CHAPTER III:

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHORE AND SEA

Conrad was an experienced sailor and his love for the sea is an element which enters all his stories dealing with life in the jungle or the city, giving his vision of the human condition more significance. In his "Author's Note" to The Mirror of the Sea he calls his relationship with the sea a passion "which [is] various and great like life itself."[1]

If we go back to Conrad's stories where the jungle predominates, such as Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands and Heart of Darkness, we find that the sea is always present along with the character's search for a meaning in life. The main character behind the stories of Almayer and Willems is identified as the King of the Sea or Captain Tom Lingard. Lingard, who becomes the protagonist in The Rescue, another Malay novel, gained his identity through the brig that brings him success and fame at sea, among the Malay tribes; thanks to it, he "belongs to history."[2] At sea, Lingard finds "the

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1. The Mirror of the Sea, "Author's Note", p.x.
2. The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows, Vol. xviii, p.4.

great joy of his youth, the incomparable freedom of the sea; perfect because a wandering home; his independence, his love - and his anxiety."[3] Moreover, his relationship with his brig shows that it is more than an instrument to manipulate. It means more to him, for he "was aware that his little vessel could give him something not to be had from anybody or anything in the world; something his own."[4]

Tom Lingard is not really concerned about home or human relations in general since his boat seems to have satisfied his personal wishes and given him a reputation and identity among both sailors and people of the jungle. As long as his ship serves and obeys his ego he belongs to it and to the sea: "I'm where I belong. And I belong where I am."[5] In other words, where his ego is sustained he finds home and belongs to himself, which is a large claim in Conradian terms:

> Lingard, unconscious of everything and everybody, contemplated the sea. He had grown on it, he had lived with it, it had enticed him away from home;

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3. The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows, vol.xviii,p.10.
4. Ibid., p.10.
5. Ibid., p.121.

> on it his thoughts had expanded and his hand had found work to do ... it had lulled him into a belief in himself, in his strength, in his luck.[6]

However, by the end of the story Lingard's attitude changes and he begins to realise that life at sea, away from his people, does not offer a lasting and solid ground for his identity. Soon his life at sea is interrupted by the outside world, the world of human society. He becomes involved in the lives of another white man, his wife and a native leader, which puts him in a dilemma: he is torn between his own people and his promise to Hassim, a Malay native. Thus the problems of the land interfere with Lingard's apparently quiet life at sea. His entanglements with the problems of people lead him to a new change in his relationship with his brig and the sea. He realises that the change stems from himself, while the sea and the brig remain as they were. He tells Mr. Carter, his assistant: "The trouble is ... that I am no longer the man to whom you spoke that night in Carimata ... [the brig] will never change."[7]

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6. The Rescue: A Romance of the Shallows, vol.xviii, p.127.
7. Ibid., p.452.

Lingard's prestige on shore is due to his success at sea, and the change that occurs in his life because of his involvement with the problems of people on shore reveals the intimate relationship between withdrawal from life in a community and the inevitable return to it in one way or another.

The reference to the sea in the other two Malay novels (Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands) has an important function, not only in connecting the sea and shore but also in revealing an organic continuity in man's struggle for his identity in both areas. More important, in An Outcast of the Islands the sea serves as a kind of measure of Willems's character, and his journey into the jungle becomes an extension of his experience at sea. His failure and escape from the challenge of the sea-life bring him to another similar challenge by the jungle. Therefore, both the sea and the jungle contain hostile forces which oppose man's search for his identity and defeat the man who has no personal integrity and who is not content to fight in the ranks.

To Conrad, therefore, the sea becomes an

important area where he learns much about man's nature, and when he uses it in sea stories or elsewhere, it serves as a means of expression of his vision of the human condition in general. In his "Preface" to A Personal Record, Conrad expresses his indebtedness to the sea and its life in these words: "I wanted to pay my tribute to the sea, its ships and its men, to whom I remain indebted for so much which has gone to make me what I am."[8] Moreover, the sea in both his life as a seaman and in his fiction "has been the scene, but very seldom the aim, of my endeavour as he records in Last Essays.[9] Besides the tales that concentrate on life in the jungle, like Heart of Darkness, Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, Conrad has recorded his experiences at sea in a few essays and tales where the sea is the main setting for man's endeavour to find himself. His major essays are: The Mirror of the Sea, A Personal Record and Last Essays; and novels and short stories are: The Nigger of the 'Narcissus', Typhoon, "Youth", The Shadow Line, Lord Jim and "The Secret Sharer".

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8. A Personal Record, "A Familiar Preface", p.xvi.
9. Joseph Conrad, Last Essays (Dent,1926), p.212.

In tales where the sea predominates, this element and the ship are not only the main scenes of man's struggle for his identity but they become live elements and characters in themselves. The sea is a moral force against which man is tested to secure or lose his dignity, and the ship is the instrument that protects him against the rages of the sea. Also, the voyage across the sea is more than a "real" one: it is a metaphor for man's soul in quest of its identity. Or, as Conrad says in "Youth" there are "those voyages that seem ordered for the illustration of life, that might stand for a symbol of existence."[10]

Again in these stories, the shore though perhaps out of sight is rarely out of mind, showing that the problems that confront the seamen are not exclusive to life at sea. Man's struggle at sea is indeed an extension of his search for a meaning to his existence that takes place in the jungle or in the city. This link between sea, city and jungle shows the consistency and continuity of Conrad's preoccupation with man's struggle for his identity in his novels as different

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10. "Youth", pp.3-4.

as Heart of Darkness, The Nigger of the "Narcissus" and The Secret Agent. This is perhaps why Conrad stubbornly refused to be labelled as a novelist of the sea. In Last Essays he says: "Though I have been often classed as a writer of the sea I have always felt that I had no speciality in that or any other specific subject."[11] This statement may imply that the different scenes (sea, city and jungle) he uses in his fiction are more than physical settings: they are the means to express a universal vision of the human condition, of man attempting to cope with hostile forces that are intrinsic to the universe. The existence of the ship, a human artefact which brings a group of individuals together and protects them, may suggest a kind of order on a restless sea.

Before examining some of Conrad's stories about the sea in detail and the contributions they can offer to an understanding of his concept of man's struggle for his identity in relation to sea, jungle and city, it may be helpful to consider a few interpretations and relationships between sea, ship and land, as

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11. Last Essays, p.211.

proposed by W.H. Auden in his book The Enchafèd Flood. Though - surprisingly - Auden does not mention Conrad as a sea writer to illustrate his interpretations of the metaphor of the sea, several of these interpretations apply to Conrad's dialectical relationship between sea, ship and land.

