and the dangers that accompany it, both natural and human. These conflicting aspects of the jungle are placed side by side, and Almayer prefers to follow his quest for wealth ignoring the consequences of such a quest, for he believes that without achieving riches he will not be able to establish himself in his ideal city. The chaotic and malignant life of the jungle in the Malay countries is then made tolerable only by his hope of becoming rich and securing a good position, not there in what to him is a wilderness, but in the city of Amsterdam.

The combined images of the city and the idea of European civilisation in general informs the whole of Almayer's story and demands to be considered in relation to the jungle in order to understand the

ramifications of his sojourn in the wilderness and the wider implications of his experiences there. In the context of Almayer's life in the Malay jungle, the image of the city comes to stand for a kind of refuge where there is order and hope as contrasted with the chaos and hostility of the jungle. Almayer's presence in the jungle is indeed like a prisoner in a cell struggling for light and freedom, both of which he associates with the city. His return to the city of Amsterdam begins as a dream, easy to realise by exploiting the life of the jungle, but ends in a nightmare from which he cannot wake, remaining instead a captive of the jungle for ever.

Almayer is divided between illusion, or his dream of the city, and the reality of his surrounding jungle world. Throughout this novel, the city is ironically treated as an illusion in which the protagonist believes, without being aware of its false reality. The ironical treatment of the city is manifested in Almayer's dream of retiring back to Amsterdam with his wealth while in fact he gradually loses his "civilised" identity.

The setting in both Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands comments on the illusions of the characters, one of which illusions is the city seen as a symbol of order. The Malay jungle is generally presented as an incoherent form that can be mastered neither by man's struggle nor by his dream of the city and its achievements in transforming the wilderness. Thus, these Malay novels introduce a fundamental theme related to the three settings and their implications - that the individual lives in a world of his own illusions. In the case of Almayer, for example, it is the dream of Amsterdam in which he lives. In making an imagined world or city the basis of his reality while he ignores the concrete and harsh reality of the jungle, Almayer anticipates Conrad's other characters, who remain divided between illusion and reality, such as Jim in Lord Jim, Axel Heyst in Victory, Nostromo in Nostromo and Kurtz in Heart of Darkness.

This tension between illusion and reality, between city and jungle, is indeed suggested in the very beginning of Almayer's Folly:

> "Kaspar! Makan!"
> The well-known shrill voice startled Almayer from his dream of splendid future into the unpleasant realities of the present hour. An unpleasant voice too. He had heard it for many years, and with every year he liked it less. No matter; there would be an end to all this soon.[1]

The novel as a whole offers us an ironic view of Almayer's dream. "His dream of splendid future" and the hope that "there would be an end to all this soon" are never achieved and Almayer remains in "the unpleasant realities", "lying stiff and lifeless".[2] The narrative technique itself, moving back and forth in time but always returning to the present, reflects Almayer's division between illusion and reality, between the city of his imagination and his concrete wild surroundings.

However, although illusion is generally presented in an ironic tone, its value is affirmed as will be demonstrated in Heart of Darknes, Nostromo and Lord Jim.

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1. Almayer's Folly and Tales of Unrest, Vol. 1, p.3.
2. Ibid., p.208.

This idea is perhaps well summed up in Stein's remark in Lord Jim: "A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea.... 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."[3] Stein is not warning against illusion: instead he suggests that man must accept illusion, live in it, in order to keep going and survive. Although illusion is always undermined by irony, it is not negated in Conrad; rather, its necessity is continually reaffirmed. In an introduction to Illusions by André Maurois, Jacques Barzun makes a remark very appropriate to Conrad, pointing out that "when illusion really illudes, it acquires reality; it acts like a truth and breeds results in reality."[4] André Maurois himself confirms the necessity of illusions remarking that "illusions are the stuff of which our life is made."[5]

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3. Lord Jim, vol. IV, p.214.
4. André Maurois, Illusions (Columbia University Press, 1968), p.xvi.
5. Ibid., p.101.

This opposition between illusion and reality characterises the apparent contrast between city and jungle in this early fiction. Other images are used by the author to heighten this contrast, such as the sea, the river and the settlement of the trading company. The river leads to the sea, which in turn leads to the world of civilisation. The settlement of the white man contains a kind of comfort and is full of familiar objects, such as books and furniture brought from the world of civilisation and placed in the midst of the wilderness. This settlement, like the river and the sea, stands for a kind of refuge for the white man and reminds him of life in the city. But the settlement and the equipment of civilisation are themselves affected by the disorder and decay inherent in the jungle.

Like the white colonisers, the material from civilisation seems to be out of context and unable to preserve its original state in contact with the wilderness. Nevertheless, to such characters as Almayer, who remains haunted by the image of the city and progress, this material gives some assurance and

a glimmer of hope against the oppressive darkness of the jungle.

Amidst the demoralising life of the jungle Almayer also turns to the river for consolation and even becomes obsessed by its image. His dream of an affluent life in Amsterdam becomes sometimes associated with the river flowing from the jungle towards the sea. The river itself is cruel, as is the jungle, but it leads to the sea and freedom. Looking at a tree being carried along by the river, Almayer meditates on his fate and thinks the tree is soon to be free:

> One of those drifting trees grounded on the shelving shore, just by the house, and Almayer, neglecting his dream, watched it with languid interest. The tree swung slowly round, amid the hiss and foam of the water, and soon getting free of the obstruction began to move downstream again, rolling slowly over, raising upwards a long, denuded branch, like a hand lifted in mute appeal to heaven against the river's brutal and unnecessary violence. Almayer's interest in the fate of that tree increased rapidly. He leaned over to see if it would clear the low point below. It did; then he drew back, thinking that now its course was free down to the sea,

> and he envied the lot of that
> inanimate thing now growing small
> and indistinct in the deepening
> darkness.[6]

As Almayer's attention is captured by the mute appeal of the denuded branch, he is in fact projecting his thoughts and feelings on the tree; thus their fates become analogous. The course of the uprooted tree towards the sea and freedom is nothing but what Almayer himself hopes to follow to be released from the cruelty of his present situation. This analogy between Almayer's destiny and that of the tree reveals man's tendency and even need to create illusions, projecting his own dreams on to external things. In this respect Maurois's remark is relevant:

> ... man's illusions stem in major part
> from the fact that he projects his thoughts,
> his prejudices and his passions upon nature.
> Trees, rivers, the stars desire nothing,
> express nothing. It is we who invest
> them with our own anguish, our fears, our
> hopes. We then have the illusion that
> they cause, or even share, these emotions.[7]

Besides its functioning as a path towards freedom, the river is also "a hurried messenger of light and

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6. Almayer's Folly, p.4.

7. Illusions, p.2.

life to the gloomy forests of the coasts."[8] While reflecting on the river and the sea and their significance as windows open on the West and hope, Almayer remembers his mother's telling him about Amsterdam, the city that comes to represent in his mind a kind of earthly paradise. He dreams of a fairy castle: "...crowning all in the far future gleamed like a fairy palace the big mansion in Amsterdam, that earthly paradise of his dreams."[9] Juxtaposed with his dream is his awareness of the intense darkness that surrounds him. Having the image of the "ideal" city in his mind he becomes even more aware of the chaotic image of the jungle. Tom Lingard's proposal to marry Almayer to his adopted daughter throws him into a dream where he contemplates himself in possession of "great piles of shining guilders" and achieving "all the possibilities of an opulent existence."[10] Then, suddenly Almayer is brought back to reality, to "the other side of the picture."[11] Almayer is again

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8. Almayer's Folly, p.186.
9. Ibid., p.10.
10. Ibid., p.10.
11. Ibid., p.10.

inevitably confronted with the chaotic image of the jungle; he is "now thoroughly recalled to the realities of life by the care necessary to prevent a fall on the uneven ground where the stones, decaying planks, and half-sawn beams were piled up in inextricable confusion."[12]

Out of this chaos, it is the river's course that always leads Almayer's imagination towards the West, which he associates with the paradise of his dreams. Very significantly, his mind instinctively runs westwards for hope and consolation, away from the depressing and demoralising life of the surroundings. Moreover, it is not only human beings who try to escape from the sordid atmosphere of the jungle, but also the plants themselves, which are shown,

> shooting upward, entwined, interlaced in inextricable confusion, climbing madly and brutally over each other in the terrible silence of a desperate struggle towards the life-giving sunshine above - as if struck with sudden horror at the seething mass of corruption below, at the death and decay from which they sprang.[13]

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12. Almayer's Folly, p.12.
13. Ibid., p.71.

Almayer's own source of light is indeed located in the West, where the city of Amsterdam stands in his imagination as a place free from the contamination of the jungle. In the latter he feels a stranger to the natives as well as to the land itself. His wish is to get away from this wild life to live in the white community, but at the same time he is bound to the jungle by his craving for wealth. And because the jungle is, to him, the source of this wealth, it acquires a power over him and holds him as its captive, in the same way the American gringos become eternal prisoners of the hidden treasure in Nostromo.

Almayer works hard and lives among the savages only to fulfil his and his daughter's happiness which, according to him, must be realised in Amsterdam and among his own people.

Besides the river there is the sea, the other wide window open on Europe. Europeans in this novel and in An Outcast of the Islands are usually called men of the sea. Tom Lingard, through whom Almayer hopes to become rich and whose adopted daughter he has married for this purpose, has built his reputation and fame at

sea and in the Malay jungle, thanks to his ship and his secret discovery of a gold mine up the river. Familiar faces to Almayer and Willems come by the sea and the river into the jungle. The sea is an emblem of life-forces while the forests exude death, and visitors from the sea bring some hope and consolation to Almayer, the prisoner of the jungle. The sea is indeed associated with freedom, as has been suggested in the scene of Almayer contemplating a tree carried along by the river, and the jungle stands for darkness and imprisonment. But the sea and the river are not simply presented as paths to hope and freedom, they can also take on a hostile nature, thus becoming ambivalent elements in the story. Dain Maroola's opinion of the sea sums up its ambivalent meanings. When telling Nina about the island he wishes to take her to, Dain speaks of the "gloomy forests and the muddy rivers"[14]; then he expresses the ambivalent force of the sea:

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14. Almayer's Folly, pp. 173-174.

> [Dain] felt a sudden impulse to speak to her of the sea he loved so well; and he told her of its never-ceasing voice, to which he had listened as a child, wondering at its hidden meaning that no living man has penetrated yet; of its enchanting glitter; of its senseless and capricious fury; how its surface was for ever changing, and yet always enticing, while its depths were for ever the same, cold and cruel, and full of the wisdom of destroyed life. He told her how it held men slaves of its charm for a lifetime, and then, regardless of their devotion, swallowed them up, angry at their fear of its mystery, which it would never disclose, not even to those that loved it most.[15]

The image of the sea in this passage is clearly expanded into a metaphor that expresses life itself, with all its various aspects, its mystery that puzzles man, and its capacity for destruction. To Almayer the sea is also that element "that leads everywhere, brings everything, and takes away so much".[16] Almayer, moreover, is from the beginning aware of the ambivalence of the river:

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15. Almayer's Folly, p.174.
16. Ibid., p.188.

> Ah! the river! His old friend and his old enemy, speaking always with the same voice as he runs from year to year bringing fortune or disappointment, happiness or pain, upon the same varying but unchanged surface of glancing currents and swirling eddies.[17]

However, the sea and the river that links it to the jungle always remind Almayer of the world of the city he yearns to return to after his sojourn in the jungle. At a critical moment in his relationship with his daughter, who is on the verge of going away with Dain Maroola, Almayer's attention is captured by the sea, the mirror where "he could see all his past life on the smooth and boundless surface that glittered before his eyes."[18] His imagination is certainly directed towards Europe: "Dain's hand laid on Almayer's shoulder recalled him with a start from some country very far away indeed."[19] The sea to Almayer is then a means of escape from the harsh reality of the jungle to the world of Amsterdam. Once again, when the

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17. Almayer's Folly, pp.173-174.
18. Ibid., p.188.
19. Ibid., p.188.

tension grows between Almayer and his daughter, they are described in these terms: "they both sat silent side by side, not looking at each other, but gazing at the vast expanse of the sea. Almayer's words had dried Nina's tears, and her look grew hard as she stared before her into the limitless sheet of blue that shone limpid, unwaving, and steady like heavens itself."[20] While he tries to persuade Nina to come back with him and abandon Dain, Almayer "turn[s] again his eyes towards the sea"[21] as if trying to run away from the jungle that holds him for ever and lamenting his failure to live in that city he has been dreaming of. Very significantly, at this very moment he is losing his daughter, who has all along been associated in his mind with his future plan to establish a happy life in Amsterdam.

Again, Conrad uses the device of juxtaposing the world in the character's mind and the real circumstances he is found in to reveal a mental relationship between

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20. Almayer's Folly, p.189.
21. Ibid., p.191.

two apparently different worlds, the city and the jungle. Almayer's concentration on the sea and his daughter's decision to leave him for a native, express his division between the jungle that surrounds him and the city in his mind, whose image seems to be shrinking and receding into the far distance, as if it is being pushed out by the powerful reality of the environment. At this stage in the story, moreover, Almayer's dream of going back to live in Amsterdam with Nina is brought to an end as he is soon to be foresaken by everyone in the jungle.

The image of the city in Almayer's story is time and again presented as a dream while the jungle is real. In contact with the jungle, the city also reveals a kind of fragility and even unreality and illusion. Thus, "the fairy palace" in the city Almayer dreams of, suggests an imaginary place and implies its unattainability, and indeed, the end of the story justifies these implications, at least as far as the protagonist's life is concerned. The buildings of the company's settlement are significantly presented as fragments of a modern city, but the darkness and chaos that exist in

the surroundings also exist in them:

> Half obliterated words - "Office: Lingard and Co." - were still legible on the dusty door, which looked as if it had not been opened for a very long time. Close to the other side wall stood a bent-wood rocking chair, and by the table and about the verandah four wooden armchairs straggled forlornly, as if ashamed of their shabby surroundings. A heap of common mats lay in one corner, with an old hammock slung diagonally above.[22]

Almayer's house, too, is characterised by "a general air of squalid neglect [that] pervaded the place."[23] Both the objects brought from civilisation, furniture and equipment, and the settlement reflect the moral state of the white man in the jungle. Like the furniture in Lingard's office, Almayer feels overwhelmed and persecuted by the jungle:

> He [Almayer] was very soon made to understand that he was not wanted in that corner of it where old Lingard and his own weak will placed him, in the midst of unscrupulous intrigues and of a fierce trade competition.[24]

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22. Almayer's Folly, p.15.
23. Ibid., p.16.
24. Ibid., p.24.

He and his dream of the city are in fact rejected by the life of the jungle, which, thus far, expresses cosmic chaos and incoherence. Its dense darkness seems to swallow all hope of order coming from the West, just as it pushes out the light of the sun that tries to penetrate it. Almayer's house and its transformation under the effect of the surroundings indeed reflect his moral degradation and the gradual disappearance of his "ideal" city. As he has lost almost all hope, his house decays into confusion: "the chaos of demoralized furniture...[and] the objects on the verandah came out strongly outlined in black splashes of shadow with all the uncompromising ugliness of their disorder "[25]

Towards the end of the novel we are given an even bleaker picture of Lingard's office as it deteriorates, which coincides with Almayer's final destruction:

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25. Almayer's Folly, p.157.

> [Almayer] entered in a cloud of dust that rose under his feet. Books open with torn pages bestrewed the floor; other books lay about grimy and black, looking as if they had never been opened. Account books... In the middle of the room the big office desk, with one of its legs broken, careened over like the hull of a stranded ship; most of the drawers had fallen out, disclosing heaps of paper yellow with age and dirt... The desk, the paper, the torn books, and the broken shelves, all under a thick coat of dust. The very dust and bones of a dead and gone business.[26]

The office desk where the "civilised" man works to control the wilderness around him is ironically compared to the hull of a ship left without means or resources. This image from the world of the sea is also a reminder of the presence of the sea, always related to the other two elements, jungle and city. The analogy between the desk and the ship also points to the concept of order they both allude to; but here this artefact so descriptive of nineteenth-century civilisation is, in the middle of the wilderness, as meaningless as a piece of driftwood. Implied in this analogy is a certain affinity between sea and

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26. Almayer's Folly, p.199.

wilderness, both representing chaos and disorder.

Finally Almayer throws the key into the river as if he has for ever lost the key to the world of his "ideal" city of Amsterdam, and he yields to the life of the jungle. Very significantly, his only companion now is an animal of the forests, the monkey, and his refuge is "the darkest rooms of his house."[27] Even worse, the house that used to protect him against the hostility of the jungle is not only reduced to chaos and disorder but is actually burnt down, and the jetty of Lingard and Company "floated down the river."[28] This expresses the irony the writer uses to undermine the apparatus of civilisation in its confrontation with the powerful primitive life. The life of the jungle indeed swallows up and covers the remains of the white traders, just as it destroys the hope of Almayer and his dreams of becoming a rich and respectable inhabitant of Amsterdam:

> As time went on the grass grew over the black patch of ground where the old house used to stand, and nothing

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27. Almayer's Folly, p.203.

28. Ibid., p.203.

> remained to mark the place of the dwelling that had sheltered Almayer's young hopes, his foolish dream of splendid future, his awakening, and despair.[29]

Thus Almayer's dream of the city disappears in the wilderness and the jungle triumphs over the city, which remains an unrealisable dream in the white man's struggle. Almayer himself has predicted this end when the Dutch officers are threatening to arrest him: "Why, I have been trying to get out of this infernal place for twenty years, and I can't. You hear, man! I can't, and never shall! Never!"[30] In his long travail between city and jungle it is the latter that keeps him its prisoner and it is the image of the city that fades away.

The function of the settlement of the trading company together with the symbolism in furniture and equipment brought from civilisation, bring the two images of city and jungle close to each other in a revealing antithesis. However, a closer reading discloses an ambivalence in the treatment of these two

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29. Almayer's Folly, p.203.
30. Ibid., p.142.

images, suggesting that they may actually overlap on some points, and thus become similar to a certain extent. In Conrad's early fiction this idea is only slightly explored, but there are small details that support it. For instance, at a certain point in Almayer's Folly there is a clear hint of an affinity between city and jungle. The narrator remarks of Dain's love for Nina: "It has the same meaning for the man of the forests and the sea as for the man threading the paths of the more dangerous wilderness of houses and streets."[31] The sentence not only relates jungle, sea and city through the manifestation of a human experience common to all settings but also, more importantly, portrays the city as a kind of jungle: "the wilderness of houses and streets." Conrad's cultivation of a careful ambivalence in the relationship of these images, is a masterly way of conveying the tensions within which man lives, as well as his aspirations and illusions. The kinship between sea, city and jungle takes on a new measure of complexity as a result, penetrating more deeply into the realities of human

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31. Almayer's Folly, p.171.

existence.

The sea and river, which link the city and the jungle, also take on similarly ambivalent meanings. From the beginning these two images do not absolutely stand for hope as paths towards order and civilisation in the West; they may bring, as has been indicated, misery and danger to the white man as well. To Almayer, at the opening of the story, the river is like the jungle, indifferent and cruel. True, it can lead him to freedom - as with the tree it transports towards the sea - but at the same time it brings enemies such as the Dutch and the natives. The river and the sea are moreover characterised by uncertainty and doubt just as Almayer's fancy of going back to Amsterdam is uncertain and undermined by dark powers rising from the jungle.

Among all these images it is the jungle that remains overwhelming and more influential on the lives of the protagonists. It is frightening and corrupting. The only way out, it would seem, lies in the world of the city. The trees of the forests are shown in a perpetual

struggle, trying to destroy each other:

> On three sides of the clearing, appearing very far away in the deceptive light, the big trees of the forest, lashed together with manifold bonds by a mass of tangled creepers, looked down at the growing young life at their feet with the sombre resignation of giants that had lost faith in their strength. And in the midst of them the merciless creepers clung to the big trunks in cable-like coils, leaped from tree to tree, hung in thorny festoons from the lower boughs, and, sending slender tendrils on high to seek out the smallest branches, carried death to their victims in an exulting riot of silent destruction... Only the parasites seemed to live there in a sinuous rush upwards into the air and sunshine, feeding on the dead and the dying alike.... An acrid smell of damp earth and of decaying leaves took him [Dain] by the throat.... The very air seemed dead in there - heavy and stagnating, poisoned with the corruption of countless ages.[32]

The life of the jungle, as the above images suggest, stands for danger, death and decay, while the city, as Almayer imagines it, is a place of order and life. Moreover, the life of the jungle is not unbearable and hostile to the white man only, for it has the same effect on the native himself. Dain Maroola prefers to die in the sunlight at the hands of his enemies rather than

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32. Almayer's Folly, pp. 165-167.

stifle in the darkness of the forest:

> Was he [Dain] a wild man to hide in the woods and perhaps be killed there - in the darkness - where there was no room to breathe? He would wait for his enemies in the sunlight, where he could see the sky and feel the breeze.[33]

If the jungle is the enemy of its inhabitants themselves, not simply to the man coming from the "civilised" world, then it transcends its meaning as an external nature and stands for a moral reality, the chaos inherent in man's nature itself.

Although the city, compared with the gloomy picture of the jungle, functions as a place of escape and source of light, Conrad's attitude towards it is in vivid contrast to Almayer's, and this is shown through his use of irony and the different opinions of characters themselves. Nina, for example, reveals certain aspects of the city, which, in a sense, bring it into close relationship with the jungle. She is taken to the city of Singapore to be educated by a white family, and then, as she grows up, she comes back to the savage life of her mother's people. Through her experiences

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33. Almayer's Folly, p.167.

with white people in Singapore Nina has developed a different view of life in a modern city and the values of civilised people in general. Her journey between Singapore and Sambir then brings the two images of the city and the jungle together and throws more light on their relationship.

The different meanings the city and jungle hold for different characters can be readily observed through the characters of Nina and her father. While the jungle, for instance, comes to stand for death, entrapment and corruption to Almayer, to Nina the darkness of the jungle "would mean the end of danger and strife, the beginning of happiness, the fulfilling of love, the completeness of life."[34] Nina first succeeds in escaping from the life of Singapore and the social values of the white community, and then rejects that other city, Amsterdam, as is implied in her refusal to share her father's dream: "She had little belief and no sympathy for her father's dreams."[35] Instead, her mother's "savage ravings...chanced to strike a responsive chord, deep down somewhere in her despairing

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34. Almayer's Folly, p.147.

35. Ibid., p.151.

heart."[36]

In any event, Nina "dreamed dreams of her own" and these dreams happen to find their satisfaction and fulfilment in the life of the jungle and among her mother's people:

> With the coming of Dain she found the road to freedom by obeying the voice of the new-born impulses, and with surprised joy she thought she could read in his eyes the answer to all the questionings of her heart. She understood now the reason and the aim of life.[37]

Nina resists her father's attempts to set her against Dain when he insists on the differences of race and blood. He demands that she should consider the cultural divide that separates them, as he sees it: "What made you give yourself up to that savage? For he is a savage. Between him and you there is a barrier that nothing can remove."[38] On the contrary, his words remind her of what she has experienced and learned in her teaching of so many years in Singapore,

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36. Almayer's Folly, p.151.

37. Ibid., p.152.

38. Ibid., p.178.

that is "scorn for scorn, contempt for contempt, hate for hate",[39] and the barrier her father insists on is ironically between her and civilised people. She answers Almayer: "Between your people and me there is also a barrier that nothing can remove. You ask why I want to go, and I ask you why I should stay."[40] Moreover, the voice of her father is the voice of materialism and egoism, whereas the voice of Dain is "the song of [their] love."[41] Nina's final choice is a rejection of the life of the city and its social values and she embraces the life of the jungle where she finds love and fulfilment of self.

The relationship between city and jungle is also expressed in terms of conflict between two different races, between the natives and the Europeans, or in a broader sense between primitive life and civilisation. On the one hand, Almayer is preoccupied with a vision of Amsterdam, which entails a future for his daughter, Nina, as the richest woman of that city through his

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39. Almayer's Folly, p.179.
40. Ibid., p.179.
41. Ibid., p.179.

efforts. On the other hand, she is also the daughter of a Malay woman, who "burn[s] the furniture, and tear[s] down the pretty curtains in her unreasoning hate of those signs of civilization."[42] To Almayer, Nina indeed becomes the centre of his hopes, and her letters from Singapore "were the only things to be looked to to make life bearable amongst the triumphant savagery of the river."[43] However, while Almayer is building all his aspirations on his daughter, whom he sent to Singapore to be educated according to civilised values in order to fit her for life in Amsterdam and complete his dream of a splendid future, she is suffering at the hands of the white family who treat her with "contempt...for her mixed blood."[44] As she comes back to Sambir she faces another conflict between her savage mother and her so-called civilised father, "a life devoid of all the decencies of civilization", and "she had breathed the atmosphere of sordid plottings for gain, of the no less disgusting

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42. Almayer's Folly, p.26.
43. Ibid., p.28.
44. Ibid., p.42

intrigues and crimes for lust or money."[45] Then she suddenly realises that "there was no change and no difference"[46] between life in Singapore and life in the jungle.

Therefore, from Nina's point of view and according to her experiences in other areas, the jungle and city are all too similar:

> It seemed to Nina that there was no change and no difference. Whether they traded in brick godowns or on the muddy river bank: whether they reached after much or little; whether they made love under the shadows of great trees or in the shadow of the cathedral on the Singapore promenade; whether they plotted for their own ends under the protection of laws and according to the rules of Christian conduct, or whether they sought the gratification of their desires with the savage cunning and the unrestrained fierceness of natures as innocent of culture as their own immense and gloomy forests, Nina saw only the same manifestations of love and hate and of sordid greed chasing the uncertain dollar in all its multifarious and vanishing shapes.[47]

The implications conveyed in this passage are very central to the significance of the interrelationship between jungle and city in this novel; and although

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45. Almayer's Folly, p.42.
46. Ibid., p.43.
47. Ibid., p.43.

the kind of kinship between them, as the quotation shows, is expressed from the point of view of one character, Nina, it is fundamental to Conrad's treatment of the two elements. This parallel is frequently suggested in novels as different as Almayer's Folly and The Secret Agent.

Despite Nina's awareness of the similarities between the values and habits in the city and the wild and natural life of the jungle, she prefers the latter, for "the savage and uncompromising sincerity of purpose shown by her Malay kinsmen seemed at least preferable to the sleek hypocrisy, to the polite disguises, to the virtuous pretences of such white people as she had had the misfortune to come in contact with."[48] Although she is educated in Singapore by a white family, her savage nature survives: "Her soul, lapsing again into the savage mood, which the genius of civilization working by the hand of Mrs. Vinck could never destroy, experienced a feeling of pride and of some slight trouble at the high value her

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48. Almayer's Folly, p.43.

worldly-wise mother had put upon her person."[49] More important, Nina is well aware "that there are some situations where the barbarian and the, so-called, civilized man meet upon the same ground."[50] The idea expressed in this sentence is strongly revealing, for it is concerned with an understanding of the inter-relationship between city and jungle, or, more precisely, civilisation and primitivism. The sentence clearly suggests a kind of affinity and kinship between the two worlds of city and jungle.

Just as Almayer feels estranged in the Malay jungle and tries to deliver himself from it to live in his "ideal" Amsterdam, so does his daughter in the life of the city of Singapore, only she escapes from it to return to the jungle. Again, by deciding to follow Dain Maroola she has, in a sense, turned her back on the city her father has been dreaming of and to which he is yearning to take her. Within her own family Nina, too, is divided between her father and mother, between the white community and the native one, between

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49. Almayer's Folly, p.67

50. Ibid., p.67.

the past and the present. Her mother asks her to forget her past, her father and his people: "Give up your old life! ... Forget that you ever looked at a white face; forget their words; forget their thoughts."[51] The past for Nina herself is nothing but "sad thoughts,.. . bitter feelings, and ... faint affections, now withered and dead in contact with her fierce passion"[52], while her present involves the desire for love and freedom she finds in her relationship with Dain.

All the social and moral struggles at work within the character of Nina are central themes in Conrad's early fiction, and could be summed up in the conflict between jungle and city, or primitive life and civilisation. Besides Conrad's use of these two major images round which he crystallises and condenses several themes, he makes use of different points of view vis-à-vis these themes. The images themselves mean different things to different characters, as has been shown in the study of Almayer and Nina, pointing

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51. Almayer's Folly, pp. 150-151.
52. Ibid., p.152.

the way man shapes his existence in delusion and ignorance. What is offered ultimately by this means is no less than a perspective on man's puny, pathetic stature, lofty and absurd in his pretension to be able to control his obscure fate and make sense of his world. The author, of course, remains studiously detached; and this detachment suggests the way the writer regulates the interrelationship between the three major settings. Conrad does not, for example, suggest that the city is a bad or corrupt place in the way that Nina sees it, or a good and ideal world as her father comes to think of it. What seems important as far as the relationship between city and jungle is concerned in this early fiction is that, despite differences and antagonistic aspects, these two meet at certain points: the city, as represented by the apparatus brought from civilisation together with the white man's settlement, and the jungle are at times shown to be both sharing the same characteristics of disorder and chaos. In addition, the mode of "civilised" life as experienced by Nina in Singapore is far from different from the savage life of the Malayans. The native as well as the European manifest the same human experiences, such

as the experience of love. In his preface to The Nigger of the "Narcissus", Conrad expresses this deep link between all human beings as "the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation ... [and] the conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts ... which binds men to each other, [and] which binds together all humanity."[53]

The common area between city and jungle indeed makes their interrelationship central to a work of art where the author works within a system of parallels and contrasts, presenting characters with different opinions and different reactions without judging them. Through the interrelationship between city and jungle different themes are organically linked and at times juxtaposed: for example, Almayer's situation brings together the themes of order as implied in the city and disorder as it is manifested in the jungle, or the themes of civilisation and primitivism. The jungle and city which appear to be polarised, are instead revealed to overlap on some common points as has already been indicated. The differences and common

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53. The Nigger of the "Narcissus" and Typhoon, vol.III, "Preface", p.viii.

areas between the two elements are not clearcut or obvious in the writer's treatment of their relationship. They are usually implied in each other, as, ultimately, are the moral categories they often represent. For instance, where the city in the mind of Almayer stands for order as distinct from the jungle, we are aware at the same time, through other characters and the writer's detachment, that it also includes the disorder inherent in the jungle. In this sense, contrasted and shared characteristics intermingle and make more realistically complex the moral picture.

In many ways, the whole story of Almayer's Folly is very subtly built round the relationship between city and jungle, two images that contribute most vividly to Conrad's expression of major themes, such as the relationship between order and chaos, between civilisation and primitivism, and the conflict between two different races. When disclosing the area where city and jungle overlap, Conrad tends to express a vision of the human situation in general. Thus the setting in his stories is expanded into a larger metaphor and acquires more significant meaning than

the purely literal. The jungle or wilderness, as presented in the Malay novels, does not simply mean wealth as Almayer and Willems conceive of it. What these white Europeans are hoping to find is in fact their destiny and themselves in a deeper sense; ignorant that what they are thereby challenging is the universal "disorder principle" itself.

The interrelationship between sea, city and jungle in Almayer's Folly is extended to Conrad's second novel, An Outcast of the Islands. The image of the sea that accompanies the jungle and city becomes more pronounced in the latter novel. The sea is referred to as a moral background to the protagonist journeying into the jungle and longing for the world of civilisation. In both novels the image of the jungle is perhaps the most emphasised, overshadowing those of the sea and city; nevertheless the latter symbols remain as frames of reference for the story and are ever-present in the background of the protagonists. The moral deterioration and death of both Almayer and Willems occur in the jungle while they are still longing to go back to the world

of the city. The presence of the image of the city in their minds through their travels in the wilderness highlights their tragic situation and underlines the jungle's test of the "civilised" man in betraying his weaknesses which the jungle merely finds out. Throughout his works Conrad suggests that the mask of civilisation simply covers the primitive, inchoate basis which is inherent in man in general. Like Almayer, Willems intends to use the wilderness to get rich and achieve a good social position among white people, but he gradually and inevitably becomes a captive of the jungle that utterly destroys him.

Willems's first "jump" is from the ship into the Malay countries, rejecting the white community and hoping to become rich in the wilderness, which appears to him as attractive and a place of opportunities. The first part of his sojourn in the Malay countries is spent in a small town where a white community lives. Macassar, despite its location and closeness to the wild life of the jungle, has some characteristics of a Western city because of its commercial

activities and social life. In this city created in an exotic setting, Willems's life is divided between his job as the confidential clerk in Hudig's Company, and his family and his friends with whom he plays billiards.

The town offers at least a kind of security within a communal life against the dangers and chaos of the surrounding jungle, but Willems does not become aware of this security until he finds himself outside it:

> When he came to himself he was beyond the outskirts of the town, stumbling on the hard and cracked earth of reaped rice fields. How did he get there? It was dark. He must get back. As he walked back towards the town slowly, his mind reviewed the events of the day and he felt a sense of bitter loneliness.[54]

Willems is rejected by the small town because of his stealing the money belonging to Hudig, the man who puts his trust in him.

After his repudiation by Hudig and his family, Willems's next step is, very significantly, towards the jungle, marking his perpetual search both to find

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54. An Outcast of the Islands, Vol.II, pp.29-30.

himself and to establish a certain order in his life, but unaware that his journey is to lead him to face not simply the natural jungle but the chaos inherent in his own nature and in the universe itself. He arrives in Sambir, a small settlement far away from the city of Macassar where there is only one white man, Almayer. In Sambir, Willems soon "felt a bitter and savage rage at the cruel consciousness of his superfluity, of his uselessness; at the cold hostility visible in every look of the only white man in this barbarous corner of the world."[55] The jungle seems to be pushing him out as it did Almayer in Almayer's Folly. In the jungle environment Willems feels passive and idle:

> He [Willems] heard the reproach of his idleness in the murmurs of the river, in the unceasing whisper of the great forests. Round him everything stirred, moved, swept by in a rush; the earth under his feet and the heavens above his head. The very savages around him strove, struggled, fought, worked -

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55. An Outcast of the Islands, Vol.II, p.65.

> if only to prolong a miserable existence; but they lived.... And it was only himself that seemed to be left outside the scheme of creation in a hopeless immobility filled with tormenting anger and with ever-stinging regret.[56]

The depiction of the natural setting, presented as full of life, in contrast with the idleness of the white man, is an ironical comment on the "civilised" man's impotence, manifest in his inability to challenge the cosmic forces. Nature's voice, "the murmurs of the river" and the "whisper of the great forests" seems to reproach Willems for his passivity. Action, Conrad suggests, at least gives a meaning to life: although the savages may be leading a hard life, they belong to an existence, whereas Willems, because of his inactivity, "seem[s] to be left outside the scheme of creation."