When Auden, for instance, suggests that "the ship is only used as a metaphor for society in danger from within or without"[12], we find the same idea expressed by Conrad in The Nigger of the "Narcissus". Throughout this story the ship is indeed referred to as a microcosm of human society, the crew being threatened from within by James Wait and Donkin, and from without by the storm. In analysing the meaning of the voyage at sea, Auden summarises the Romantic postulates on the subject in the following points:

- to leave the land and the city in desire of honour,
- the sea as a real situation and the voyage as the true condition of man,
- the sea is where decisive events, moments of eternal choice, of temptation occur and the shore life is always trivial,

12. W.H. Auden, The Enchafèd Flood (Faber and Faber Ltd., 1951), p.19.

- destination is unknown.[13]

In fact, Conrad is not far from the Romantic view of the voyage at sea, and the above points could well apply to his stories of the sea, though his vision as a whole seems more complicated than the one suggested in the Romantics' attitude to life, as will be shown in The Nigger of the "Narcissus", "The Secret Sharer" and Lord Jim. In the first two stories the land seems to stand as the opposite of the sea. The shore in both stories is not only trivial but negative; James Wait, for example, dies at the first sight of the land, and the crew of the "Narcissus" seem to break up on contact with the city, which is depicted as dark and dirty.

Auden, too, sees the sea and city in terms of opposition; the ship, according to this interpretation, stands for escape from necessity and social ties in the city. However, Conrad's attitude toward the sea is not as simple as this, for he shows in his stories about the sea that man in his struggle for his identity is faced with similar problems in the

13. W.H. Auden, The Enchafèd Flood (Faber and Faber Ltd., 1951), p. 23.

city. Auden also takes into consideration this parallelism between ship and city, observing that the ship is, like the city, a strictly disciplined society where authority is recognised. Auden also talks of the sea as a testing ground for the characters, and the voyage as "a necessary evil" in that the sea "becomes the place of purgatorial suffering".[14] The journey across the sea, as "The Nigger of the "Narcissus", "The Secret Sharer" and Lord Jim demonstrate, stands for the "condition of man", and life at sea offers crucial events, both social and natural, to test man's ability to prove his identity and protect his integrity. The crew of the "Narcissus" are faced with the choice between surrendering to division and anarchy, and maintaining solidarity to preserve their identity and defeat the dark powers. In the stories about the jungle the individual generally fails to triumph over the hostility of the wilderness because the support of others is absent.

Auden's essay is also useful in considering Conrad's manipulation of the jungle or desert and its

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14. W.H. Auden, The Enchafèd Flood, p.65.

relation to the city or civilisation. He proposes that "the desert is the wilderness which lies outside the fertile place or city"[15]; and the wilderness is where there is no community where the individual is either free from the evils of responsibility of communal life, or he is lonely and alienated and longs for company and home.[16] Conrad's characters in Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands and Heart of Darkness are indeed caught in a situation of conflict between freedom and alienation. But Conrad's vision goes beyond this simple relationship between the jungle and city and shows the same human dilemma illustrated in both places, as he demonstrates in the novels dealing with a large human community such as Nostromo and The Secret Agent.

Conrad's interest in man's struggle for his identity is a major theme that links the three geographical areas (sea, city and jungle) where his characters make their journeys. His treatment of the crew in The Nigger of the "Narcissus", for example,

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15. W.H. Auden, The Enchafèd Flood, p.24.
16. Ibid., p.65.

is not only as a group of seamen onboard a ship, but his main concern is in "the psychology of a mass of human beings." The ship, as has already been mentioned, is used as a symbol of society or mankind at large; thus life in the city is removed to the sea, to a new environment to expose man's struggle for his identity in different conditions. All of the sea stories under examination, namely The Nigger of the "Narcissus", "The Secret Sharer" and Lord Jim, demonstrate the interaction of sea and city; Lord Jim brings together all three elements. In these three stories man is engaged in a perpetual struggle to define himself, and the only hope that may give his struggle a meaning is to accept his condition, but without illusions, and to remain in the ranks. Conrad's insistence on solidarity in his preface to The Nigger of the "Narcissus" and throughout this novel, itself, is a clear hint at the possibility of defying the dark powers inherent in the universe and to sustain man's dignity and identity within the community. How does Conrad, then, present the relationship between the sea, city and jungle in

The Nigger of the "Narcissus", "The Secret Sharer" and Lord Jim, and what does this relationship reveal about Conrad's vision of man's search for his identity?

The Nigger of the "Narcissus", published in 1897, is generally considered as Conrad's first major sea story. Henry James calls it "the very first and strongest picture of the sea-life that our language possesses."[17] Unlike the previously discussed novels and short stories about the jungle, its protagonist is not a single character but a group of individuals with the same vocation. Conrad says of its subject that he is interested in the psychology of the crew, or "the crew of a merchant ship, brought to the test of what I may venture to call the moral problem of conduct."[18] In the "Preface" to the novel Conrad insists repeatedly on the theme of solidarity, which implies that human beings everywhere, whether in the jungle, sea or city, are faced with the same problems, and that they may find a sort of identity within the group. So, man on board a ship is tested

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17. Jerry Allen, The Sea Years of Joseph Conrad (Doubleday and Co., 1965), p.167.

18. The Nigger of the "Narcissus" and Youth (Pan Books, 1902), "Critical Supplement", p.183.

by the dark powers that rise from the life of the sea, and only human fellowship remains as a possibility to sustain his identity.

The ship in The Nigger of the "Narcissus" is treated as "a small planet", completely detached from the land, while its frontiers are the sea and sky. Physically, the ship seems to be a world apart from life on shore: "She had her own future; she was alive with the lives of those beings who trod her decks; like that earth which had given her up to the sea."[19] Though it seems an independent planet it is not different from the earth itself, hence the ship becomes a metaphor for a microcosm of human society in a restless universe. The parallel between ship and society prepares us for the interpenetration and juxtaposition of the two worlds involved in the journey of the crew, in spite of their acting in a different environment and under different conditions.

The community of the ship, however, offers a kind of order based on a democratic spirit free from

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19. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", pp.29-30.

the corruptions of a modern city. The seamen have a common cause and clear-cut roles to play, which define their identity. In other words, the ship does not allow the corruptions and social injustices that exist in the city despite its social organisation. Moreover, the conditions at sea do not permit the pursuit of self-interests, political or material, which undermine the community's stability in Nostromo, for example. The community of the "Narcissus" represents the society of the British Merchant Navy which Conrad served and chose to belong to. In his letters, essays and stories he repeatedly expresses his love of this well-established service and its tradition, which to him stands for a typically organised and disciplined human community. It is by belonging to this tradition that Conrad could establish his identity and draw useful meanings that shape his fiction. However, he is not unaware, as his novels show, that even this well-organised community is vulnerable to dangers not different from those that face man in the jungle or the city.

The ship is ruled by discipline and hierarchy: Captain Allistoun, Mr. Baker, the chief mate, and the crew. Very significantly, the crew is made up of individuals from several nations, which gives the tale an international dimension. This fact also shows that Conrad's interest is in man in general and his vision that there exists, in one way or another, a common bond between all human beings. In this respect, Jerry Allen says of Conrad that he is "[a] gifted, sensitive, intellectual youth with a bent of exploration and a strong sense of daring, a roamer without home ties, [who] came to look upon mankind not as nationals or races but as people, simply."[20]

Life on board the "Narcissus" or within a well-ordered community is not, as has been suggested, as simple or secure as it seems. As soon as the sea-journey of the ship begins, that "feeling of fellow-ship" that holds the seamen together is threatened from within the men themselves. When Mr. Baker finishes calling out the names of the sailors, the one

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20. The Sea Years of Joseph Conrad, p.xvii.

missing shouts: "Wait!" Whatever interpretations are given to this loud cry and the implications of the word "wait", it is a reminder of an outside danger, a danger that seems to have come from the wilderness to establish itself among the community of the ship. Significantly, the voice turns out to be the name of a newly-recruited sailor, who is accepted as one of the crew.

From the beginning James Wait is not only presented as a dark power coming from the wilderness or the unknown, hence the "nigger" condensing dark and hostile powers, but also as a real human being running from this wilderness, seeking refuge in an ordered community. No doubt Wait's awareness of alienation and need for identity within the framework of a group are motivating factors behind his joining the "Narcissus". But this apparent escape from the wilderness to an organised society is not enough in itself, for the ship and life within the group have their own demands which should be met in order to protect man against hostile forces. Wait does not seem to have any intention or ability to participate

in the activities of communal life. He stands aloof and apart from the crew as if he were still a lonely wanderer in the wilderness; but at the same time he fears his loneliness and, in his own way, tries to attract others' attention to win their sympathy.

Thus, James Wait comes to stand for a kind of force that tempts others to join it without accepting their conditions. In this sense, then, Wait's presence is a threat to the solidarity of the crew and joins other dark powers against which they must fight in order to maintain their integrity and justify their human identity. So Wait takes the form of a negative force coming from the outside and unknown world. Hence, the two worlds, the ordered one of the ship and the chaotic and unknown one, come into direct conflict through his intrusion into the community of seamen. Along with his emergence, a kind of uncertainty and mystery breaks the peace of the ship as his cough suggests:

> He put his hand to his side and coughed twice, a cough metallic, hollow, and tremendously loud; it resounded like two explosions in a vault; the dome of the sky rang to it, and the iron plates of the ship's

> bulwarks seemed to vibrate in unison, then he marched off forward with the others.[21]

Wait's coughing is indeed mysterious and puzzling; it is more than an appeal for sympathy, it is a sign of coming danger from an unlocated place, and perhaps of the menacing dimensions of the force he represents. Does he really suffer from a serious illness, or does he simply pretend to do so to mislead others and tempt them to break their solidarity and lose themselves?

The uncertainty and doubt about Wait's character lead the crew to doubt in everything and to waver from their duties toward the ship and their officers on the one hand, in the direction of the inclinations to idleness, vagueness and lack of purpose - to the "nigger" in short - on the other. Whether Wait tries to attract others' attention to relieve him from a physical or moral illness, or is simply a kind of evil seducing them from their work, he is unable to convince them entirely, because he does not participate in the

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21. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", pp.18-19.

action to which they are devoted to protect their lives and sustain their identity.

Action, to Conrad, is one means of saving man's integrity and of giving his life a meaning in an uncertain and chaotic world. What, in fact, may save the lives of the crew on board a ship is commitment to duty and action; the motto of the "Narcissus" is indeed "Do or die."[22] Work, above all, not only protects man against elemental dangers and hunger, it also provides him with a moral defence against the absurdity of life. Considering the moral value of work Conrad remarks: "To forget oneself, to surrender all personal feeling in the service of that fine art [i.e. sailing ships], is the only way for a seaman to the faithful discharge of his trust."[23] Life is like the sea in its restlessness and uncertainty, and only devotion to action can give a kind of order and meaning to man's struggle. Comparing the craft of sailing with art, Conrad observes:

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22. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.93.

23. The Mirror of the Sea, p.30.

> Like all true art, the general conduct of a ship and her handling in particular cases had a technique which could be discussed with delight and pleasure by men who found in their work, not bread alone, but an outlet for the particularities of their temperament. To get the best and truest effect from the infinitely varying moods of sky and sea, not pictorially, but in the spirit of their vocation, one and all.[24]

Through work, therefore, man in general, like the artist, can put some order into chaos in order to define and preserve his identity. In Heart of Darkness, Marlow expresses the spirit found in work, insisting on the meaning it gives one's self:

> No, I don't like work. I had rather laze about and think of all the fine things that can be done. I don't like work - no man does - but I like what is in the work, - the chance to find yourself. Your own reality - for yourself, not for others - what no other man can ever know. They can only see the mere show, and never can tell what it really means.[25]

Again, in A Personal Record, Conrad underlines the moral importance in work and vocation and man's dependence on

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24. The Mirror of the Sea, p.31.

25. Heart of Darkness, p.85.

it: "one's own dignity is inseparably united with the dignity of one's work."[26]

In The Nigger of the "Narcissus", James Wait and Donkin, who are opposed to work, are both victims and agents of alienation and chaos and are therefore without real identity. Very significantly these two characters suffer from hunger, lack of clothing and boredom, which are the consequences of refusing work. Voltaire's saying is very relevant here: "Le travail éloigne de nous trois maux: l'ennui, le besoin et la souffrance." Donkin the other shirker of duty, is presented in ragged clothes and hungry. He, like James Wait, tries to appeal to the help of others by begging for spare clothes and food. The crew do not hesitate to offer their assistance, but Donkin is never grateful and is an eternal complainer against the injustice of the world. Sympathy with both characters cannot save them from their moral and physical sufferings as long as they refuse participation in the action of the group. The crew's instinctive sympathy indeed turns out to be a weakness that

26. A Personal Record, "A Familiar Preface", p.xviii.

identifies it with primitive instincts inherent in human nature. Both Wait, a "nigger", and Donkin, a "child" of the modern city, find some appeal among the ordinary seamen. Through Donkin, "the independent offspring of the ignoble freedom of the slums full of disdain and hate for the austere servitude of the sea",[27] and his identification with Wait, the symbol of darkness, the writer brings the two areas, city and wilderness, together.