As in Almayer's Folly the forest again becomes an image of death, rottenness and corruption: "[Willems feels] oppressed by the hot smell of earth, dampness,

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56. An Outcast of the Islands, p.65

and decay in that forest which seemed to push him mercilessly back into the glittering sunshine of the river."[57] Here light is opposed to the oppressive atmosphere in the jungle, pointing to the recurrent opposition between light and darkness, or order and chaos. However, the light mentioned in this quotation again is an illusory and deceiving one, which is reflected by the river itself an equivocal image of danger and release. The "glittering sunshine" is indeed another form of mirage that deceives Willems, like the image of the city for Almayer. The jungle has also the effect of crushing and belittling the white man; Willems feels small under the "[trees] tall, strong, indifferent in the immense solidity of their life."[58] Soon Willems is overcome by the powerful and overwhelming force of the jungle, which reduces him to an insignificant creature in its darkness.

Furthermore, the jungle in An Outcast of the Islands takes on the image of a woman and is presented as active, full of life and dangerously seductive.

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57. An Outcast of the Islands, p.67.
58. Ibid., p.67.

In this respect, Conrad draws upon the Romantic tradition, describing the destructive female figure - the obverse of the other female figure who offers salvation - or what Northrop Frye describes in Keats and Blake as "the terrible white goddesses like La Belle Dame Sans Merci, or females associated with something forbidden or demonic."[59] Thus, in this second novel the image of the jungle is associated with the image of a woman, who is not only part of the jungle but actually sums up all its dark powers and mystery. In this sense the jungle echoes something within human nature itself - something that appeals to man and with which he identifies. In his relationship with the jungle, like the one between Willems and Aissa, the "civilised" man betrays his own deficiencies and ends being swallowed up by its forces.

The jungle, moreover, is not only an embodiment

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59. Northrop Frye, Romanticism Reconsidered (Columbia University Press, 1963), p.21.

of many dangers, but is also an "enigma", the "Incomprehensible" that attracts the white adventurer, puzzles and ultimately destroys him. The fascination of this "enigma" finds its explanation in the nature of man himself and his destiny, usually qualified in Conrad by inscrutability and mysteriousness. In Heart of Darkness, Marlow expresses human fate in these terms:

> I remained to dream the nightmare out to the end, and to show my loyalty to Kurtz once more. Destiny. My destiny! Droll thing life is - that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself - that comes too late - a crop of unextinguishable regrets.[60]

Above all, the jungle is the most powerful force that overshadows and, in a sense, defeats the image of the city or civilisation, because it embodies something - some fundamental truth - about the nature of man. Through his characters' quests for themselves in the face of a universal chaos, Conrad may be suggesting that it is just this fundamental truth that links man with the latter. Elements of the city, nevertheless,

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60. Heart of Darkness in Youth: A Narrative and Two other stories, vol. VI, p.150.

attempt to enter and impose themselves on the wilderness, but these are, like civilised man himself, pushed out or swallowed up by the jungle. Like Almayer in Almayer's Folly, Willems, too, is preoccupied with a dream that alludes to the life of the city. Through his dream or ambition to secure a position among the white and "civilised" community, the two images of jungle and city are again brought side by side in an antagonistic relationship, at least in Willems's mind. Willems's ambition is, indeed, to get rich by any means, in order to become a member of the bourgeois class:

> A man of his stamp could carry off anything, do anything, aspire to anything. In another five years those white people who attended the Sunday card-parties of the Governor would accept him - half-caste wife and all![61]

Towards the end of the novel an overwhelming preoccupation for Willems is the idea of the city, and, definitively, a city which will be far from the deadly

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61. An Outcast of the Islands, pp.9-10.

and oppressive atmosphere of the jungle. Willems, abandoned by Tom Lingard in the jungle, hopes to get to the sea where he can meet the ships of white people to take him back to the world of civilisation:

> [to] take him far away where there was trade, and houses, and other men that could understand him exactly, appreciate his capabilities; where there was proper food, and money; where there were beds, knives, forks, carriages, brass bands, cool drinks, churches with well-dressed people praying in them ... The superior land of refined delights where he could sit on a chair, eat his tiffin off a white table-cloth, nod to fellows - good fellows; ... where he could be virtuous, correct, do business, draw a salary, smoke cigars, buy things in shops - have boots ... [62]

The details in the above passage point to the urban life; and although Willems's hope of returning to the city at this stage in the story is already rendered impossible by the powerful hold the wilderness has on him, it remains an escape-world in his mind. Willems's first idea of the jungle, that is, to use it as an instrument to attain his objective, proves to be wrong

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62. An Outcast of the Islands, pp.329-330.

since it holds him a prisoner for ever and, as in Almayer's case, his hope that one day he might live among civilised people after his sojourn is never to be realised.

Willems's unawareness of being already entrapped by the jungle, while he persists in the hope of escaping, puts him in an ironic situation, almost similar to that of tragic heroes in Shakespeare, "fixed and caught up in an action that denies them any freedom, while all the time they think they exercise it."[63] This is what is usually referred to as dramatic irony, "in which the victim is serenely unaware that the real state of affairs is quite different from what he assumes it is."[64] The other ironic element in Willems's situation is also implied in the contrast between Willems's confidence in using the jungle and controlling it and that which really happens in the course of the events. With more intensity, this is what happens to Kurtz in Heart of

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63. Irony, p.64.
64. Ibid., p.60.

Darkness where he talks of: "My Intended, my ivory, my station, my river, my ---" [65] Marlow's ironic comment is suggested in the fact that Kurtz, who thinks himself to be the master, is actually the slave of the wilderness:

> It made me hold my breath in expectation of hearing the wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter that would shake the fixed stars in their places. Everything belonged to him - but that was a trifle. The thing was to know what he belonged to, how many powers of darkness claimed him for their own. [66]

In An Outcast of the Islands Conrad makes great use of the relationship between Aissa and Willems to cast more light on the interrelationship of jungle and city and their implications. To Willems, Aissa is a combination of life and death, love and hatred, like the forest itself:

> He [Willems] had been baffled, repelled, almost frightened by the intensity of that tropical life which wants the sunshine but works in gloom; which seems to be all grace of colour and form, all brilliance, all smiles, but is only the blossoming of the dead; whose mystery holds the promise of joy and beauty, yet

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65. Heart of Darkness, p.116.

66. Ibid., p.116.

> contains nothing but poison and decay... He looked at the woman. Through the checkered light between them she appeared to him with the impalpable distinctness of a dream. The very spirit of that land of mysterious forests, standing before him like an apparition behind a transparent veil - a veil woven of sunbeams and shadows.[67]

The abundant reference to light and darkness being two inseparable elements is very significant in this quotation and to Conrad's vision of life in general. The tropical life "wants sunshine but works in gloom"; it "seems to be all grace of colour and form, all brilliance, all smiles, but is only the blossoming of the dead"; it offers "the promise of joy and beauty, yet contains nothing but poison and decay"; and the woman herself, who sums up this life, is described as "an apparition behind a transparent veil - a veil woven of sunbeams and shadows." This series of antinomies gathered in the image of tropical life may suggest the metaphysical significance of the jungle, which then comes to express life itself.

The fact that the jungle embodies opposites in the symbolic interplay between light and darkness

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67. An Outcast of the Islands, p.70.

makes it difficult to establish any equation such as light and good (or order), darkness and evil (or chaos). The play of light and shade is made to convey a subtle moral chiaroscuro. The combination of light and darkness also raises the question of the jungle not being simply a place of complete moral darkness. For the white man in search of truth about himself and about the universe, the jungle may reveal some knowledge of this truth. In Heart of Darkness, the jungle for Marlow and Kurtz indeed becomes a place of enlightenment, which offers them some truth about themselves and about their civilisation. Thus the opposites in the symbolic jungle are the opposites inherent in man's nature itself. This idea is usually formulated in the metaphysical principle of irony which, as George Palante says, "resides in the contradictions within our nature and also in the contradictions within the universe or God."[68]

The reference to light in this passage is also

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68. A Rhetoric of Irony, p.218.

very consistent with the light reflected by the river and the sea throughout An Outcast of the Islands and Almayer's Folly; it is a deceiving sort of light that evokes the character's false dream and illusion. Through this symbolic light Aissa appears to Willems "like an apparition behind a transparent veil", suggesting that reality is distorted, and that things are not clearly seen, yet neither are they invisible.

The meaning of the tropical life is indeed summed up in the woman, Aissa, who does not represent for Willems the qualities of a woman only; but is actually the embodiment of forces in her wild surroundings: she is "the animated and brilliant flower of all that exuberant life."[69] The author treats Aissa as the sum and spirit of the jungle, and when Willems falls under her spell he is in fact captivated by the jungle itself, not only by a mere woman. Moreover, Aissa seems more active and powerful than Willems, which also communicates the imbalance that lies at the heart of the relationship between the savage life and the civilised one. So, although the idea of the

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69. An Outcast of the Islands, p.76.

city is always present behind the protagonist and the major events, it is weaker than, and overshadowed by, the jungle. The life of the forest seems to be resisting the intrusion of the city and civilisation. In the same way, Aissa perpetually struggles against Willems and gradually triumphs over him by "converting" him to the savage life, making him forget his past and his people. In short, the relationship between Aissa and Willems suggests and points to the struggle between two different ways of life: life in the jungle and life in the city.

Willems's exclusion from the city of Macassar and his next move to Sambir, a small settlement surrounded by the jungle, is indeed a change from the life of the city; from an ordered communal life to the wilderness. This literal journey runs parallel to his moral degradation and his gradual loss of all contact with civilisation. Throughout the story Willems is depicted as inevitably drawn towards the heart of the jungle, which finally swallows him up and, in some ways, prevents him from going back to the world of civilisation.

The jungle first weakens, then cuts all the ties between the white man and the world he dreams of, the world of the city. Willems begins by triumphing over Aissa, the "spirit" of the jungle, by seducing her, but before long his blind passion for her and his over-complacency lead him to a significant loss of integrity. At the first sight of the savage woman he feels "the flight of one's old self".[70] Willems's sudden loss of his old identity reveals not only his weakness as an individual, but stands as an exemplar of all that is weak in the "civilised" man. The closer their relationship grows, the more Willems begins to behave as a savage himself, forgetting all civilised values - or perhaps he betrays something inherent in his nature that identifies with primitive life.

The climax of his moral degradation occurs when he betrays Lingard's secret of the river to the natives. This dishonest act distances him from the white people and makes him more like the natives. In this process, and by implication, the image of the city

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70. An Outcast of the Islands, p.69.

or civilisation gradually fades from Willems's life, giving way almost totally to the jungle and its savage life. Incidentally, Willems is, all the while, becoming more and more possessed by Aissa, and the darkness of the forest creeps into his soul. Thus, being much involved with the life of the jungle - particularly through his relationship with Aissa and his betrayal of the white man - Willems is actually acting against his ambition to secure a position in a white urban bourgeois class. He is travelling even further in the opposite direction to the world of the city.

The next stage of his journey significantly leads him from the small settlement of Almayer to Lakamba's house, still deeper in the jungle. The triumph of Aissa and the world she represents is becoming more obvious and is indeed accompanied by the gradual, though as yet not total disappearance of the image of the city from Willems's mind. (Until the end he remains divided between the wilderness and his past). As soon as he begins to realise the intensity of the danger Aissa is leading him into, the image of the

city and communal life becomes a form of desired escape from the hostility and death the new environment discloses to him. In this way, a slight but significant link still remains between Willems's life in the jungle and the world he began by abandoning and ends by desiring. He blames the savage woman for his exile from civilisation and the white community. The struggle becomes more intense; now, however he no longer thinks of winning a fortune from the jungle but merely of escaping from it to that world where he can meet "good people", buy things in shops and smoke cigars. So the image of the city remains but a dream, receding more and more into the far distance. In An Outcast of the Islands, as in Almayer's Folly, the dream is again very frequent. Like Almayer, Willems lives more on dreams than on reality and herein lies his failure, first to regain "the path of honesty" he has stepped off and then to achieve "the splendid web of his future"[71] that he weaves in imagination. The ubiquitousness of the city in Willems's mind highlights and dramatises his present moral situation in the jungle.

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71. An Outcast of the Islands, p.11.

Very significantly, Lingard's sentence against Willems for betraying him to the natives is a kind of banishment from his familiar environment, abandoning him in the jungle forever. In other words, his punishment is to destroy Willems's hope of going back to the world of the city or civilisation.

In this line of argument, the image of the city comes to mean an idealised world which the white man in the far East desires and dreams of as a way out of the destructive life of the forest. And since the jungle equals chaos the city seems to function as a potential antidote - but is only apprehensible as a dream. It follows, then, that "order" symbolised by the city seems to be only a dream or an illusion. This world of the city, as both Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands demonstrate, is always unattainable and too weak to compete with the strong and fatal attractiveness of the jungle.

Nevertheless, the frequent reference to the city, in one way or another, contributes to an understanding of the implications of the jungle and expands the

dimensions of the novels' themes. More importantly, by making use of two different settings related to each other, Conrad suggests not only differences between them but similarities as well; and by placing them side by side, at least in a network of implications, the author makes each help the understanding of the meaning or meanings of the other. When Conrad uses the image of the city in novels that take place in the jungle and the image of the jungle in novels that concentrate primarily on life in the city, he no doubt does so deliberately. In the author's works the different settings not only overlap with each other and become metaphors to express a wider and universal vision of the human condition, but more than this, the one without the others represents an incomplete understanding of man's experience and of reality.

Again, in this second novel Conrad makes use of other sub-images to refer to the city and its presence in the context of the jungle. The white man's settlement and the equipment of civilisation are concrete reminders of some aspects of life in the city.

Almayer's house and the office of Lingard and Company in An Outcast of the Islands supply the same function as in Almayer's Folly. The house and the settlement are a kind of refuge for the white man from the malignity of the world that surrounds him. Almayer, indeed, considers his house a bastion of civilisation; as Willems comes to ask for his help and starts shouting, Almayer asks him not to shout because it is a civilised man's house, contrasting it with the forest:

> Don't shout like this. Do you think yourself in the forest with your ... your friends? This is a civilized man's house. A white man's. Understand?[72]

Conrad's use of the image of the house, and through it that of the city, as a place of order and civilisation standing against the primitive, disordered life of the jungle, is reminiscent of the function of the city and wood in some of Shakespeare's plays. In Othello, for example, when Brabantio is disturbed during the night by Roderigo and Iago, like Willems, he says:

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72. An Outcast of the Islands, p.88.

> What tell'st thou me of robbing? This
> is Venice:
> My house is not a grange.[73]

The value Almayer attributes to his house, then, refers in a sense to the world of the city or civilisation. Almayer seeks refuge in his house as he does in imagination in his dream of Amsterdam. In An Outcast of the Islands Almayer, compared with Willems, remains more in touch with his household than the latter, and he is thus protected from becoming completely swallowed up by the wilderness. Willems, on the contrary, has gradually lost almost all contact with civilisation and is finally taken up by the savage life Aissa represents; he becomes like "some ascetic dweller in a wilderness."[74] Finding no refuge in a house or settlement, he "sought refuge within his ideas of propriety from the dismal mangroves, from the darkness of the forests and of the heathen souls of the savages that were his masters."[75]

Conrad also seems to emphasise the contrast

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73. William Shakespeare, Othello (Penguin), p.55.
74. An Outcast of the Islands, p.92.
75. Ibid., p.128.

between Almayer's house and the surroundings through his treatment of Nina in An Outcast of the Islands. In Almayer's Folly Nina becomes a central character and is associated in her father's mind with the city and ordered life; yet, in this novel she herself thinks differently of the city. In An Outcast of the Islands she, as a young and innocent child, stands rather for order and peace. Very curiously, she dreams like her father of a city, which is suggested in the house of cards she asks Lingard to build for her - a house with several floors like those in a modern city. To her father she is a moral support and actually represents order and safety against the chaos and hostility in the jungle:

> If it hadn't been for her I am sure I would have gone mad; I felt so utterly alone and helpless ... seeing her so pretty and peaceful steadied me somehow. Couldn't believe there was any violence in this world, looking at her lying so quiet and so unconscious of what went on.[76]

In this novel Nina, still a young child, is not only presented as a moral support for her father, an

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76. An Outcast of the Islands, pp.170-171.

ordered and peaceful spot in the midst of a chaotic world, a glimmer of hope in the heart of darkness, but also Almayer's only refuge from the wild life: "[Nina] the only thing real, living, sweet, tangible, beautiful and safe amongst the elusive, the distorted and menacing shadows of existence."[77] Yet, it is again Almayer himself who insists on seeing order in Nina, an order related to the meaning of the city he dreams of.

The dream shared by Nina's father and Lingard is clearly summed up in this desire of hers to have a house with several floors. Conrad's device of juxtaposing the making of the house with cards by Lingard and his conversation with Almayer about their project, expresses the close relationship that exists in their minds between their project of getting wealth and their dream of a splendid future in the world of civilisation. Therefore, by thinking of making Nina the richest woman in the West, Almayer and Lingard are thinking only of their project.

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77. An Outcast of the Islands, pp.170-171.

Despite the moral function of the house-image, there is an obvious ironic tone in the author's treatment of it and its implications; in the same manner he deals with the equipment and the trading posts in these Malay novels, and later in "An Outpost of Progress" and Heart of Darkness . The fate of Lingard's and Almayer's project for the acquisition of gold is associated with the fate of the small house of cards. With extreme irony, Conrad seems to be suggesting that the fate of this project depends on the fate of the little house. Lingard having almost finished building it remarks to his partner: "Then we shall all go to Europe. The child must be educated. We shall be rich. Rich is no name for it. Down in Devonshire where I belong"[78]; and just a little before, Nina insists on having a house

> 'I want a house,' she warbled, with great eagerness. 'I want a house, and another house on the roof, and another on the roof - high. High! Like the places where they dwell - my brothers - in the land where the sun sleeps.'