These two individuals are also presented in the story as images of evil, which come from the outside world to disturb the peace of the crew. They are, in fact, attacking this small community as destructive messengers from another world, but at the same time they arouse hidden instincts among the crew that respond to them. What are, then, the influences of Wait and Donkin on the crew, and what do they reveal about the relationship between the anxiety of man in the city and his struggle in the wilderness or at sea?

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27. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.11.

James Wait, a nigger, rootless and without family connections, seems to embody the eternal wanderer of the wilderness where there is no social organisation. In his loneliness his main preoccupation is with death, a primitive fear that is more pronounced in the life of emptiness than in the life of community and activity. Partly, Wait resorts to the society of the crew because he cannot face death alone, and partly to remind them of it. The crew themselves are daily faced with death, but their absorption in their work and their solidarity keep this primitive fear at bay. Wait's presence is, then, a concrete reminder of this hidden power, which tends to demoralise them and subvert them from their activities. When Wait declares that he will soon die the "men stood around very still and with exasperated eyes. It was just what they had expected, and hated to hear, that idea of a stalking death, thrust at them many times a day like a boast and like a menace by this obnoxious nigger."[28] It is not the presence

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28. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", pp.35-36.

of death that surprises the crew, but the awakening of the fear it causes. This fear brings them together around the nigger and drives them away from their work. They are able to forget Wait and death only during their busy moments.

Death is, indeed, another enemy that man faces in his search for identity, which Conrad suggests, could be protected by the act of creation. There is nothing that can save man in a universe intrinsically chaotic and absurd except perhaps his personal effort to fabricate his own identity. In this respect Conrad anticipated a fundamental theme in modern existentialism. James Wait does not represent simply the fear of death but also the alienated and lonely man who fails to overcome the absurd.

Even the most experienced officers on board the ship, like Old Singleton and Captain Allistoun, are aware of this annihilating force, but their reaction to it is different. While Wait indulges in thoughts of death and become paralysed, Old Singleton, for example, has developed a mature attitude towards it,

facing it courageously without allowing it to interfere with his activities in life. His human condition recognises the existence of death, but prevents this negative force from affecting him in his everyday business. Once again, action is the safeguard against death or any other dark power present in the universe. According to Old Singleton, death should be treated as any other natural phenomenon and any other business in life. Stopping to talk to Wait, who starts complaining that he is dying, Old Singleton is not moved. On the contrary, he lifts "a piece of soaked biscuit...to his lips" and shouts at him: "Well, get on with your dying... don't raise a blamed fuss with us over that job."[29] The crew, who are under the influence of Wait, accuse Old Singleton of hard-heartedness and "suspect him of being stupid."[30] The crew's attitude towards Old Singleton, calling him stupid, is ironical, for they are unaware of their own stupidity in being misled by James Wait. Their sympathy with the "nigger"

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29. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.42.
30. Ibid., p.42.

betrays their weaknesses and is indeed associated with stupidity: "[falsehood] triumphed through doubt, through stupidity."[31]

Here Conrad has brought two important themes side by side: death and self. Death, as Old Singleton's attitude implies, should be taken as a datum, as an aspect of man's condition and his being, and his role is to prevent it from hampering the process of life. In the face of death, man should remain in the ranks to sustain his struggle. The idea introduced by Wait plunges the crew into a conflict between order and chaos, solidarity and division, primitive fear of death and the restraints of this instinct by the marine regulations and action. In the character of Old Singleton, Conrad suggests a kind of regulated and regulating attitude to be taken towards death, a perspective to protect man against the horrors of death that will not interfere with the dynamic spirit of life and man's pursuit of his identity. What concerns Old Singleton and the other officers is action to keep the ship afloat. The

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31. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.138.

characters who attempt to paralyse the movement of the ship are those who refuse to be involved in action.

Besides James Wait, who seems to have come from the wilderness, Donkin introduces into the life of the ship the trouble that stems from life in the city. Donkin, too, seems to be running from the wilderness of the city to find an identity among the crew of the "Narcissus". When a seaman asks him: "What are you?", he replies in an impudent manner: "Why, a sailor like you, old man."[32] Like Wait, his intrusion causes a sense of doubt and consternation among the crew. He introduces another kind of hostile force that shakes the seamen's feeling of fellowship which shields and preserves them. As soon as Donkin enters this small society, they know what kind of person he is:

> They all knew him! He was the man that cannot steer, that cannot splice, that dodges the work on dark nights... the man who curses the sea while others work... The sympathetic and deserving creature that knows all about his rights, but knows nothing of courage, of endurance, and of the unexpressed faith, of the

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32. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.11.

> unspoken loyalty that knits together
> a ship's company.[33]

His lack of these qualities - duty, courage, endurance and loyalty - prevents him from identifying with the crew and predicts his failure to convince them with his campaign for mutiny.

However, Donkin tries to appeal to their hidden instincts for rebellion, another test they have to undergo before they attain self-knowledge. What he starts preaching is indeed anarchy, a political disease that haunts modern man in the city or any large community. Donkin always complains against the injustice of society and the exploitation of common people, two clichés very popular in modern mass-movements. But, at the same time, he withdraws from work and disobeys the discipline of the ship, which are the immediate interests of the crew. His rejection of any kind of authority and discipline places him in the same situation as the "nigger", or the inhabitant of the wilderness. In fact, Donkin's campaign for "revolution" against the social

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33. The Nigger of the "Narcissus",pp.10-11.

system of seamanship proves to be meaningless and out of place on board the ship, where each individual has a defined role to play and all the members have a common cause:

> For discipline is not ceremonious in merchant ships, where the sense of hierarchy is weak, and where all feel themselves equal before the unconcerned immensity of the sea and the exacting appeal of the work.[34]

Here Conrad seems more concerned with man's elemental fight for his identity within the scheme of creation than for status in society. Donkin, indeed, stands outside this scheme and tries to undermine it. Moreover, he introduces the corruption of the city into the community of the ship, in the form of rebellion and anarchism. These latter social evils have no place in a community that has nothing to rebel against, and where individuals have no political ambitions or selfish purposes. In this sense, the character of Donkin anticipates the main themes of disorder and anarchy in novels where the urban

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34. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.16.

scene predominates, like The Secret Agent, or novels dealing with a large community such as Nostromo.

Along with James Wait and Donkin are placed characters who fight disorder and restrain those dark instincts that tend to distract the crew from their work. Old Singleton and the chief mate, Mr. Baker, characters who stand against Wait and Donkin, are devoted to their vocation, which in turn defines their identity. Old Singleton is portrayed as a self-sufficient person, who stands apart: "he resembled a learned and savage patriarch, the incarnation of barbarian wisdom serene in the blasphemous turmoil of the world."[35] In comparing Old Singleton to a "savage patriarch", Conrad suggests a certain wisdom to be found in primitive and simple-minded man, not contaminated by the sophistication of modern life. Conrad underlines the kind of integrity of primitive man which he contrasts ironically with the weaknesses of "civilised" man. This also recalls the ironical distinction between the cannibals and the "pilgrims of progress" in Heart of Darkness: the cannibals show

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35. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.6.

a great deal of restraint and inner discipline, while the colonisers shoot innocent natives merely as a whim. Because of this natural wisdom, Old Singleton is above the trivialities of common sailors and immune to the dark powers introduced by Wait and Donkin. His concept of solidarity is different from that of the emotional Irish or the other ordinary seamen who are easily affected by Wait. Singleton's is a practical one unaffected by sentiment, and it is his concept of solidarity that triumphs over the false sympathy with Wait and the appeal of Donkin for rebellion at the end.

So, in the midst of the turbulence caused by the two intruders there remains a kind of order embodied in Singleton and the officers, an order that saves the identity of the crew and their lives. These characters, who maintain order, stand for a positive force that struggles against two kinds of destructive powers: natural elements (storm and wind) and disorder and division emanating from Wait and Donkin and the crew themselves. Throughout this journey, threatened by the conspiracy of evil forces (Wait and Donkin) and

the uncertainty of the crew, a life-force throbs. One which, Conrad may be suggesting, is present in life itself. This positive force, as embodied in Singleton and the officers, intervenes from time to time to prevent the crew of the "Narcissus" from yielding to Donkin and Wait and losing their identity as a consequence.

Between the negative forces and the positive ones Conrad places the crew, or a group of ordinary men. While the officers' attitude towards the destructive elements is clear and unchanging, the crew are torn between two opposite poles: their officers and order on the one hand, and Donkin, Wait and chaos on the other. Neither the indulgence in primitive instincts nor the corruption of politics can win over a community engaged in a struggle for survival within an ordered system. The journey of the "Narcissus" becomes, then, a challenge to the crew to make a choice between the emblems of order and the laziness and purposelessness of Wait and Donkin.

During this journey they have to learn how to cope with evils that attempt to annihilate them

physically as well as morally. The only possible way to challenge the violence of the sea and the treachery and lies of Donkin and Wait is to act as an organised body. The community of the ship is placed in an indifferent universe that knows nothing of their sufferings and problems, and besides, they are, despite their physical detachment from the life of the shore, visited by evils that dwell there. Therefore, it is up to them to subdue these dark powers to their own wills to prove their human identity.

The journey the crew are undertaking is a journey towards self-knowledge, in order to fulfil their identity; hence Conrad's insistence on the necessity of experience, which is usually defined in terms of antagonistic forces that test his characters. The crew of the "Narcissus" are indeed divided between a life-force represented by the officers as the guardians of their calling and a destructive one rising from the sea, Wait and Donkin. They have to deal with these opposite forces and make their own choice. In a sense, the crew's experience of what Wait and Donkin stand for becomes necessary to acquire a

mature attitude towards life. Their temptations to join Wait in his fear of death and Donkin in his anarchism prove to be evanescent moments in their lives; what remains a constant in the midst of their struggle is indeed what Old Singleton and the other officers represent and defend, that is, work, solidarity and endurance.

More importantly, the crew's confrontation with annihilating powers seems to have, in a way, a positive effect on their journey towards self-realisation. During the storm, for example, "[the crew] are not permitted to meditate at ease upon the complicated and acrid savour of existence."[36] A glimmer of order emerges when they are fighting against the storm, which brings them together and drives them away from Wait and Donkin. When the crew turn against the storm, they ignore Wait and Donkin, and feel again "proud of [the ship]" in whose "existence is hung the whole meaning and joy of the world."[37]

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36. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.90.
37. Ibid., p.50.

It is when the sea is calm that Donkin almost succeeds in organising a mutiny among the crew, who, being "inspired by Donkin's hopeful doctrines", abandon the ship to its fate:

> And, again, for long hours she remained lost in a vast universe of night and silence where gentle sighs wandering here and there like forlorn souls, made the still sails flutter as in sudden fear, and the ripple of a beshrouded ocean whisper its compassion afar - in a voice mournful, immense, and faint....[38]

At this crucial moment Wait joins forces with Donkin and they become identical powers. As Captain Allistoun, who knows that Wait is false, orders him not to go on deck, the crew protest: "There were exclamations of surprise, triumph, indignation. The dark group of men swung across the light."[39] Donkin, the main agent behind this trouble, attempts to kill the captain, and the crew are thrown into chaos and confusion:

> The black cluster of human forms reeled against the bulwark, back again towards the house ... The confused voices of men talking amidships mingled with the wash of

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38. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.104.

39. Ibid., p.120.

> the sea, ascended between the silent and distended sails - seemed to flow away into the night, further than the horizon, higher than the sky.[40]

In this scene the crew are thrown into a moral disorder which makes them easy prey for Donkin, who nearly drives them to the abyss of revolt against their officers. To convey the tension between order and chaos, Conrad once more uses the symbolic opposition between light and darkness. The crew are referred to as "the dark group of men" and "the black cluster of human forms" to underscore their moral situation: by obeying Wait and Donkin, the symbols of the baser instincts in man, the crew betray their own weaknesses. However, the quick shift between darkness and light also indicates that the men have not totally yielded to "darkness". And once more they are reminded that they are losing their identity as seamen, and the voice of Captain Allistoun, who has been trying to control them, finds an echo in nature itself: "It was as if an invisible hand had given the ship an angry

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40. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", pp.123-124.

shake to recall the men that peopled her decks to the sense of reality, vigilance, and duty."[41]

Immediately after this natural incident, which reminds the crew that what they are obeying is a mere illusion that has nothing to do with their situation, they witness Donkin's defeat by Captain Allistoun. When Allistoun insults him calling him a cur, the crew do not support Donkin. As their journey progresses Donkin is gradually unmasked. At this stage, when they refuse to support Donkin against Captain Allistoun, they have shown a kind of progress towards self-knowledge and have therefore chosen responsibility, order and solidarity. They begin to realise that Donkin does not offer any convincing alternative to prove and protect their dignity.