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78. An Outcast of the Islands, pp.195-196.

> 'To the westward,' explained Almayer, under his breath.[79]

The symbolic house is, therefore, always pointing to the West and European civilisation.

This scene (the building of the house of cards and the dialogue between Almayer and Lingard at the same time) has a central place in the novel, summing up the whole situation of the two white men and the fate of their struggle in the jungle, hunting for wealth yet preoccupied with their dream of the city that depends on it. Conrad's ironic tone which undermines the "city" is expressed by the fragility and the ultimate collapse of the structure of the house of cards. Very significantly, as soon as Lingard finishes the house for Nina and his talk about his project, the whole structure of the symbolic house falls apart at one breath from the little Nina: "The structure collapsed suddenly before the child's light breath."[80] Ironically, too, Nina who is the only "real" thing in Almayer's life destroys his illusion.

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79. An Outcast of the Islands, p.194.

80. Ibid., p.196.

Another example of irony, as far as the structure of the story is concerned, lies in the fact that at this point in the tale the reader already knows of Lingard's betrayal by Willems to the natives, and therefore any plan for extracting gold from up-river is already doomed to failure. In An Outcast of the Islands Nina's breath, however unconscious and innocent it is, is, in a sense, a rejection of her father's dream. In Almayer's Folly, where she is presented as a grown-up girl, Nina consciously decides to repudiate him. In this latter novel, it is not a light breath that destroys her father's dream of taking her with him to Amsterdam, but her own determined words spoken with utter calculation of their effect.

Conrad's use of irony vis-à-vis the image of the city distinguishes his point-of-view from that of his characters. The opinions of Almayer and Nina in Almayer's Folly, or Willems and Aissa in An Outcast of the Islands, for example, should not therefore be confused with those of the novelist. His irony, however, draws jungle and city, or primitive life and

civilisation, into a close relationship and discloses the common points between them.

The writer also approaches ironically other elements related to the image of the city and civilisation. Equipment, furniture and the office of the company are, as previously observed, portrayed in disorder and decay. The irony here expresses both the overwhelming influence of the jungle and reveals the failure of the white man, proud and overcomplacent about his civilisation, to master and use the wilderness. The following quotation conveys the white man's pride in the objects of civilisation, their decay under the impact of the jungle, and the uselessness and failure of his equipment to tame, control and domesticate the primitive life and its people:

> The interior [of Lingard's house] had been furnished by Lingard when he had built the house for his adopted daughter and her husband, and it had been furnished with reckless prodigality. There was an office desk, a revolving chair, bookshelves, a safe: all to humour the weakness of Almayer, who thought all those paraphernalia necessary to successful trading.... It had been the sensation of Sambir some five years ago. While the things were

> being landed, the whole settlement literally lived on the river bank in front of the Rajah Laut's house, to look, to wonder, to admire.... What a big meza, with many boxes fitted all over it and under it! ... There is a man carrying a pile of books from the boat! What a number of books. What were they for? ... those books were books of magic - of magic that guides the white men's ships over the seas, that gives them wicked wisdom and their strength; of magic that makes them great, powerful, and irresistible while they live ... And when he saw the room furnished, Almayer had felt proud ... he thought himself, by the virtue of that furniture, at the head of a serious business.[81]

This citation clearly states the proud attachment of the white man to the objects of civilisation and the exalted meaning they hold for him. The books are the instruments whereby the "civilised" man seeks to impose his order on the anarchical and primordial jungle. They become images of control, guiding the white man to explore the mystery and darkness of the sea and jungle. These books, in other words, seem to give man the knowledge to subjugate the wilderness. However, Conrad's scepticism concerning any attempt

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81. An Outcast of the Islands, pp.299-300.

to master the wilderness is expressed particularly clearly in the suggestion of the superfluity and ineffectiveness of such objects as implied, for example, in the question about the use of books: "What are they for?" And immediately the apparatus of civilisation is depicted in complete turmoil and disarray. Here, of course, lies Conrad's irony, which reveals the two images of city and jungle overlapping:

> He [Lingard] found out very soon that trade in Sambir meant something entirely different. He could not guide Patalolo, control the irrepressible old Sahamin, or restrain the youthful vagaries of the fierce Bahassoen with pen, ink, and paper. He found no successful magic in the blank pages of his ledgers; and gradually he lost his old point of view in the saner appreciation of his situation. The room known as the office became neglected then like a temple of an exploded superstition... [Later when Joanna, Willems's wife, came to live in Lingard's settlement, she] took possession of the dust, dirt, and squalor, where she appeared naturally at home, where she dragged a melancholy and dull existence... amongst the hopeless disorder - the senseless and vain decay of all these emblems of civilized commerce. Bits of white stuff; rags yellow, pink, blue: rags limp, brilliant and soiled, trailed on the floor, lay on the desk amongst the sombre covers of books soiled, grimy, but stiff-backed, in virtue, perhaps, of their European origin.[82]

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82. An Outcast of the Islands, pp. 300-301.

The descriptive details quoted above reveal much about Conrad's suspicion of the ideal, ordered image of the city or the "civilised" principle and its inability to superimpose itself on the wilderness: its magic is ineffectual. Chaos, now attributed to the equipment from the city, is far from endemic only in the jungle. The two apparently different worlds come to have similar characteristics in depth. The organised life in the world of the city, as it were, exists merely on top and is far from being the antidote of the jungle. Thus, the interrelationship between city and jungle is intensified, disclosing deeper and deeper implications where they both meet, despite their superficial differences.

This affinity between city and jungle might also be seen in other significant details in the story. For example, In An Outcast of the Islands Conrad even refers to the civilised man as a savage and vice versa. Almayer, angry with Willems and his son, exclaims: "A perfect savage! Like his honourable papa."[83]

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83. An Outcast of the Islands, p.205.

At another point the narrator comments that Babalatchi responds to loneliness "with keen perception worthy even of a sensibility exasperated by all the refinements of tender sentiment that a glorious civilization brings in its train, among other blessings and virtues, into this excellent world."[84] In the same way, in Almayer's Folly, the writer avers that there are matters where civilisation is like savage life. Whether in the Malay forests or in the city of Singapore "Nina saw only the same manifestations of love and hate and of sordid greed."[85]

More important is Babalatchi's reaction to the jungle, revealing a kind of identification between city and jungle. Babalatchi stands

> on the edge of the still and immense forests; a man angry, powerless, empty-handed, with a cry of bitter discontent ready on his lips; a cry that, had it come out, would have rung through the virgin solitudes of the woods, as true, as great, as profound, as any philosophical shriek that ever came from the depths of an easy-chair to disturb the impure wilderness of chimneys and roofs.[86]

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84. An Outcast of the Islands, p.214-215.
85. Almayer's Folly, p.43.
86. An Outcast of the Islands, p.215.

This quotation suggests not only that a savage man is able to express feelings as profound as, or more so than, any intellectual might express in "a philosophical shriek", but also the city is described in terms that are usually attributed to life in the jungle: "the impure wilderness of chimneys and roofs."

The comparison of a civilised man with a savage one and vice versa and the parallels that exist between city and jungle, through the implications conveyed by the treatment of objects from civilisation, indeed suggest a kind of affinity between the two apparently dissimilar worlds, and emphasise their close inter-relationship. Therefore, in his use of the two images, city and jungle, in these Malay novels dealing primarily with life in the jungle, the author, far from suggesting simply their contrasts and differences, discloses the existence of areas where they both overlap. This interrelationship between city and jungle, less explicit in this early phase of his fiction, is fundamental to our understanding of those novels that deal mainly with urban life. His constant reference to the jungle in these later novels, such as The Secret

Agent, helps to unify his works in general and gives more insight into the implications of the city where this is the most predominant scene. In fact, the two images take colour and meaning from each other and, of course, come to discharge a metaphorical function rather than remaining confined to their literal meanings.

What Conrad seems to emphasise in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, therefore, is not simply the prevailing and powerful presence of the jungle - the universal "disorder principle": by virtue of constant references to the city, he expresses a wider vision of the human condition. Nevertheless, despite the suggestion that there exists a close relationship, and even an identification between city and jungle, the image of the latter in this early fiction seems to prevail over the image of the city, with all that that implies. The dreams and desires of Almayer and Willems of going back to civilisation, or the city life, are indeed thwarted by the oppressive and destructive influence of the forest. The conflict between city and jungle, or civilisation and the

wilderness, is also manifested and posed not in terms of the equipment and furniture of civilised man alone, but through the antagonism between characters themselves such as Willems and Aissa in An Outcast of the Islands. Aissa, as has already been pointed out, is associated throughout the novel with the jungle and is even referred to in terms of the spirit of the life around her. On the other hand, Willems is a white man, who, despite his gradual degradation into a savage, keeps protesting his identity as a civilised person. Just before his final destruction at the hands of the savage woman, he seeks refuge in his race and in the life of the city of his imagination.

The relationship between Willems and Aissa actually sums up the conflict between the claims - spurious or otherwise - of civilisation and of savage life, order and chaos, city and jungle. However, this relationship between Aissa, a savage woman, and Willems, a civilised man, reveals something other than conflict or complete dichotomy between city and jungle. Hence, any interpretive structure built on polarity between these two elements, as seems to be suggested in these

Malay novels, is by no means reliable. Rather, there is something inherent in the nature of civilised man that finds an echo in the nature of the savage or primitive man. Willems himself recognises this fact:

> I did not know there was something in me she [Aissa] could get hold of. She, a savage. I, a civilized European, and clever! She that knew no more than a wild animal! Well, she found out something in me. She found it out, and I was lost. I knew it...I was ready to do anything. I resisted - but I was ready.[87]

Although Willems and Aissa are presented as opposite forces from two apparently distinct worlds, yet something lies deep in Willems, the representative of the so-called civilised being - even the civilised principle at large, something inherent in his own nature which identifies him with primitive man, and, by implication, there is a kind of identification and kinship between the city and the wilderness.

From this perspective, the white man, in his contact with the wilderness and for all his "civilised" acquisitions, betrays his inner nature. This idea of

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87. An Outcast of the Islands, p.269.

the wilderness finding out the "civilised" man is widely explored in Conrad's tales of the African phase. In "An Outpost of Progress" the two whites, Kayerts and Carlier, are quickly divested of their "civilised" trappings and values, uncovering their weaknesses in contact with the unfamiliar environment. Kurtz in Heart of Darkness is perhaps the epitome of the ultra "civilised" man found out by the jungle, which "echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core."[88] Trying to account for Kurtz's betrayal of his inner nature, Marlow observes:

> [The heads on the stakes] only showed that Mr Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him.... I think the knowledge came to him at last - only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion.[89]

In this respect, Professor Sandison pointed out à propos of Heart of Darkness that:

> Confrontation with the primitive, unorganised native discloses a horrible and unsuspected affinity between him and the sophisticated

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88. Heart of Darkness, p.131.

89. Ibid., p.131.

> alien which makes clear just how much of an assumption, how much of a carefully erected, entirely superficial thing, individual identity is.[90]

In An Outcast of the Islands, as in Almayer's Folly, Conrad makes use of a third and very important image, the image of the sea. This image is organically linked to the city and jungle and contributes to the understanding of their interrelationship and implications. The sea-image actually completes the interrelationship in question by connecting, literally as well as thematically, the city and the jungle and serves as a moral force in the background of the protagonists. The importance of the sea in An Outcast of the Islands is emphasised by Conrad himself in his "Author's Note" to this novel, pointing out that "neither in my mind nor in my heart had I then given up the sea."[91]

Willems runs away from home and the sea into the jungle where he thinks he will easily become rich. In so doing he abandons the white community only to

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90. Alan Sandison, The Wheel of Empire (MacMillan and Company Limited, 1967), p.127.

91. An Outcast of the Islands, "Author's Note", p.vii.

find himself "stray[ing] amongst the brambles of the dangerous wilderness." He already feels disappointed with the sea that "looked so charming from afar, but proved so hard and exacting on closer acquaintance."[92] Moreover, Willems, we are told at the beginning of the story, "was hopelessly at variance with the spirit of the sea"[93], which predicts his coming failure to cope with the hardships of life in the jungle, a world no less challenging than the sea. Thus, the sea and the jungle are similar areas where the moral integrity of the individual is tested by hard circumstances. In this line of thinking, Willems's failure as a seaman is connected with his failure as an adventurer in the jungle. Both sea and jungle demand of man strength of character and endurance in order to survive.

Tom Lingard, an important character in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands and known as the "King of the Sea", expresses this idea thus: "there

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92. An Outcast of the Islands, "Author's Note", p.17.

93. Ibid., p.17.

is only one place for an honest man. The sea, my boy, the sea!"[94] Very significantly, after his "jump" from ship, Willems, on occasion after occasion, betrays his moral incapacity to cope with conditions in the wilderness, which prove to be no less hard than those of the sea. Again, in the city of Macassar he acts in the same cowardly and dishonest manner, stealing Hudig's money. Although Willems is more or less conscious of his moral weakness, he remains incorrigible. It is his own conduct and lack of integrity that cause him to abandon ship, that bring about his dismissal from the city of Macassar, and finally sentence him to stay forever in the jungle. In his confrontation with the jungle he is again defeated by its "deceptive challenge."[95]

Again, in this novel, as in the first one, the sea also functions as an open window on civilisation and as a way out of the stifling and deadly atmosphere of the jungle towards freedom. After Willems has become aware of the dangers in the wilderness and in Aissa's

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94. An Outcast of the Islands, p.17.

95. Ibid., p.66.

race, he asks her to flee with him by "the sea that would give [him] freedom."[96] His attempt to escape completely fails in the end as Lingard sentences him to be incarcerated in the jungle; Lingard telling him in anger: "You are buried here."[97] Willems, as if paralysed, fixes his eyes on Lingard's canoe as it goes straight towards the sea, and the farther it sails away, taking with it the "white figure" of Lingard, the more desperate and isolated Willems feels, and the more his dream of going back to the city recedes into the far distance until it fades away. At this point Willems's past is already dead, a past "like an old cemetery full of neglected graves"[98], since the only man, Lingard, who in the past was his link with the world of civilisation, has abandoned him for ever. As soon as Lingard disappears towards the sea, Willems "felt on his face the passing, warm touch of an immense breath coming from beyond the forest"[99] as

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96. An Outcast of the Islands, p.154.
97. Ibid., p.277.
98. Ibid., p.282.
99. Ibid., p.282.

though the voice of the wilderness reminds him in a menacing tone that he is its prisoner. Incidentally, at the same time Aissa "clung to him as if he were a refuge from misery, from storm, from weariness, from fear, from despair"[100] and makes him her captive.

Along with the image of the sea goes the image of the river, linking it with the jungle and the West metaphorically as well as literally. The river, like the sea, is a kind of window open on hope and freedom out of the prison of the jungle:

> To the river Willems turned his eyes like a captive that looks fixedly at the door of his cell. If there was any hope in the world it would come from the river, by the river.[101]

Out of the jungle, then, the river leads to the sea where there are "ships ... white men, help ..." The river and the sea, so to speak, become one path that links the jungle to the world of the city the white man dreams of.

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100. An Outcast of the Islands, p.285.

101. Ibid., pp.328-329.

However, the river, like the sea, is always presented as an ambivalent image, mainly manifested in its description as being full of a deceptive sort of light. In the beginning of Almayer's Folly, the light of the river reflects Almayer's illusion of gold: "the sinking sun would spread a glowing gold tinge on the waters of the Pantai, and Almayer's thoughts were often busy with gold."[102] Significantly, when Almayer realises his failure to secure gold, "he looked on the broad river. [But] there was no tinge of gold on it this evening."[103] André Maurois's opinion of the illusion of the senses and the sentiments expresses this idea very well: "There are cases" he wrote "where we see what we want to see and can at will suppress or re-create the illusion."[104]

Thus far, the three elements, sea, city and jungle, are shown to be organically, thematically, and even

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102. Almayer's Folly, p.3.
103. Ibid., p.4.
104. Illusions, p.8.

geographically, connected to each other, completing the pattern of the story. Conrad, as this interrelationship demonstrates, does not limit the experience of his characters to an exclusive setting, or rather the setting in his fiction is presented in such a way that it does not limit these human experiences. The sea, city and jungle intermingle with, and contribute to, the implications of each other, and through this interrelationship the writer attempts to communicate a general human truth.

In this early fiction, Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, there is no doubt that the image of the jungle is the one that overshadows those of the sea and city. It is, indeed, the most emphasised, principally because the main events take place in the world of the jungle, while the city and the sea remain in the background. As these early novels show, the jungle comes to stand for moral ectopia. It is a place of chaos and darkness from which the white man is trying to escape but cannot, and his efforts end in death. On a more complicated level, this jungle is not only cosmic but also personal.

The writer explores the actual jungle as seen in the physical setting, but also examined is the "jungle" within the person himself. The image of the city, on the other hand, seems to stand for organised life. It hovers over the journey of the civilised man in the jungle throughout the novel, exercising a great moral influence in his life. By and large, the image of the city takes the opposite meaning of the jungle: it apparently is all that is not the forest, namely, order, freedom, human community and civilisation. For all that, the city is time and again presented as an artefact of Western civilisation, as an illusion while the jungle is real. So, neither the city nor the values of the civilised man himself has an absolute reality, nor do they really stand apart from life in the jungle.

The city and jungle, then, do meet on similar points in such a way that they are brought into an intimate relationship. Furthermore, although this kind of intimacy may risk a degree of confusion, the two

elements are not, in fact, confused, their inter-relationship remaining finely regulated. This process and method of regulation is, as we shall see, more apparent in Conrad's other works, particularly Heart of Darkness and The Secret Agent.

CHAPTER II:

THE STREAM OF DARKNESS IN THE AFRICAN STORIES

In Conrad's Malay phase the finer points of relatedness between sea, city and jungle are perhaps more implicit than explicit. The world of the novels is mainly the jungle while the city exists in the minds of the protagonists, its image generally characterised by false perception and unreality. From the point of view of the white man confronting the jungle, the city is a dream and refuge, and consequently comes to stand dramatically opposed to the hostility of the wilderness, even though it remains unattainable. However, there are hints in the stories that there exist some points where these images do not represent wholly opposed states, but overlap. That is, Conrad sets them up initially as apparently distinct entities, and then shows that to believe, or to act as if one believed, that they were truly separate, is to reveal a very partial knowledge of reality. So, hovering over the malevolent anarchy of the jungle in the earlier stories, as we have seen is the vision of the city: an insubstantial vision as it turns out, whose cloud capp'd towers and gorgeous palaces are finally enveloped by the irresistible, destructive disorder

of the jungle which seems in the end to be the only true reality. Thus the image of the city as a place of sanity, civilisation and order comes mockingly to underline its own unreality in the face of chaos. And the river, which leads to the life-giving West is but one more mark of a deceitful and treacherous universe. So these images have a dangerous fluidity to match the unreliable behaviour of the world.

In stories like "An Outpost of Progress" and Heart of Darkness, dealing with the attempt of the European powers to colonise or civilise Central Africa, the image of the city is, in a way, a more challenging force to the jungle than in the Malay novels. The civilised European in the African jungle is no longer a single-handed traveller in search of wealth for a personal purpose, but an agent of a colonial company or a civilising mission. In other words, the city, as a symbol of civilisation, is presented in this African phase as a force that attempts to impose itself on primitive life, or to bring order where there is still chaos; and above all, perhaps, to justify its cultural and scientific achievements

in the face of the wilderness.

It is, then, this interplay between civilisation and primitive, chaotic life that throws more light on the interrelationship between city and jungle and its implications. To the white man coming from Europe, there is a compulsion to establish a city or its values in the midst of the jungle, to make his existence possible there. In "An Outpost of Progress" Carlier, carried away by the magic of the books and home papers he finds in his outpost, expresses his hope of founding a town there. He remarks to Kayerts:

> 'In a hundred years, there will be perhaps a town here. Quays, and warehouses, and barracks, and - and - billiard-rooms. Civilization, my boy, and virtue - and all. And then, chaps will read that two good fellows, Kayerts and Carlier, were the first civilized men to live in this very spot!'[1]

Again Carlier's concept of the city and the civilisation it stands for is ironic: the benefits he associates with the city culminates in billiards - an indictment of his own limited imagination and the

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1. "An Outpost of Progress" in Almayer's Folly and Tales of Unrest, Vol.I, p.95.

values he represents.

The contact of the so-called civilised man with the wilderness and his reaction to it reflect many aspects of the interrelationship between city and jungle. If, in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, the city is only present as a shadowy image behind the real jungle, in Heart of Darkness, for example, it acquires more substantiality, for to the white man the city is not only a dream or a place of escape, but the sum of progress and civilisation, which becomes his reality. Behind the European's journey into the jungle is the idea of conquering the wilderness and imposing on it the kind of life he has created in the city and which has become a vital condition of his being. But is not this journey from the city to the jungle, motivated by a kind of fear of the wilderness, that still threatens the order man has created in urban life? If urban life can really offer some sort of moral order that the city symbolises, why should its creator leave this comfort in an attempt to conquer the wilderness?

No doubt, man in the city is still aware, or at least half-aware, of the wilderness that undermines his life in the city and the "wilderness" in himself. In other words, the journey of modern man to the jungle is an attempt by the city itself and its values to subdue the jungle, and justify itself to prove its validity. This attempt also implies that the wilderness is always at the threshold of urban life.

These issues, seen in the light of the general theme of "An Outpost of Progress" and Heart of Darkness, that is, civilisation confronting primitivism, meaning both savagery and the chaotically instinctual in man, may suggest the opposition and differences between city and jungle. As in the previous works, Conrad continues exploring crucial differences between the two elements, but at the same time he emphasises significant points where they overlap; hence the persistence of a kind of ambiguity that characterises their interconnection. However, Conrad does not seem to be interested in their differences and similarities as separate entities,

but in how these intermingle and collaborate to give his themes a whole and organic background. As far as the characters go, the interrelationship between city and jungle is expressed through the reactions of the civilised man facing life in the jungle. It is a confrontation which raises questions about civilised man's ability to handle the new environment, in spite of his being equipped with the values he believes to be invincible.

"An Outpost of Progress", Conrad's "lightest part of the loot from Central Africa"[2], takes up the relationship between city and jungle as treated in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, insisting on the hostility of the forest and its repulsion of the white man and his ways of life. However, the image of the city here is not only a dream or an illusion, but a place that defines his existence and protects it against annihilating forces. Removed to the midst of the wilderness, the white man, already accustomed to urban life, as a familiar social environment, feels as if he is

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2. "An Outpost of Progress", "Author's Note", p.vii.

deprived of his identity and existence. Outside the urban conditions he has created himself, he realises that the danger is no longer concealed and that there is nothing that can protect him against it. This helps to suggest that the danger of the wilderness is only hidden, rather than absent from life in the city.

In the absence of these familiar conditions, the individual is forced to rely on his inner self to prevent the wilderness from annihilating him, but this "own self" proves sadly deficient. Worse than that, his reliance on self and its subsequent failure betrays something within the person that responds to the wilderness outside. In other words, the true self of the civilised man is saturated with primitive feelings that collaborate with the outside jungle, the jungle which ultimately ends up claiming him as its own and cutting him off from the artificial life of the city. In this sense, the jungle is not only different from the city but is presented as an annihilating force, or a negation of the city.

In "An Outpost of Progress" this conflict between city and jungle is ironically expressed as the opposition of the "habitual" and the "unusual", or the "safe" and the "dangerous":

> But the contact with pure unmitigated savagery, with primitive nature and primitive man, brings sudden and profound trouble into the heart. To the sentiment of being alone of one's kind, to the clear perception of the loneliness of one's thoughts, of one's sensations - to the negation of the habitual, which is safe, there is added the affirmation of the unusual, which is dangerous; a suggestion of things vague, uncontrollable, and repulsive, whose discomposing intrusion excites the imagination and tries the civilized nerves of the foolish and the wise alike.[3]

This kind of relationship between the "habitual" and the "unusual" illustrates just how closely the city and jungle are related, for each, though apparently antagonistic, implies the existence of the other. It also suggests that the human artefact, or the "habitual", is fabricated as an armour against a hidden or imminent danger.

The reactions of Kayerts and Carlier to the jungle

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3. "An Outpost of Progress", p.89.

reveal, indeed, the antagonism as well as the kinship between jungle and city. As soon as they realise the full extent of their exposure to the "unusual", they regret their exile from life in the city, despite its monotony and enslavement of the individual, as though once urban man is removed from his familiar environment, he finds himself in an empty world. Although the wilderness presents itself to Kayerts and Carlier as a great emptiness, it is paradoxically "throbbing with life" and therefore real:

> The river, the forest, all the great land throbbing with life, were like a great emptiness. Even the brilliant sunshine disclosed nothing intelligible. Things appeared and disappeared before their eyes in an unconnected and aimless kind of way. The river seemed to come from nowhere and flow nowhither. It flowed through a void.[4]

As their stay in the new environment lengthens, they realise that what appears to them as "emptiness" is more real than the city itself. However, as the image of their previous life fades, the two whites

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4. "An Outpost of Progress", p.92.

become more vulnerable to the danger of the wilderness:

> It was not the absolute and dumb solitude of the post that impressed them so much as an inarticulate feeling that something from within them was gone, something that worked for their safety, and had kept the wilderness from interfering with their hearts. The images of home; the memory of people like them, of men that thought and felt as they used to think and feel, receded into distances made indistinct by the glare of unclouded sunshine. And out of the great silence of the surrounding wilderness, its very hopelessness and savagery seemed to approach them nearer, to draw them gently, to look upon them, to envelop them with a solicitude irresistible, familiar, and disgusting.[5]

Although Kayerts' and Carlier's experience affirms the utility of the man-made conditions in urban life as a bulwark between them and the "unusual", the threat to the artificial wall of safety seems to be stronger and more real. The city, then, despite its utility as a safeguard against the wilderness, is not an invincible means whereby man has totally succeeded in subduing the "unusual" and the chaotic, which still lurk behind or beneath the "habitual" and the ordered,

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5. "An Outpost of Progress", pp.107-108.

confirming the latter as superficial. Thus, seen in this way, the "habitual" and the "unusual", or the city and the jungle, are by implication closely related to each other; and an ambiguous relationship grows up between the artificial and the natural, the city and the wilderness. Furthermore, if the city is not real as compared with the overwhelming reality of the jungle, its usefulness as a protective wall between its inhabitants and the danger in the latter, makes it relatively real. In other words, Conrad always suggests a significant distinction between the useful expedient of a "real" city and the "absolute" reality of chaos and the jungle.

The relationship between city and jungle as expressed by the relatedness between the "habitual" and the "unusual", or the safe and the dangerous, cannot be seen simply as a relationship of two opposite forces; they rather become two inseparable elements. Man in the city has created conditions of life that have become familiar and reassuring to him as a protection against the danger which lies

behind the "familiar". In other words, the "safe" and the "dangerous", or city and jungle, cannot be separated from each other. Conrad seems to insist on this inseparability of the two elements and their implications; and so does not categorically exclude the artificiality of the city as something futile and meaningless, vis-à-vis the powerful reality of the wilderness.

Although urban life is artificial, it is, like sustaining illusions, necessary for man who has created it, necessary in that it keeps the danger at least at bay. Once man is deprived of this artefact, he cannot stand the annihilating force of the wilderness. There is at least a kind of safety in hiding behind the achievements of civilisation, which implies, of course, that the wilderness is not completely forgotten or done with. If the conditions in the city are deliberately fabricated by man to protect himself against some kind of danger, this danger is real and not absent from his life.

So, once more the relationship between city and jungle can be seen to be not a relationship of two absolutely opposite elements. Rather, they come to coexist in a manner that is almost symbiotic. In the same way that the "habitual", which sums up life in the city, is inseparable from the "unusual", which characterises the jungle, so are the two main elements of city and jungle themselves also inseparable. In other words, what Conrad seems to suggest is that the wilderness is just beneath the thin crust of urban life and that there is nothing absolute about civilisation. Very significantly, in his short story "The Return", apparently restricted to life in London, the writer makes use of the two elements in so intricate a way that they combine with each other to explore a theme which is not by any means limited to the city alone.

In "The Return", the images of city and jungle are intertwined and interwoven to make up the background of the story. Although the story is just a "left-handed production", as he calls it, it is perhaps a good example of how he manipulates the

intimate relationship between jungle, sea and city to convey a universal vision of the human condition. What the moral experience of Mr. Hervey and his wife, as representative members of urban middle-class life, reveals about the interaction of city and jungle is very significant. A few descriptive details, such as darkness and disorder, indicate the close relationship between the two elements; yet the city seems to be distinguished from the wilderness, though Conrad contrives to imply that this distinction is more on the surface.

The manner in which Conrad makes use of the wilderness, its images and even its vocabulary, to present human relations in the city, is very subtle and suggests modern man's situation between an illusory safety and a permanent fear of chaos. Hervey's self-confidence is due to his acceptance of the social conditions around him. But his self-confidence is based only on the highly vulnerable ground of his selfishness and materialism:

> And he moved on in the rain with careless serenity, with the tranquil ease of someone successful and disdainful, very sure of himself - a man with lots of money and friends ... and his clear pale face had under its commonplace refinement that slight tinge of overbearing brutality which is given by the possession of only partly difficult accomplishments; by excelling in games, or in the art of making money; by the easy mastery over animals and over needy men.[6]

The whole atmosphere where urban man moves seems to be charged with danger, affecting the city and the behaviour of the inhabitants themselves. Mr. Hervey and his wife seem to live in "a perfect safety" because of their many acquaintances, who are themselves afraid of any kind of intimacy. All they are interested in is facts, or the surface-reality as that comes to them, based on profit. This urban atmosphere seems marked by serenity, and what is real and hidden is simply ignored - ignored, but, as that implies, not totally absent:

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6. "The Return", in Almayer's Folly and Tales of Unrest, Vol. I, p.119.

> They [Mr. and Mrs. Hervey] moved in their enlarged world amongst perfectly delightful men and women who feared emotion, enthusiasm, or failure, more than fire, war, or mortal disease; who tolerated only the commonest formulas of commonest thoughts, and recognized only profitable facts. It was an extremely charming sphere, the abode of all the virtues, where nothing is realized and where all joys and sorrows are cautiously toned down into pleasures and annoyances. In that serene region, then, where noble sentiments are cultivated in sufficient profusion to conceal the pitiless materialism of thoughts and aspirations Alvan Hervey and his wife spent five years of prudent bliss unclouded by any doubt as to the moral propriety of their existence.[7]

Man in the city, as the above quotation suggests, has in fact opted for the surface side of life, while under this surface something real but dangerous still exists, and even threatens to break through. Life in the city is nothing but an artificial crust covering the wilderness whose dark life continues undiminished:

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7. "The Return", pp.120-121.

> They [Hervey and wife] skimmed over the surface of life hand in hand, in a pure and frosty atmosphere - like two skilful skaters cutting figures on thick ice for the admiration of the beholders, and disdainfully ignoring the hidden stream, the stream restless and dark; the stream of life, profound and unfrozen.[8]

This could stand as an example of Conrad's skill in connecting city and jungle and fusing them without confusing them. Whatever belongs to the city remains on the surface, and the jungle is organically linked to it through the image of the stream of darkness, which also refers to the third element of the inter-relationship, the sea. The two elements, the city and jungle, are indeed inseparable, but at the same time each of them remains surprisingly distinguishable. What comes over most strongly, however, is that, the surface reality or urban life is not only inseparable from its depth or the stream of darkness, but the latter is a persistent and permanent danger ready at any moment to spring forth, to burst onto the surface and overwhelm all that it finds there.

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8. "The Return", p.123.

Man in the city, then seems to be living on the surface, which becomes a fragile kind of insulator between him and the hidden danger that is ignored rather than vanquished or non-existent. Man's awareness or half-awareness of "the hidden stream, the stream restless and dark" inevitably affects his behaviour within the dimension of the familiar. This is perhaps the main reason why the inhabitants of the city seem to be afraid even within the "habitual" itself which is created by them and is supposed to protect them against the "unusual":

> Outside the big doorway of the street
> they scattered in all directions,
> walking away fast from one another
> with the hurried air of men fleeing from
> something compromising; from familiar-
> ity or confidences; from something
> suspected and concealed - like truth or
> pestilence.[9]

Despite man's creation of familiar conditions around him to secure or give himself the illusion of "perfect safety", he cannot absolutely convince himself that this "familiarity" is not in direct contact with the

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9. "The Return", p.119.

"unusual" and the dangerous, as expressed by the dark stream flowing everlastingly beneath the city.

Very paradoxically, man within the city as presented in "The Return" is afraid of the "habitual", which itself becomes dangerous, while in "An Outpost of Progress" Kayerts and Carlier are afraid of the "unusual" and long for the "habitual". In "The Return", as the above quotation suggests, the "habitual" becomes associated with the suspicious and the unseen, hence its apparent identification with the "unusual" or life in the jungle. What the whole situation reveals is that man tries in vain to avoid facing something inherent in his own nature and not simply a phenomenon in the wilderness. Ironically, the familiar objects and institutions man creates to protect himself against the wilderness, and indeed against his own inner nature, turn against him by betraying him. By suspecting his own fellow human beings and even himself, man in the city is ironically running from his own self.

In addition, the intricate interrelationship

between the "habitual" and the "unusual" indeed, points to the seemingly ambiguous interrelationship between city and jungle. However, where and how the familiarity of urban environment and the "unusual" come to be superimposed and apparently identified, does not convey so much the idea of confusion as convey how closely they interact. The artificial life of the city in fact only blinds man to the wilderness inherent in his life. As has already been suggested, what makes the familiarity of urban conditions suspect and feared is actually man's lack of total confidence in its protectability against the hidden. However, the existence of the wilderness within the city is not presented solely as something hidden, for sometimes it is visible on the surface; yet it seems to be tamed by what man has created in order to give himself an illusion of safety:

> Alvan Hervey turned twice to the left, once to the right, walked along two sides of a square, in the middle of which groups of tame-looking trees

> stood in respectable captivity behind
> iron railings, and rang at his door.[10]

The trees standing in the middle of the city may be interpreted in the same way Paul Piehler interprets "the enclosed garden, park or paradise" in Medieval Allegory, that is, they "represent a reconciliation of wilderness and city, the hostile powers of nature tamed but not extinguished."[11]

Despite man's effort to control or ignore the existence of the dark and real powers that threaten the order he constructs to make his life possible, there are crucial moments when in the city he, through some incident, has to confront and wrestle with the hidden and dangerous truth. Under very hard moral circumstances, then, he breaches the artificial security of the city to perceive the dark stream of life. Such a moment is a kind of window opening upon chaos that proves more real than the artefact of urban life man tries to hide behind.