His propaganda, that the social order in the ship is against them, and that they are exploited by their superiors turns out to be against themselves. For what Donkin preaches is that they do not belong to the ship and nothing belongs to them; in other words, he urges them to abandon their world and to say with him:

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41. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.124.

"to hell with the ship!" Moreover, the kind of freedom Donkin is preaching to the crew is a freedom from all restraints, a freedom to withdraw from a system that secures their lives and identity, or to repeat the tragedy of Kurtz in the jungle. But, unlike Kurtz, the crew of the "Narcissus" are controlled by the voice of their officers which triumphs over the discontents of Donkin and his collaborator James Wait.

Like Donkin, Wait is gradually unmasked and defeated before the journey reaches its end. Wait has indeed appealed to and tested "the egoism of the crew"; they nurse him as if they were nursing something precious for they are more afraid for themselves than for Wait: "the latent egoism of tenderness to suffering appeared in the developing anxiety not to see him die."[42] However, at least one of the crew, the narrator, becomes aware of the falseness of their sympathy for Wait: "Falsehood triumphed. It triumphed through doubt, through stupidity, through pity, through sentimentalism."[43] Their sympathy with

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42. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.138.

43. Ibid., p.138.

Wait and emotional response to death have a negative effect on their solidarity and the code of the ship: "All our certitudes were going; we were on doubtful terms with our officers... We suspected Jimmy, one another, and even our very selves."[44] Through their experience with Wait they are delving into their inner selves to explore and understand their inner dark powers, which proves to be a necessary journey to reach moral maturity:

> Through him we were becoming highly humanised, tender, complex, excessively decadent: we understood the subtlety of his fear, sympathised with all his repulsions, shrinkings, evasions, delusions - as though we had been over-civilised, and rotten, and without any knowledge of the meaning of life... We lied to him with gravity, with emotion, with unction, as if performing some moral trick with a view to an eternal reward.[45]

In other words, the crew's involvement with Wait is to some extent negative, but later it turns out to be positive and necessary in order to arrive at an objective understanding of themselves and to develop

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44. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.43.

45. Ibid., p.139.

a mature concept of their identity.

Their self-knowledge, however, is not completed until they detach themselves from what they discover in Wait, as Kurtz does from the wilderness, to gain a certain dignity and integrity. So, as the journey of the "Narcissus" draws to its end the crew gradually put Wait aside along with their egoism, fear of death and laziness. From the beginning Old Singleton and Captain Allistoun dismiss Wait from their activities and seem to be indifferent to him. The other character who has been aware of his falsehood, is Donkin, who calls him a "black fraud."[46] Conrad's irony is here directed against Donkin himself who, ascribing falseness and pretence to Wait, simply expresses what he is himself. Wait confesses the truth about himself to Donkin during one night as they are alone. And when the crew themselves begin to be convinced of the truth about Wait and detach themselves from him, we are told that

> he did not like to be alone in his cabin, because, when he was alone, it seemed to him as if he hadn't been there at all.

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46. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.41.

> There was nothing ... he couldn't enjoy his healthful repose unless some one was by to see it.[47]

At this point Wait is overtaken by death, which coincides with the first sight of the land as Captain Allistoun has prophesied earlier. Realising that Allistoun's prophesy has become a truth, the crew finally begin to believe strongly in their officers and reassert their loyalty to the ship, abandoning their egoism and false sympathy with Wait. Wait's death, nevertheless, is also "like the death of an old belief" and it "shook the foundations of our society"; but we are immediately told that the "common bond [that] was gone" is nothing but "the strong, effective and respectable bond of a sentimental lie."[48] The crew finally realise that the kind of fellowship that has been attracting them to Wait "was common foolishness" mainly because "he didn't back us up."[49] It is, in fact, the work to which they return after Wait's death that remains their salvation, despite the turmoil caused by Donkin and the "nigger". This doubt and uncertainty

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47. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.148.
48. Ibid., p.155.
49. Ibid., p.156.

come to an end because of man's determination to fight for his survival. Finally, the voice of the life-force is heard, loud and clear, promising release and victory: "Breeze coming", shouts the master, and the boatswain adds: "the chap [Wait] was nothing but trouble."[50]

Despite the conflicts that have been threatening the identity of the community of the "Narcissus", evils are subdued to the will of people and the ship proceeds on its journey triumphantly. Still, a new conflict is brought into relief as the ship approaches the coast, the conflict between land and sea that has been hovering over the journey from the beginning. The sea, in spite of its hostility to man, offers a positive ground for his moral struggle to find a meaning for his existence. The storm brings the crew together against forces that tend to break them apart. Although the problems of the shore are not completely absent from the ship as far as human conflicts are concerned, the environment is different and demands solidarity and endurance. Nevertheless, the relationship between shore and sea remains con-

50. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.161.

stant. At one point, their landfall, which is a city, looks like "an indestructible craft riding motionless upon the immortal and unresting sea."[51] This analogy between ship and city suggests a kind of intimate relationship between them despite their apparent difference. Yet, while the sea is described as pure and good, the city is presented in a black picture: "the dark land", "the sight of walls ... is like a vision of disaster ... soulless walls ... smell of perfumes and dirt ... the sordid earth."[52] However, the city being compared to a ship could also have the virtue of protecting man.

The inhabitants of the city are far from leading a stable life; they are "the crowd of the anxious earth", and some of them who come to greet the sailors are dressed in black: "a toff in a black coat" and "a real lady, in a black dress."[53] Conrad brings the ship and the city together to reveal affinities as well as differences between them. The city takes

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51. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.162.
52. Ibid., p.165.
53. Ibid., p.165.

the picture of corruption and the sea of purity. As soon as the "Narcissus" reaches the shore, it "had ceased to live"[54] and the crew, too, "broke up" in the new environment.

In other words, "the latent feeling of fellowship" and "the unavoidable feeling of solidarity" provided by life at sea seem to have vanished in contact with the city. Mr. Baker, whose identity exists only in relation to his vocation as a seaman, has significantly no one waiting for him on shore and is left solitary and lost. Even Old Singleton, who had a firm belief in himself and "never hesitated in the great light of the open sea, could hardly find the small pile of gold in the profound darkness of the shore."[55] The contrast between light and darkness underlines the moral dichotomy between city and sea, consecutively symbolising chaos and the possibility of moral order.