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10. "The Return", p.123.
11. The Visionary Landscape, p.78.

The unexpected sight of the wilderness in the heart of the city reveals two important things about its inhabitant's situation: on the one hand, he realises that the conditions he has built for his safety are too fragile for their "reality" to challenge successfully the reality of the wilderness, and on the other hand, the unmasked truth is too disturbing and terrible to stand, which immediately makes him prefer the superficiality of the city and his refuge in ignorance.

In "The Return", Hervey's sudden vision and his moral shock, after he has discovered his wife's message, sums up this interpenetration of city and wilderness. His vision of the chaos undermining the apparent order and security of an urban bourgeois-society destroys his belief in the old life, and above all, reveals to him that the wilderness is always at the threshold of the city:

> Everything was changed. Why? Only a woman gone, after all; and yet he had a vision, a vision quick and distinct as a dream: the vision of everything he had thought indestructible and safe in the world crashing down about him, like solid

> walls do before the fierce breath
> of a hurricane.[12]

Hervey's reaction to this vision is very similar to that of Kayerts and Carlier when confronted with unmitigated savagery in the jungle of Central Africa, though Hervey remains in the city of London. As soon as he confronts the wilderness within the city, he experiences the same feelings as those which the others experience in direct contact with the jungle, far from their familiar environment. He realises that nothing can stand between him and the danger that has been hidden or simply ignored, and that no one can help him. It is as though he was in a real desert:

> He glanced vainly here and there, like a man looking in desperation for a weapon or for a hiding place, and understood at last that he was disarmed and cornered by the enemy that, without any squeamishness, would strike so as to lay open his heart. He could get help nowhere, or even take counsel with himself, because in the sudden shock of her desertion the sentiments which he knew that in fidelity to his bringing up, to his prejudices and his surroundings, he ought to experience, were so

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12. "The Return, p.130.

> mixed up with the novelty of real feelings, of fundamental feelings that know nothing of creed, class, or education, that he was unable to distinguish clearly between what is and what ought to be; between the inexcusable truth and the valid pretences.[13]

Very significantly, the city itself wears a new image in the eyes of Hervey after his confrontation with the hidden wilderness. The city seems to have been turned into a hostile and wild environment. Hervey seems to hear noises and sounds that echo savage life: "he was stunned by a noise meaningless and violent, like the clash of gongs or the beating of drums."[14] At the same time a kind of chaos overwhelms the city:

> He saw an illimitable darkness, in which stood a black jumble of walls, and, between them, the many rows of gaslights stretched far away in long lines, like strung-up beads of fire. A sinister loom as of a hidden conflagration lit up faintly from below the mist, falling upon a billowy and motionless sea of tiles and bricks.[15]

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13. "The Return", p.131.
14. Ibid., pp.125-126.
15. Ibid., p.126.

His state of mind is that of a man facing the forest in its silence and concealed danger: "his thoughts, as if appalled, stood still, recalling with dismay the decorous and frightful silence that was like a conspiracy; the grim, impenetrable silence of miles of walls concealing passions, misery, thoughts of crime."[16] His house, too, appears to him as if it "had stood alone - the only dwelling upon a deserted earth."[17]

Having had a glimpse of the hidden danger, Hervey feels as if he were suddenly removed from the city and organised society, whose values and conditions have been his only refuge from chaos and danger:

> For a moment he ceased to be a member of society with a position, a career, and a name attached to all this, like a descriptive label of some complicated compound. He was a simple human being removed from the delightful world of crescents and squares. He stood alone, naked and afraid, like the first man on the first day of evil.[18]

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16. "The Return", p.136.

17. Ibid., p.166.

18. Ibid., pp.133-134.

If this wilderness has its abode in the city, too, it is also beating in the heart of man himself, and there comes a time when it frees itself and comes up to the surface. Hervey recognises its existence within his soul:

> He realized that he had had a shock - not a violent or rending blow, that can be seen, resisted, returned, forgotten, but a thrust, insidious and penetrating, that had stirred all those feelings, concealed and cruel, which the arts of the devil, the fears of mankind - God's infinite compassion, perhaps - keep chained deep down in the inscrutable twilight of our breasts.[19]

Hervey's discovery and recognition of the wilderness within his own nature and in the heart of the city, like Kayerts' and Carlier's confrontation with the "unusual" in the jungle, has a double-edged meaning. It proves both the true reality of the wilderness, and the utility and necessity of the artefacts of urban life to ward off the hidden danger. Hervey, like Kayerts in "An Outpost of Progress", remains in a dilemma between the terrible truth

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19. "The Return", p.133.

that the jungle discloses, and the kind of peace that the artificiality of the city can provide. At times, Hervey tries to defend and even preach the beliefs of the life he used to lead before his moral fall, declaring that "some kind of concealment seemed a necessity because one cannot explain."[20] He, in other words, expresses his preference and desire to regain that paradise he has lost as soon as the hidden wilderness is revealed to him:

> Go and seek another paradise, fool or sage. There is a moment of dumb dismay, and the wanderings must begin again; the painful explaining away of facts, the feverish raking up of illusions, the cultivation of a fresh crop of lies in the sweat of one's brow, to sustain life, to make it supportable, to make it fair, so as to hand intact to another generation of blind wanderers the charming legend of a heartless country, of a promised land, all flowers and blessings....[21]

But after confronting the terrible reality lurking behind the mask of urban life, it becomes impossible for Hervey to live in peace with his new knowledge, and he soon admits his inability to believe once

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20. "The Return", p.131.

21. Ibid., p.134.

again in pretences and artificialities: "He knew with unerring certitude that could not be deceived by the correct silence of walls, of closed doors, of curtained windows."[22]

Both the civilised man facing the wilderness in a real jungle and man facing it in the city, becoming aware of the hidden stream of darkness, can hardly reconcile their seeming safety with what it conceals. Thus, the city may be considered as an artefact fabricated to hide a reality that man is simply unable to live with. In this sense, city and jungle are neither separate from each other nor confused; they are coterminous to the extent that they both reflect the power of the wilderness. In considering the similarities between the reaction of the white man in the African jungle and that of urban man within the boundaries of the city, one tends to conclude that the thing man fears in both physical settings is the wilderness, whether it is the free monster in the forest or the shackled form of it in the city. The reassuring familiarity of

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22. "The Return", p.136.

urban life cannot ultimately compete with the more powerful reality of the stream of darkness, but it is necessary for man's safety, for it provides him with some degree of moral protection against the permanent threat of dark powers.

The common denominator between civilised man in a real jungle and the inhabitants of the city is indeed the fear of the wilderness. The "unusual" that destroys Kayerts and his assistant in the savage surroundings in Central Africa exists, but is concealed in their familiar environment, a theme "The Return" explores more explicitly. In this line of thinking, the images of city and jungle invade each other's territory, but they are not confused: Conrad having ensured that the city will carry an additional dimension of significance even if, ironically, that dimension is the product of illusion and may itself be illusory. This slight but significant difference between the two images will be further elaborated in Heart of Darkness".

In Heart of Darkness, perhaps Conrad's most profound work about the civilised man journeying into the heart of the jungle, his treatment of the interrelationship between jungle, sea and city is further developed. Here, the implications of the three elements are both widely and deeply explored, and their interrelationship becomes fundamental to the understanding of a network of other relationships within which the story works.

The opening pages of Heart of Darkness make explicit cross-references to the sea, jungle and city; and as the novel progresses it weaves them together to make up a single and organic structure for the themes. The author seems to heighten their mutual dependence to such a degree that the reader might get confused as to whether an incident is about the jungle, sea or city, particularly in the use of descriptive details that apply to all three.

Unlike the Malay novels, Heart of Darkness deals with the European traveller who both experiences the external jungle and returns to the city to complete

his journey. This is made possible because of the author's introduction of Marlow, both as narrator and actor in the story. Though Kurtz dies in the heart of the jungle, his vision and his spirit survive in Marlow. The latter returns to urban life with the knowledge he has always been aware of but which has been enhanced by his experiences in the wilderness. Marlow, then, completes the journeys of Almayer and Willems, for he witnesses and, to some extent, undergoes Kurtz's experience and succeeds in seeing the city again, while it remains the unattainable for the two protagonists in the Malay tales.

In Heart of Darkness two big European cities are alluded to in connection with the jungle in Central Africa, Brussels and London, though not by name. Marlow goes from London to Brussels to get an appointment for a job in Central Africa. After he has accomplished his mission he goes back to Brussels, and later he recounts his experience to a group of seamen on the estuary of the Thames.

Not only are sea, city and jungle linked through

his journey, throughout the tale there are descriptive details that bring them together in another way and, metaphorically, knit together the three elements to make up the fabric of the whole work. In the first pages of the story Conrad suggests a kind of affinity between the three settings, and he goes on developing a set of interrelationships, like that between primitive and civilised man, light and darkness, order and chaos, the interplay between the outer and inner reality. All these contribute to the illumination of the main interrelationship between sea, city and jungle.

Before Marlow starts telling the main story about his experience in Central Africa, he gives a kind of introduction to the story in the form of a brief account of the Roman Conquest of England, which depicts the Roman soldier in a similar situation to that of the European coloniser or civiliser facing the wilderness in the Congo in modern times. Indeed, England is portrayed as a real jungle, and significantly the effect of the wilderness on the Roman conqueror in England is highly similar to that of

the African jungle on the "pilgrims of progress":

> Imagine him [the Roman soldier] here - the very end of the world, a sea the colour of lead, a sky the colour of smoke ... and going up this river with stores, or orders, or what you like. Sand-banks, marshes, forests, savages, - precious little to eat fit for a civilized man, nothing but Thames water to drink ... Here and there a military camp lost in a wilderness, like a needle in a bundle of hay - cold, fog, tempests, disease, exile, and death, - death skulking in the air, in the water, in the bush ... They were men enough to face the darkness ... Land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed round him, - all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men .... He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon him.[23]

The description of England and of the Roman conqueror's experience in it are reiterated later in a different context to depict the difficult situation of the civilised European in the African forest. Had it not been for a few specific references in the above quotation, for example, the allusion to the companions'

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23. Heart of Darkness, pp.49-50.

jobs and to the Thames, the reader might easily confuse the Roman's situation in England with the European's in the African jungle during the colonial era: and he is meant to. Repeatedly, Marlow reminds his audience in the boat as well as the reader that the wilderness that confronted the Roman soldier in the past still exists today in England. He interrupts his tale remarking: "'And this also ... has been one of the dark places of the earth.'"[24] Marlow's use of the present perfect is very significant in that it suggests the continuity of darkness within civilisation, and his remark is consistent with and confirms what the anonymous narrator says, referring to London as a mysterious forest:

> The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth.[25]

Later on he calls it "the monstrous town."

Marlow also provides us with a brief glimpse of

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24. Heart of Darkness, p.48.

25. Ibid., p.45.

the other big European city, which calls to his mind the image of a desert or "the city of the dead", thus joining the wilderness in London or in Africa:

> ...I arrived in a city that always makes me think of a whited sepulchre ... I had no difficulty in finding the Company's offices. It was the biggest thing in the town ... A narrow and deserted street in deep shadow, high houses, innumerable windows with venetian blinds, a dead silence, grass sprouting between the stones, imposing carriage archways right and left, immense double doors standing ponderously ajar. I slipped through one of these cracks, went up a swept and ungarnished staircase, as arid as a desert, and opened the first door I came to.[26]

A form of the jungle appears here, peeping through the stones to assert its permanent presence in the middle of the city.

Besides these similarities between city and jungle the writer's technique brings the two elements more closely together. The sort of interpenetration achieved is due mainly to the abrupt shift back and forth from the description of the forest to the

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26. Heart of Darkness, p.55.

description of the city and the use of similar terms for both. For all that, the two images are not confused: the author simply weaves them together to convey a common and deeper theme. Even where the city borrows images and symbols from the jungle or the sea it still retains its own identity. The reference to the city in Heart of Darkness becomes, indeed, a leit-motif in a story dealing apparently only with civilised man in the jungle of Central Africa. Now and then, Marlow interrupts his tale to address people associated with the sea and inhabitants of the city. For example, at one point he interrupts what he calls his "dream" to identify, in a way, the kind of audience he is telling his story to:

> Here you all are, each moored with two good addresses, like a hulk with two anchors, a butcher round one corner, a policeman round another, excellent appetites, and temperature normal.[27]

The fact that the story is told by a sailor and a traveller in the jungle on the border of the city

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27. Heart of Darkness, p.114.

of London emphasises the relevancy of the three elements, sea, city and jungle, to one another and their meaningful interconnection. Conrad's narrative usually extends to the three areas with which he was well acquainted to express the meaning he draws from them about life. When he includes the three settings side by side in a single story, and sometimes even in a single paragraph, they become functions or vehicles for an idea. It is in terms of their functions that their interrelationship is defined and becomes more significant and organic. So, taking into account their role within the world of the novel and the fact that they come to transcend their individual meaning, we may legitimately consider Conrad's Heart of Darkness, for instance, a good example of what D.H. Lawrence calls "the highest form of subtle-relatedness."

Heart of Darkness takes up the implications of the interrelationship between jungle, sea and city explored in Conrad's previous works, but he extends them in this further exploration. When Conrad takes

his character from the city to the jungle he does not actually take him to an absolutely unknown area, for, as has been suggested before, the darkness and chaos that are visible in the world of the forest also exist in his familiar environment; the only difference perhaps is that this wilderness is simply ignored or hidden beneath the artificialities of the urban scene. The unseen or the wilderness survives in the city as well as in the heart of its inhabitants. In Heart of Darkness the relationship between city and jungle is well conveyed through the kinship the author explores between the civilised and primitive man.

The jungle as it operates in Heart of Darkness is both an outer and inner force, and thus it reflects and appeals to the primitive feelings in the civilised man's soul. The savage and the civilised man have something in common; and this kinship between them emphasises again the affinity that exists between city and jungle. Marlow meditating on the death of his savage helmsman expresses this idea: "And the intimate profundity of that look he

gave me when he received his hurt remains to this day in my memory - like a claim of distant kinship affirmed in a supreme moment."[28] In this view, civilisation and wilderness, or city and jungle, are coextensive elements. Kurtz's confrontation with the wilderness in the physical jungle and his identification with it sum up this kind of affinity between city and jungle; hence, the apparent ambiguity that lies in the interrelationship under examination. If this kind of kinship between city and jungle suggests the possibility of confusion, is there any way out?

The city life is in fact what man has constructed to protect himself against the stream of darkness. Whatever belongs to civilisation, therefore, may be considered as a deliberate means of masking a terrible truth, yet civilised man remains primitive inside, only wearing a new mask. Although this mask is not solid enough to outface the wilderness for ever, it is the distinguishing feature which

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28. Heart of Darkness, p.119.

avoids total confusion between city and jungle.

In Heart of Darkness this significant difference is emphasised by the recurrent relationship between the impediments of civilisation and the hidden and natural truth. As the civilised man is removed from his artificial and familiar atmosphere to face the wilderness alone, he realises that his "acquisitions" easily wear out. Then he is left alone with his inner self, which betrays him by identifying with the hidden forces of the dark stream and so contributes to his defeat. This is exactly what happens to Kurtz, to whose making "all Europe contributed."[29] Although he "had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort"[30], he has exposed the "jungle" within his soul and become a savage himself. But in the absence of the artefacts that would ward off the inner truth their utility is confirmed.

The artificialities of urban life are, therefore, far from being without importance. The truth Kurtz

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29. Heart of Darkness, p.117.
30. Ibid., p.88.

discovers and articulates is indeed terrible, and this is why man prefers to ignore truth and hide behind artefacts which at least give him an illusion of safety. This fact also explains why Marlow, despite his awareness that "Principles won't do. Acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags - rags that would fly off at the first good shake",[31] also admits that: "When you have to attend to things of that sort, to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality - the reality, I tell you - fades. The inner truth is hidden - luckily, luckily."[32] In the course of his sojourn in the jungle he encounters the Chief Accountant of the Company and finds him - even though morally at fault - something of a miracle in the midst of the wilderness because he still preserves good appearances:

> When near the buildings I met a white man, in such an unexpected elegance of get-up that in the first moment I took him for a sort of vision... I shook hands with this miracle, and I learned he was the Company's chief accountant, and that all the book-keeping was done at this station.... Moreover, I respected the

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31. Heart of Darkness, p.97.

32. Ibid., p.93.

> fellow. Yes; I respected his collars, his vast cuffs, his brushed hair. His appearance was certainly that of a hair-dresser's dummy; but in the great demoralization of the land he kept up his appearance. That's backbone.[33]

Although Conrad seems to place more emphasis on the inner truth, which is inseparable from the outer reality, the latter keeps a dimension of expediency. What this kind of link between the outer and inner reality reveals about the relationship between city and jungle is that, despite their coexistence, they still can be individually recognised; in this sense a confusion is again avoided. Marlow expresses both the significant difference between the two elements and the usefulness of urban and artificial conditions that hide the danger of the dark truth:

> These little things [i.e., neighbours, butcher, policeman, public opinion...] make all the great difference. When they are gone you must fall back upon your own innate strength, upon your own capacity for faithfulness.[34]

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33. Heart of Darkness, pp.67-68.