The city, like the jungle in Heart of Darkness,

54. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.165.
55. Ibid., p.168.

is another place of darkness and seems to be too much for simple-minded people like Old Singleton, who believes in action and solidarity to protect his identity. The city is rather a suitable location for characters like Donkin, who prefers treachery and chaos to discipline and work. As the crew land in the city, it is Donkin who feels happy and more at home: "He had better clothes, had an easy air, appeared more at home than any of us."[56] But, again, the identity he wants to assume now he is out of the sea proves to be false as the crew ignore him and turn down his invitation: "No one moved. There was a silence; a silence of blank faces and stony looks."[57]

Although the crew, in contact with the city, "appeared to be creatures of another kind - lost, alone, forgetful and doomed; they were like castaways",[58] their dignity and identity survive. Their identity, in fact, lies in the process of the journey itself and the meaning they get out of it; they have confronted the primitive fear of death, embodied in

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56. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.169.
57. Ibid., p.170.
58. Ibid., p.172.

Wait, and the evils of the city introduced by Donkin, but they have chosen Singleton's stoical attitude towards death and his resistance to Donkin's anarchism. They have, so to speak, embraced a realistic attitude towards life, which demands the ability to carry on their struggle for survival to challenge dark powers and preserve their dignity. The end of the story, indeed, confirms their triumph in winning a kind of identity from a hostile and chaotic world.

Despite the corruption of the city, what they have gained from their journey is not evanescent; it rather defies the darkness of the city and death itself. What the last paragraph of the novel does imply is that their victory is eternal; the narrator says:

> I never saw them again. The sea took some, the steamers took others, the graveyards of the earth will account for the rest. Singleton has no doubt taken with him the long record of his faithful work into the peaceful depths of an hospitable sea.[59]

The last sentence clearly suggests that even in their death their identity will endure. Although the crew

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59. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.172.

seem to fall apart in the darkness of the new setting, which some critics take as the final note of the narrative, each one of them carries with him the meaning he has wrested from his struggle with the sea. This is what the narrator, a member of the crew himself, expresses to celebrate their moral victory:

> Haven't we, together and upon the immortal sea, wrung out a meaning from our sinful lives? Good-bye, brothers! You were a good crowd. As good a crowd as ever fisted with wild cries the beating canvas of a heavy foresail; or tossing aloft, invisible in the night, gave back yell for yell to a westerly gale.[60]

The reference to the shore in connection with the sea is also important in Conrad's short story "The Secret Sharer" whose main events, like The Nigger of the "Narcissus", take place on board a ship at sea. The suspicion and the moral dilemma of the captain come to an end at the appearance of the land, and he at last feels reconciled with his ship and commands it with self-confidence. Though his journey has been a struggle far from the eyes of others, a

60. The Nigger of the "Narcissus", p.173.

struggle undertaken to come to terms with his private concept of self, it has been throughout affected by the concept of society.

In the course of his journey he becomes involved with a man who has committed a "crime" in the eyes of an organised community, based on a set of laws and conventions that regulate it. By protecting Leggatt, at odds with the law of society, the captain realises that he is protecting him against the harsh social law. Being faithful to this kind of refugee, the captain undergoes a moral and psychological test, which, in the end, leads him to turn to ship having achieved a kind of moral identity.

In The Nigger of the "Narcissus" the drama is not centered on one individual in conflict with community, as is the case in "The Secret Sharer", but on a group of men threatened by several forces. The test of the crew of the "Narcissus", as we have seen, lies, in general terms, between order and chaos, fidelity to the ship and its officers on the one hand, and natural elements and human discontent

on the other.

We may conclude from The Nigger of the "Narcissus" and "The Secret Sharer" that the three areas, sea, city and jungle, in one way or another intermingle with each other to express man's perpetual and universal struggle to find order and a firm identity. Although the community of the ship seems to be integrated, self-sufficient and cut off from the latter world, it is not free from the human conflicts that exist in social life nor the moral problems that confront the isolated man in a jungle or an island.

Lord Jim explores further dimensions of the relationship between sea, city and jungle, revealing additional implications for the three images. As in the Malay and African stories, here the quest - moral rather than physical - of the white man is again defined within the framework of the three main settings. However, the motivating factors behind the protagonist's journey which links the three locales, and the conceptions he develops of each, present a new perspective on their relationship.

Unlike Almayer, Willems and Kurtz, Jim is happy to accept the wilderness as a final refuge and does not keep longing for a return to the world of the city or his white community. Very significantly, the direction of his journey is from West to East, from "civilisation" to exotic and isolated lands. What determines his destination is undoubtedly the idealised image he entertains of himself, which is fulfilled neither in his own civilisation nor at sea, but finds a strong appeal in the unknown and the world of the jungle which seems to offer an ideal environment for self-realisation.

Initially, it is the sea which attracts Jim, and the vision he has of it seems to echo his dreams of realising the "unattainable" and fulfilling the image he has of himself. In his early experience with the sea, during his apprenticeship, Jim encounters the dark powers in this element that challenge his illusions about himself:

> There was a fierce purpose in the gale, a furious earnestness in the screech of the wind, in the brutal

> tumult of earth and sky, that
> seemed directed at him, and made
> him hold his breath in awe.[61]

Jim's failure to cope with the dark side of the sea on the training ship is assuaged by more dreams of heroism, by which he convinces himself that a better chance to demonstrate his abilities will yet present itself.

Jim's major and decisive test by the sea occurs during his voyage as the first mate of the Patna, an old ship carrying eight hundred pilgrims to Mecca. Before the incident itself, Jim is significantly still contemplating the image he has had of the sea - an image of peace and security:

> 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 the 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 circle of a dark horizon. ... "How steady she goes," thought Jim with wonder, with something like gratitude for this high peace of sea and sky. At such times his thoughts would be full of valorous deeds: he loved

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61. Lord Jim, p.7.

> these dreams and the success of his imaginary achievements. They were the best parts of life, its secret truth, its hidden reality. They had a gorgeous virility, the charm of vagueness, they passed before him with a heroic tread; they carried his soul away with them and made it drunk with the divine philtre of an unbounded confidence in itself.[62]

Jim's imagination finds comfort and encouragement in this view of the sea, and his vision of the universe seems to be justified.