34. Ibid., p.116.

Marlow begins his journey to the heart of Africa to fulfil the job of captain of a steamer and ends by becoming more interested in the fate of Kurtz, a great agent of the colonial company and chief of the Inner Station. Marlow is curious to know what will become of the principles and values of European civilisation, and indeed of man in search of his destiny, when they are tested against the wilderness and the universal "disorder principle" it has come to stand for. As he pursues his journey towards Kurtz, he begins to realise that primitive life finds an echo within his own soul; thus his journey between city and jungle is turned into a kind of pilgrimage of modern man towards his origins, or from the present to the past.

In the light of this relationship between primitive and civilised man, the city does contain the "jungle", but they are not interchangeable or confused. The city is always distinct from the jungle in that it stands for the man-made conditions and the progress of civilisation, which expresses the effort man makes to impose some order on the universal

chaos, a chaos not yet fully mastered. And when urban man is deprived of his artefacts, he finds himself in direct contact with the wilderness, which is not only a phenomenon in the external or physical world but is also the dark power hidden within his own nature.

On his return to "the sepulchral city" Marlow becomes more aware of the existence of the "jungle" there, and he notices that the inhabitants are simply pretending to ignore the hidden truth and are hiding behind the futility of their urban activities:

> I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams. They trespassed upon my thoughts. They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence, because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew. Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace individuals going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety, was offensive to me like the outrageous flauntings of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend.[35]

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35. Heart of Darkness, p.152.

After his experience in the jungle, Marlow can clearly see the wilderness within urban life, and the inhabitants of the city though they cannot have the same degree of awareness as himself, manifest a kind of fear of the danger behind their superficial sense of safety.

It should be reiterated that Marlow's or Conrad's ironic observations about the "perfect safety" of urban man are not without reservation, that is, they do not completely repudiate the importance of artificialities, and this is implied in Marlow's feeling of resentment towards the inhabitants of the city. Conrad suggests that perhaps in their ignorance there is safety. And thus Marlow's irony towards these people who do not know what he knows may also be Conrad's irony being exercised upon Marlow himself. Marlow is enlightened by Kurtz's vision, where darkness paradoxically generates light:

> It [Marlow's experience with Kurtz] seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me - and into my thoughts. It was sombre enough, too - and pitiful - not extraordinary in any way - not very clear either. No, not

> very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light.[36]

The references to darkness and light in Heart of Darkness are numerous. The story starts in twilight between a luminous river and a dark city. Even after the sun sets, new lights appear along the shore illuminating the darkness. This chiaroscuro technique underscores the result of Marlow's experience. He is undecided about the clarity or meaning of Kurtz's vision: it is obscure and yet seems to throw "a kind of light". The jungle, then embodying both light and darkness, does not simply stand for chaos and darkness in the universe; it can also provide some sort of enlightenment for man in his quest for his self and destiny. Concerning the meaning of nature in Conrad, Professor Sandison makes the following observation:

> ... nature in his writings instead of reflecting simply chaos and anarchy sometimes discovers a spiritual vitality and a mystery: an entrée to which has for Conrad, almost in spite of himself, a baffled enchantment.[37]

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36. Heart of Darkness, p.51.

37. The Wheel of Empire, p.142.

The paradox in the above quotation about Marlow's experience with Kurtz also points to the apparent ambiguity in the interrelationship between city and jungle, or civilisation and primitive life, consecutively symbolised by light and darkness. The interplay of these two opposites and their fusion provides additional evidence of the subtle way Conrad interweaves and interconnects city and jungle.

Kurtz's vision, which survives in Marlow's mind, enters the city, and therefore embraces the whole universe, and Marlow's awareness and generalisation of it in the city is consistent with the wider implications of Kurtz's judgement. While the experience of Almayer and Willems, for instance, tends to demonstrate that the chaos and savagery are endemic in the physical jungle, Kurtz's vision, on the contrary, transmitted to Marlow, transcends the physical jungle to prove its validity in the world of the city. In other words, Marlow's journey from the city to the jungle and back to the former, rounds off, or provides us with a comprehensive view of, the interrelationship between the two settings.

More important, perhaps, is not so much Marlow's hesitation in choosing between the new truth and the superficial one, but the fact that the world of the city is always "on the threshold of the invisible". As to his ambiguous attitude, it is not without positive implications; through it Conrad suggests that it is a mature attitude towards life, which is itself a mysterious fusion of opposites. Marlow's attitude can be accounted for by considering the novelist's irony behind it. This rhetorical device serves Conrad to partly resolve the relationship between conflicting elements and to bring the incongruities in life under control. Thus the artist gives us the illusion of a certain victory over the chaos inherent in the universe. Friedrich Schlegel's concept of irony sums up Conrad's idea; he believes that irony is the "recognition of the fact that the world in its essence is paradoxical and that an ambivalent attitude alone can grasp its contradictory totality."[38]

In the light of this idea Marlow differs from the

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38. Irony, p.19.

previous characters who have perished after their sight of the horror that undermines their pretentious lives. For example, while Marlow's sense of detachment saves him from being totally overcome by the wilderness, or easily deceived by the pretences of urban life, Hervey, after his sudden vision of the stream of darkness freely flowing beneath the surface reality of London, becomes completely defenceless against it. Marlow is perhaps more realistic and he even suggests a way out of this dilemma, although it is not clear whether he is himself faithful to it and carries out this suggestion or not. Marlow is aware of and expresses a realistic modus vivendi which will reconcile man to the surface reality, which is safe, and to the real truth, which is morally disturbing. He says:

> The earth for us is a place to live in, where we must put up with sights, with sounds, with smells, too, by Jove! - breathe dead hippo, so to speak, and not be contaminated.[39]

Hervey is indeed unable to reconcile himself to the sight of the "jungle", and in this way he differs from Marlow,

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39. Heart of Darkness, p.117.

who survives. Hervey feels as if he had been expelled from a kind of paradise and cannot come back to it; for the new and terrible truth is too overwhelming and outfaces the artificial safety he used to believe in as an absolute reality:

> Every train of thought seemed to lead into the hopeless realm of ungovernable folly, to recall the knowledge and the terror of forces that must be ignored.[40]

Hervey actually tries to ignore the dark stream of life but he fails and never regains his lost paradise. This failure is implied in the last sentence of the story: "He never returned" and additionally in the irony behind the title itself: "The Return". His hopelessness is due to his sudden and unprepared discovery that the wilderness is not only present in, but also triumphs over, the city and its social organisation. He sees it everywhere: in his house, in others' houses and in the streets. Marlow, on the contrary, though he recognises this triumph of the wilderness, does not totally give up his belief in the value of civilisation-as-artefact and the utility of

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40. "The Return", p.161.

hiding the truth.

With Marlow the wilderness seems to enter the city; even although it has always been there, it has not been fully recognised. Instead, thanks to the wall man has fabricated to isolate it from his activities, the wilderness has been kept at bay. This also reveals the difference between experiencing the wilderness in the physical jungle and experiencing it in the urban environment. Marlow explains this difference more clearly:

> The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there - there you could look at a thing monstrous and free.[41]

When Marlow visits Kurtz's Intended the wilderness seems more visible than before. He feels the house and the whole city engulfed in darkness; and, above all, he can hear the echo of Kurtz's words "The horror! The horror!", almost as real and audible as he has heard them in the heart of the African jungle. In the scene between Marlow and the Intended, the concealed stream of

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41. Heart of Darkness, p.96.

darkness and the surface reality become fused, just as the vision of Kurtz and the naive beliefs of his Intended are juxtaposed in Marlow's mind. While the Intended, who stands for innocence based on ignorance, is talking to Marlow, the latter can hear at the same time Kurtz's speech, "the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness."[42]

The darkness as a triumphant force over the city again emphasises the reality of the wilderness and the superficiality of the city. However, the fact that in the city the wilderness is presented as a kind of shackled monster implies the challenge of the former and its utility, which, Conrad seems to argue, should not be dismissed as something futile or something to be given up in favour of the hidden and real truth. What he impugns and handles with skilful irony is not the progress of human civilisation, but modern man's self-complacency and total dependendence on his arte-facts to subdue the incessant stream of darkness,

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42. Heart of Darkness, pp.113-114.

apparently inherent in man's universe and man's nature.

Civilised man himself, as summed up in Kurtz, is "satiated with primitive emotions" and has not yet reconciled this inner truth with his "acquisitions". The tragedy of modern man, Conrad seems to imply, lies in his tendency to believe more in the latter than in the former; and once the hidden truth is disclosed it appears more terrifying than perhaps it should. Kurtz's experience demonstrates this fact, at the discovery of which he abandons all restraints, and thus allows his primitive feelings to take total possession of him. Yet, Marlow's view of Kurtz's "leap" into darkness is not negative, for Kurtz has at least articulated that darkness and, in a way, achieved a partial victory by imposing some sort of order on it, if only that which inheres in language:

> He had something to say. He said it ... He had summed up - he had judged. "The horror!" ... True, he had made that last stride, he had stepped over the edge, while I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot. And perhaps in this is the whole difference; perhaps all the wisdom, and all truth, and all sincerity, are just compressed into that inappreciable moment of time in which we step over the

> threshold of the invisible. Perhaps! I like to think my summing-up would not have been a word of careless contempt. Better his cry - much better. It was an affirmation, a moral victory paid for by innumerable defeats, by abominable terrors, by abominable satisfactions. But it was a victory![43]

Marlow's hesitation, as has already been commented on, remains with him to the end. His lie to Kurtz's Intended betrays his inability, (or demonstrates his wisdom) to choose between the dark truth or its suppression when it would serve some useful purpose. In other words, he still believes in the importance of illusions and the "lendings" of civilisation as safeguards against the horror of the hidden truth. Although he believes that there is "a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies",[44] he lies at the end to affirm the surface reality, which sustains the safety of the Intended and of those who share the same belief. Marlow's ambiguous attitude lies, therefore, in his affirmation of both Kurtz's vision and "the faith that was in [his Intended]....

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43. Heart of Darkness, p.151.

44. Ibid., p.82.

that great and saving illusion that shone with an unearthly glow in the darkness, in the triumphant darkness from which I [Marlow] could not have defended her - from which I could not even defend myself."[45] In this ambiguity indeed resides the inseparability of safety and danger, light and darkness, and by implication city and jungle.

Conrad sums up this idea in his metaphorical use of "the infernal stream of darkness" that incessantly flows beneath "the solid pavement" of the city. Heart of Darkness ends with this metaphor to express the inseparability of wilderness, sea and city with a universal implication. It is also a variation of Kurtz's vision that embraces mankind in general. The Thames, on whose estuary Marlow tells his story to a group of seamen and inhabitants of the city, comes to be associated with the Congo river that leads to the heart of the jungle. Meditating on the Thames's waters, the anonymous narrator concludes the work with the image that sums up the interconnectedness and implications of the three elements ,

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45. Heart of Darkness, p.159.

sea, city and jungle:

> The offing was barred by a black bank of clouds, and the tranquil waterway leading to the uttermost ends of the earth flowed sombre under an overcast sky - seemed to lead into the heart of an immense darkness.[46]

The references to the stream of darkness in Heart of Darkness are numerous, and this metaphor is very significant in that it links the three images under discussion and widens their implications. That is to say, instead of connecting one "civilised" centre with another in a chain of order and stability, this metaphor links "civilisation" with savagery and shows that savagery is inherent in its own condition too. In "The Return", too, "the hidden stream restless and dark; profound and unfrozen", is a central image and has the same function as in Heart of Darkness. It is indeed the stream that generates that darkness which Hervey perceives engulfing the whole city and the whole universe. The same metaphor conveys his vision of the dangerous truth urban man is afraid of and which he tries to ignore to save his existence. In

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46. Heart of Darkness, p.162.

"An Outpost of Progress" there is the mysterious river, or another stream of darkness. Kayerts and Carlier are puzzled by this river flowing by their small settlement. They are not sure as to its origin or destination. To the two white men the whole milieu, river and land, is but a mystery:

> The river, the forest, all the great land throbbing with life, were like a great emptiness. Even the brilliant sunshine disclosed nothing intelligible. Things appeared and disappeared before their eyes in an unconnected and aimless kind of way. The river seemed to come from nowhere and flow nowhither. It flowed through a void.[47]

In other words, Kayerts and Carlier, because they are unable to comprehend the new truth, associate the river with the void and emptiness. The river, in fact, becomes the metaphor that expresses the mystery and reality of the wilderness flowing beneath the surface of the city.

In Heart of Darkness the metaphor of the stream of darkness becomes a kind of leitmotif in the story, manifesting the inner truth in the heart of civil-

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47. "An Outpost of Progress", p.92.

isation as well as in the breast of man himself. On the level of speech, too, Conrad makes use of this metaphor to show that at the root of the acquired language skills, or whatever man has invented to hide the inner truth, there is darkness. Marlow commenting on Kurtz's power of speech remarks:

> The point was in his being a gifted creature, and that of all his gifts the one that stood out preeminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words - the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness.[48]

Language in Conrad has often an ambivalent value: the word is both a lie and an instrument of truth and order. Mr. Hawthorn in Language and Fictional Self-Consciousness suggests that "few writers are more conscious than Conrad that a word is only a word, and can be trusted, distrusted, falsified, denied, amplified and corrected."[49] The duplicity of the word is closely related to the subtle link between the stream

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48. Heart of Darkness, pp.113-114.

49. Jeremy Hawthorn, Joseph Conrad: Language and Fictional Self-Consciousness (Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd.), p.5.

of darkness, which sums up Conrad's vision of man's nature which, despite its appearance betrays the darkness within, and the city. Marlow discovers another analogy to Kurtz's speech in the smile of the general manager of the Central station: "He sealed the utterance with that smile of his, as though it had been a door opening into a darkness he had in his keeping."[50]

This intricate relationship between light and darkness, appearance and reality, reflects the major interrelationship between city and jungle. Urban life becomes associated with "acquisitions" and appearances, while the stream of darkness stands for the wilderness or the inner truth of all things. To enrich this interrelationship, Conrad uses a large pattern of subordinate interrelationships between two different but organically connected elements, such as outer and inner phenomena, light and darkness, dream and reality, artefact and the natural. The way these two elements juxtapose and become fused

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50. Heart of Darkness, p.74.

in the story conveys Conrad's concept of how far two apparently distinct elements interpenetrate, and to what extent each may justify the existence of the other by implication, as the visible or surface reality is proof of the concealed truth. This can be found within a single character and his response to the external world, which happens to reflect what is hidden within him. The best example is perhaps Marlow's experience in the jungle when he hears the drums of the savages beating which at a certain moment he cannot dissociate from the beating of his own heart. Conrad's irony is magnificent here: it is directed against Marlow himself, who gives us the impression of being detached from the "pilgrims of progress" and the wilderness, but then suddenly begins to lose his own identity as a civilised man, identifying with savagery: "And I remember I confounded the beat of the drum with the beating of my heart, and was pleased at its calm regularity."[51]

Such interplay between an external sound and an

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51. Heart of Darkness, p.142.

internal one, and their apparent confusion, also points to the way city and jungle and their philosophical implications are interconnected in Conrad's works. Although Marlow identifies with the wilderness, he does not allow his primitive instincts to overcome him in the same way that Kurtz does. Vis-à-vis Kurtz, the forest, as it were, "had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception till he took counsel with this great solitude - and the whisper had proved irresistibly fascinating. It echoed loudly within him because he was hollow at the core."[52] This quotation suggests two main ideas implied in the relationship between city and jungle, or civilisation and the primitive. First, the truth the forest discloses to Kurtz has not been without existence in his own self; he simply "did not know" until he is removed from his familiar environment to meet the world with his "own innate strength."[53] Secondly, being deprived of all the appurtenances of civilisation, he is unable to resist or defend himself

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52. Heart of Darkness, p.131.

53. Ibid., p.116.

against the wilderness for he is "hollow at the core." By implication, both the reality of the wilderness and the utility of the equipment man has fabricated to keep it at bay, are recognised and confirmed. Conrad, like Marlow in the story, seems to leave open the question of whether to give up the beliefs and value of the artefacts for a dangerous but an "inexcusable" truth, or preserve them despite their illusoriness.

It is, therefore, in the light of this network of subordinate relationships between two seemingly different elements that the interrelationship between city and jungle is expressed, and expanded more extensively and intensively in Heart of Darkness than in the previous works. If the city and jungle are taken only in their literal meanings, and if their interrelationship is not regulated, confusion might seem imminent. However, the way they function in the context of the stories transcends their literal definitions: they take a new significance from the context itself and from each other, through a series of comparisons, juxtapositions and cross-references.

And when they borrow terms as well as implications from each other, they come to carry something of the same image or to stand for an equivalent meaning.

Now and then, of course, Conrad deliberately makes it difficult to distinguish between jungle, sea and city. This occurs particularly when he tries to convey the triumph of the wilderness over the city, whose people, buildings and streets are swept by an overwhelming wave of darkness; and on such occasions the distinctions between the three locations that concern him seem to dissolve completely. Yet, in spite of the fact that the wilderness and city are submerged in the stream of darkness, the two factors can still be identified: although Conrad comes close to confusion, he is aware of the impending chaos and does not allow it to be so. To show how far he avoids total confusion it would be very useful to consider and compare again the vision of Kurtz, a civilised man in the jungle, and that of Hervey, who remains within the confines of the city.

Kurtz's vision of the horror the African jungle

discloses to him in complete solitude is simply what he has been unaware of in the city and in his own nature because of the restraints civilisation has put on it. In the heart of the jungle Kurtz is deprived of, or rather has abandoned, these restraints to meet the "free monster". Hervey, on the other hand, gets a glimpse of a similar vision in the midst of the city, where the wilderness is supposed to have been mastered and subdued. In this line of thinking, the two visions are, in fact, one - the wilderness - though one is revealed in the physical jungle and the other in the city. This is to say that Kurtz's vision and Hervey's experience of it, without the latter being physically removed from his familiar environment, is something universal and survives in the bosom of civilisation. Like Kurtz, too, Hervey realises that the props of this civilisation are too fragile to subdue completely the hidden stream of darkness; they simply disguise it. Both Kurtz and Hervey are unable to stand the horror they have perceived, no doubt because they easily abandon the principles of their civilisation - the

safeguards against the demoralising effect of the wilderness. Different from both, Marlow is more detached; despite - or perhaps because of - his clear knowledge of the terrible truth and the illusory effect of man's artefacts, he survives. However, this is not to say that Kurtz is exactly like a Hervey and therefore is defeated. He, indeed, survives morally as his words, his shadow and soul outlast his body through Marlow.

Certainly, one of Conrad's significant and bitter ironies is conveyed in the final discovery of Kurtz and Marlow that the heart of human nature and of the universe itself is "dark". Nevertheless, there are positive implications in their quest, as Wayne C. Booth explains in the following comment:

> Marlow in Conrad's Heart of Darkness learns that the heart of man, like the heart of the universe is dark. The horror lies in wait to be discovered by anyone who is spiritually adventuresome. The Erzienungsroman, invented by Goethe and others on the assumption that beneath ironic undercunnings there were some solid truths that a hero could be educated to, turned into this even more ironic form when authors became convinced that the only final education for a mature man was to recognize the emptiness,

> the abyss. But there are still limits here; nothing undercuts the sense of importance of the quest, of honesty in unmasking error and facing the truth, of courage in facing the horror. Though everything else may be ironized, the nobility of the quest is not.[54]

So far, the emphasis has been on the interrelationship between city and jungle, while the third element has been only slightly touched upon. Yet, the exploration of the metaphor of the stream of darkness and the river, always refers to the sea and hints at its lasting presence along with the other two elements. The three elements are, therefore, through the wide implications of the stream or river images, inseparable. Very significantly, the three stories examined in this chapter, that is, "An Outpost of Progress", "The Return" and Heart of Darkness, make ample use of the three images together. In what additional way, then, is the sea a fundamental and relevant aspect of the interrelationship under examination?

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54. A Rhetoric of Irony, pp.209-210.

If the general theme of Heart of Darkness is a journey between city and jungle or from civilisation to primitive life, the sea is inevitably interwoven with these two elements to widen the scope of their implications as well as to join them physically and metaphorically. To a writer like Conrad, well-acquainted with the sea and seamen, his ideas about the jungle and city are satiated with images and meanings he has carried away from the sea. The store of meanings about life the sea has provided him with is very effectively employed in his works in general.

In "The Return", for example, the writer interweaves the three images, jungle, sea and city in a single paragraph to convey Hervey's awareness of the stream of darkness beneath the crust of urban life. The words "she's gone" which bring the moral shock to Hervey generate this awareness:

> They [the words] vibrated round him in a metallic atmosphere, in a space that had the hardness of iron and the resonance of a bell of bronze. Looking down between the toes of his boots, he seemed to listen thoughtfully to the receding wave of sound; to the wave spreading out in a widening circle,

> embracing streets, roofs, church-steeples, fields - and travelling away, widening endlessly, far, very far, where he could not hear - where he could not imagine anything - where ... [55]

The diction itself in this paragraph mirrors the skilful connectedness between jungle, sea and city. For instance, the "metallic atmosphere", "the hardness of iron", "a bell of bronze", "streets, roofs..." explicitly refer to urban life and its technological atmosphere. "The receding wave" that envelops them is the image of the sea, while the sound of the wave travels away into the realm of the wilderness, the unknown that is not expressed in words but is replaced by the three dots after "where".

In Heart of Darkness, too, there are several examples of paragraphs and even sentences where the three elements are linked to one another to express a single idea or theme. The whole story is in fact framed by the element of the sea. The opening paragraphs told by an anonymous narrator are about the "Nellie", "a cruising yawl, [which] swung to her

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55. "The Return", p.127.

anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest."[56] A group of seamen are waiting by the estuary of the Thames for the turn of the tide. The closing paragraph of Heart of Darkness is again taken up by the anonymous narrator, who now sees the large path of water as if leading to the heart of darkness.

Marlow, who recounts the story of his experience in the jungle, is an experienced seaman and his audience, too, are all connected with the sea:

> Between us there was, as I have already said somewhere, the bond of the sea. Besides holding our hearts together through long periods of separation, it had the effect of making us tolerant of each other's yarns - and even convictions.[57]

Marlow has experiences in both the sea and the jungle: "He was a seaman, but he was a wanderer, too, while most seamen lead, if one may so express it, a sedentary life."[58] The attention his audience, seamen and citizens of the city, give to his tale about the jungle

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56. Heart of Darkness, p.45.

57. Ibid., pp.45-46.

58. Ibid., p.48.

also affirms its relevance to life in the city and sea; hence, we can observe the cosmic value of Conrad's vision. The sea is also the mystery in the heart of the jungle and the city. It stands for life and even something larger than life itself, and in this sense the sea encompasses the other two elements. Talking of seamen and the environment of the sea which surrounds them the anonymous narrator uses words that recall the mystery of the wilderness and the description of the city:

> In the immutability of their surroundings the foreign shores, the foreign faces, the changing immensity of life, glide past, veiled not by a sense of mystery but by a slightly disdainful ignorance; for there is nothing mysterious to a seaman unless it be the sea itself, which is the mistress of his existence and as inscrutable as Destiny.[59]

To Conrad the sea is indeed a great mystery, and the image that reflects reality with its contraries and contradictions. For this reason the sea in his writing is a centrally ambiguous and more comprehensive image: it displays the universe in its violence and

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59. Heart of Darkness, p.48.

its recurring threat of death, and at the same time, it is a testing ground that can offer man some hope in the possibility of order if he survives its destructiveness.

The attitude of man towards the sea, too, is ambivalent: he expresses both a deep love and a deep fear of it. Conrad himself both appreciates its beauty and the order reflected on its surface, but fears its wild and stormy moods. In The Mirror of the Sea, he clearly expresses this ambivalent view of the sea:

> Water is friendly to man. The ocean, a part of Nature farthest removed in the unchangeableness and majesty of its might from the spirit of mankind, has ever been a friend to the enterprising nations of the earth. And of all the elements this is the one to which men have always been prone to trust themselves, as if its immensity held a reward as vast as itself.[60]

Later on, he states the hostility and destructiveness of the sea:

> For all that has been said of the love that certain natures (on shore) have professed to feel for it, for all the

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60. The Mirror of the Sea, p.101.

> celebrations it had been the object of in prose and song, the sea has never been friendly to man ... The sea - this truth must be confessed - has no generosity. No display of manly qualities - courage, hardihood, endurance, faithfulness - has ever been known to touch its irresponsible consciousness of power. The ocean has the conscienceless temper of a savage autocrat spoiled by much adulation. He cannot brook the slightest appearance of defiance, and has remained the irreconcilable enemy of ships and men ever since ships and men had the unheard of audacity to go afloat together in the face of his frown. From that day he has gone on swallowing up fleets and men without his resentment being glutted by the number of victims - by so many wrecked ships and wrecked lives.[61]

Then Conrad gives a comprehensive impression of the sea where its two opposite aspects are integrated:

> I saw the duplicity of the sea's most tender mood. It was so because it could not help itself, but the awed respect of the early days was gone. I felt ready to smile bitterly at its enchanting charm and glare viciously at its furies. In a moment, before we shoved off, I had looked coolly at the life of my choice. Its illusions were gone, but its fascination remained.[62]

The image of the sea, as explained in The Mirror

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61. The Mirror of the Sea, pp.136-137.

62. Ibid., p.142.

of the Sea, is to be explored in his novels and in particular Lord Jim, "Youth" and The Nigger of the "Narcissus". The characters in these stories are tested by the sea, an environment which also reflects the complexity of their human nature: if they allow their weaknesses to be found out it destroys them, but if they endure its dark powers they are rewarded with the moral order they seek. In Lord Jim, Jim's dilemma between illusion and reality is manifest in the ambivalent image of the sea itself. He is enchanted by its surface-reality displaying serenity and order, which are at the same time undermined by chaos and destructiveness. During a calm moment on board the Patna, Jim's impression of the sea is described in these terms:

> A marvellous stillness pervaded the world, and the stars, together with the serenity of their rays, seemed to shed upon the earth the assurance of everlasting security. The young moon recurved, and shining low in the west, was like a slender shaving thrown up from a bar of gold, and the Arabian Sea, smooth and cool to the eye like a sheet of ice, extended its perfect level to the perfect circle of a dark horizon ... Jim on the bridge was penetrated by the great certitude of unbounded safety

> and peace that could be read
> on the silent aspect of nature like
> the certitude of fostering love upon
> the placid tenderness of a mother's
> face.[63]

However, there is something ominous suggested in this serenity itself, which is soon disturbed by "a faint noise as of thunder, of thunder infinitely remote" and "suddenly the calm sea, the sky without a

Note. It is regretted that, because of a typographical error, pagination proceeds from 188 to 190. There is therefore no 189.

nificent vagueness in the expectations

63. Lord Jim, p.17.

64. Ibid., p.26.

> and peace that could be read
> on the silent aspect of nature like
> the certitude of fostering love upon
> the placid tenderness of a mother's
> face.[63]

However, there is something ominous suggested in this serenity itself, which is soon disturbed by "a faint noise as of thunder, of thunder infinitely remote" and "suddenly the calm sea, the sky without a cloud, appeared formidably insecure in [the crew's] immobility, as it poised on the brow of yawning destruction."[64] The sea, then, not unlike the jungle, attracts man and seems to offer a world where the illusions of his life can be fulfilled, but it turns out to be an enslaving and annihilating force. Marlow expresses man's illusions about the sea and his subsequent disenchantment and captivity in these words:

> Surely in no other craft as in that
> of the sea do the hearts of those
> already launched to sink or swim go
> out so much to the youth on the brink,
> looking with shining eyes upon that
> glitter of the vast surface which is
> only a reflection of his own glances
> full of fire. There is such mag-
> nificent vagueness in the expectations

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63. Lord Jim, p.17.

64. Ibid., p.26.

> 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! ... 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.[65]

However, despite man's disillusionment with the sea, with the "horror of the home service, with its harder conditions, severer view of duty, and the hazard of stormy oceans", the sea can also offer the hope for order and self-knowledge; it is a test by

> those events of the sea that show in the light of day the inner worth of a man, the edge of his temper, and the fibre of his stuff; that reveal the quality of his resistance and the secret truth of his pretences, not only to others but also to himself.[66]

In "Youth", where Marlow expresses a great enthusiasm and pleasure as he relates his reminiscences of the voyage of the Judea, the sea is again described as peaceful and stormy. Moreover, the sea not only finds out the weaknesses in man but also discloses something noble in his nature:

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65. Lord Jim, pp.128-129.

66. Ibid., p.10.

> There was a completeness in it [the experience at sea], something solid like a principle, and masterful like an instinct - a disclosure of something secret - of that hidden something, that gift of good or evil that makes racial difference, that shapes the fate of nations.[67]

The voyage at sea, as presented in The Nigger of the "Narcissus", for instance, is a comprehensive metaphor of man's existence and his struggle to preserve his dignity and identity in it. Although the sea constantly threatens to destroy the crew, it also offers them opportunities to prove their integrity and to avoid the boredom of life:

> 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. They must without pause justify their life to the eternal pity that commands toil to be hard and unceasing, from sunrise to sunset, from sunset to sunrise.[68]

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67. "Youth", pp.28-29.

68. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.90.

In general, the ambivalent image of the sea, a composite of order and disorder, serves the novelist as a comprehensive symbol of reality itself. In other words, the duplicity of the sea, reflecting order on its surface while down in the depths lie chaos and annihilating forces, is "like the image of life, with a glittering surface and lightless depths."[69] Indeed, to Conrad, the image of the sea is a comprehensive medium that expresses life more aptly even than human language itself:

> The problem of life seemed too voluminous for the narrow limits of human speech, and by common consent it was abandoned to the great sea that had from the beginning enfolded it in its immense grip; to the sea that knew all, and would in time infallibly unveil to each the wisdom hidden in all the errors, the certitude that lurks in doubts, the realm of safety and peace beyond the frontiers of sorrow and fear.[70]

Against the destructiveness and restlessness of the sea, Conrad places the image of the ship, the instrument by which man can establish some kind of order and protect himself. In The Mirror of the Sea,

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69. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.155.

70. Ibid., p.138.

Conrad suggests that "[the] love that is given to ships is profoundly different from the love men feel for every other work of their hands" and expresses his admiration for "the equal fellowship [between ship and man], backing each other against the implacable if sometimes dissembled, hostility of their world of waters."[71]

In terms of the interrelationship in question, the link between ship and sea is a kind of reduced analogy to the connection between city and jungle, between the seemingly ordered life and the chaos lurking beneath it. Man has invented the ship to sail on the restless element and to protect himself against the dark powers concealed under its deceiving surface. For Conrad, the ship becomes not only an instrument for sailing the seas, but a symbol of order to subdue chaos.

The image of the sea, then serves the writer for many purposes in his stories, particularly to give his themes a wider range of associations, as it

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71. The Mirror of the Sea, pp.136-137.

amplifies the meanings of city and jungle. The ship in its implications plays a similar function to the city or the man-made artefacts, in that together they are refuges against the restless stream of darkness that undermines man's fabricated safety. Very significantly, by the end of The Nigger of the "Narcissus", Conrad's masterpiece about the sea, he compares the city to an enormous vessel:

> The lights of the earth mingled with the lights of heaven: and above the tossing lanterns of a trawling fleet a great lighthouse shone steadily, like an enormous riding light burning above a vessel of fabulous dimensions. Below its steady glow, the coast, stretching away straight and black, resembled the high side of an indestructible craft riding motionless upon the immortal and unresting sea. The dark land lay alone in the midst of waters, like a mighty ship bestarred with vigilant lights - a ship carrying the burden of millions of lives - a ship freighted with dross and with jewels, with gold and with steel.[72]

In this view, both the ship and the city come to have the same functionality and the same image that sums up all the artefacts man has constructed in an attempt to

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72. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.162.

master the chaos inherent in the universe.

In the midst of the African jungle in Heart of Darkness, Marlow, too, finds refuge from the chaos in the surroundings in the Chief Accountant's office, because it is kept in order, and also in his steamer and in the work it gives him. The jungle becomes like the sea itself and Marlow's steamer protects him against the hostility of elemental forces:

> It was a great comfort to turn from that chap to my influential friend, the battered, twisted ruined, tin-pot steamboat. I clambered on board. She rang under my feet like an empty Huntley & Palmer biscuit-tin kicked along a gutter; she was nothing so solid in make, and rather less pretty in shape, but I had expended enough hard work on her to make me love her. No influential friend would have served me better. She had given me a chance to come out a bit - to find out what I could do. No, I don't like work.... I don't like work - no man does - but I like what is in the work, - the chance to find yourself.[73]

In the jungle Marlow also comes across a document about the sea, a sign of civilisation and order. After travelling many miles in the Congo he has

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73. Heart of Darkness, p.85.

noticed nothing but chaos, and suddenly the manual appears to him as a miracle:

> It was an extraordinary find. Its title was, 'An Inquiry into some Points of Seamanship' ... Not a very enthralling book; but at the first glance you could see there a singleness of intention, an honest concern for the right way of going to work.... The simple old sailor [the author of the document], with his talk of chains and purchases, made me forget the jungle and the pilgrims in a delicious sensation of having come upon something unmistakably real.[74]

Therefore the element of the sea, in its different forms, not only frames the story as a form but also permeates all its details and thus is constantly present beside the other two elements, jungle and city.

Berthoud's approach to Heart of Darkness in his book Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase, emphasises the relevancy of the sea to the other two settings. He even goes further in considering this novel as a "continuation" of The Nigger of the "Narcissus", pointing out that the former "begins where The Nigger ends."[75] The sea is also directly referred to through

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74. Heart of Darkness, p.99.

75. Jacques Berthoud, Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase (Cambridge University Press, 1978),p.41.

the images of river and stream. All the rivers and streams actually meet in the sea, through which the jungle and the city are physically as well as metaphorically connected. The recurrent image of the stream of darkness that flows beneath the "solid pavement" of the city is very central to the interrelationship between the three elements.

In brief, the three images, sea, city and jungle, are closely related to each other, and by virtue of their interrelationship in Conrad's stories, they acquire wider meanings. Conrad brings them together in his works not as three absolutely different elements, nor does he confuse them, but he uses them as metaphors to convey his vision of a dark truth forever vibrating below the artifices of human civilisation, which are deliberately created by man to outface the danger of the hidden dark powers. Moreover, Conrad seems to emphasise this permanent existence of the wilderness within the artificial life of modern man, without at the same time denying the importance of the latter. He succeeds in interweaving the three apparently different settings,

which become jointly definitive rather than suffering random confusion. For, taking into account the meanings and implications Conrad instils in them and the way each contributes to extend the other, they remain distinguishable even when they are compounded together.

In other words, what Conrad demonstrates by this skilful interelationship between the three elements is that they are organically linked, and for some thematic purposes they are inseparable. In the heart of the city there is the wilderness still surviving in the form of the stream of darkness, which, in its danger and restlessness, suggests and reflects the mystery of the sea and the dark powers lurking beneath the deceptive serenity of its surface.