Nevertheless, what is revealed to Jim during these moments of security and serenity, or perhaps simply what he insists on seeing in the natural spectacle that surrounds him, is more illusory than real. Very significantly, the light Conrad uses to illuminate the scene before Jim's eyes is the weak and indistinct light of the moon, the stars and the bull's-eye lamp. Under this blurred light Jim's "eyes seemed to gaze hungrily into the unattainable, and did not see the shadow of the coming danger."[63] The surface reality seems to disappear under this deceiving light and it is, of course, the superficial level of things

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62. Lord Jim, pp.17-20.
63. Ibid., p.19.

on which Jim habitually focuses, the abyss of darkness remaining veiled to him:

> The sheet of paper [of the chart] portraying the depths of the sea presented a shiny surface under the light of a bull's-eye lamp lashed to a stanchion, a surface as level and smooth as the glimmering surface of the waters.[64]

This aspect of the sea and of reality as Jim sees it is countered with the rising of unexpected dark powers from the sea. After the Patna incident, he claims that

> he had been taken unawares - and he whispered to himself a malediction upon the waters and the firmament, upon the ship, upon the men. Everything had betrayed him! He had been tricked into that sort of high-minded resignation which prevented him lifting as much as his little finger.[65]

Jim's test by the sea has proved very challenging, exposing his weaknesses, though he persists in disowning responsibility and in claiming that he has been betrayed by the sea and its community. Thus he comes to the conclusion that neither among his people

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64. Lord Jim, p.20.

65. Ibid., p.95.

nor at sea, with which they are associated, can he find a moral pattern for his self. Neither the sea nor his own culture seems to offer Jim that chance to realise himself to his full heroic potential, and from such a reading of events comes his retreat into isolation, and his persistent search for a new scene and a new opportunity to redeem himself.

First, Jim "kept to seaports because he was a seaman in exile from the sea, and had Ability in the abstract, which is good for no other work but that of a water-clerk",[66] and finally his "keen perception of the Intolerable drove him away for good from sea-ports and white men, even into the virgin forest."[67] Jim has repudiated both his own culture and the sea, which offer a certain discipline that can sustain the individual's identity, and shows his readiness to seek for a new identity in that wilderness, which, in the case of other white characters has proved a negation of the principles that define and protect their identity.

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66. Lord Jim, pp. 4-5.

67. Ibid., p.5.

Marlow's idea to send Jim to Patusan where Stein has a trading post seems to deliver him from the world that has been tormenting him. It is this last episode of Jim's life that sheds more light on the meaning of the wilderness in relation to the sea and the world of the city, both from Jim's own perspective and from the general outlook of the novel.

In fact, Jim is despatched to the world his dreams have anticipated for him. It is in this light that Stein perceptively assesses him: "I understand very well. He is romantic"; and then he pronounces his statement about man in general, offering a closer understanding of Jim's case:

> How to be! Ach! How to be. ... he [man] wants to be a saint, and he wants to be a devil - and every time he shuts his eyes he sees himself as a very fine fellow - so fine as he can never be. ... In a dream. ...
>
> Yes! Very funny this terrible thing is. A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns - nicht war? ... No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of

> your hands and feet in the water make
> the deep, deep sea keep you up.[68]

Jim's dimensional shift from West to East, from civilisation to the unknown, seems to be fulfilled in the opportunity Stein and Marlow open up for him in Patusan: "Of course he didn't mind a wilderness.... That was where he would be going to.... He had shown a desire... to go out and shut the door after him."[69]

The main preoccupation of Jim is indeed to escape from both the world of the sea and his white community, and so be free to master his fate in a world outside those constraints:

> [Jim] entered the land he was destined to fill with the fame of his virtues, from the blue peaks inland to the white ribbon of surf on the coast. At the first bend he lost sight of the sea with its labouring waves for ever rising, sinking, and vanishing to rise again - the very image of struggling mankind - and faced the immovable forests rooted deep in the soil, soaring towards the sunshine, everlasting in the shadowy might of their tradition, like life itself.[70]

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68. Lord Jim, pp.213-214.
69. Ibid., p.231.
70. Ibid., p.243.

Jim is therefore turning his back on the sea - "the very image of struggling mankind" - which, as has been discussed before, stands for a testing ground against which man can win a certain moral identity if he defies its self-destroying powers. Jim, on the contrary, is evading this field of struggle, thinking he has been unfairly treated by it rather than admitting his limitations.

Although Conrad has already examined in the Malay and African tales the reactions of the civilised man confronting the wilderness, a study of Jim offers further significant comment on the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle. This is due to the fact that Jim has completely rejected both his own culture and the sea as environments incompatible with the realisation of his heroic self. At the same time he turns his face to the jungle seeking his identity there where the other white characters have so signally failed. In other words, Jim is determined to create a moral order outside the sea and his community, instead of using these factors, as so many Conradian characters do, to generate the solidarity that sustains the

individual's identity. He seeks to find it there in the wilderness where he will not have to fit into an already established pattern, but where he will fabricate a new one that will fit the image he has of himself.

In Patusan, Jim seems to have achieved the success he has been deprived of at sea and among his own people. Although the jungle world of Patusan is significantly similar to the wilderness described in Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands and Heart of Darkness, hostile and chaotic, Jim succeeds in overcoming many of its dangers and even manages to perform a few heroic acts. Like Kurtz, Jim is travelling into "the very heart of untouched wilderness",[71] but unlike him he does not allow its dark powers to overwhelm him:

> And there I [Marlow] was with him, high in the sunshine on the top of that historic hill of his. He dominated the forest, the secular gloom, the old mankind. He was like a figure set up on a pedestal, to represent in his persistent youth the power, and perhaps the virtues, of

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71. Lord Jim, p.331.

> races that never grow old, that have emerged from the gloom. I don't know why he should always have appeared to me symbolic.[72]

Out of this wilderness Jim has indeed gained a new identity; "the Malays of the jungle village, where he has elected to conceal his deplorable faculty, added a word to the monosyllable of his incognito. They called him Tuan Jim: as one might say - Lord Jim."[73] Thus Jim has renounced his civilisation with the identity he has had there and has embraced the world of the jungle that seems to meet the demands of his private concept of self:

> He left his earthly failings behind him and that sort of reputation he had, and there was a totally new set of conditions for his imaginative faculty to work upon.[74]

Jim's purpose behind his retreat to the jungle, different from that of the white colonisers and traders in the Malay and African stories, is mainly based on moral grounds rather than material ones, and in this sense Patusan and its inhabitants have accepted him:

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72. Lord Jim, p.265.

73. Ibid., p.5.

74. Ibid., p.218.

he is trusted and depended upon as an agent of order and peace. In return, he accepts his responsibilities as their protector: "I am responsible for every life in the land." He expresses his social success to Marlow in these words:

> What more can I want? If you ask them who is brave - who is true - who is just - who is it they would trust with their lives - they would say, Tuan Jim. And yet they can never know the real, real truth....[75]

However, Jim's success is still uncertain, and, as the last sentence in the quotation implies, his reputation in Patusan is safe only as long as he remains unknown to the natives themselves. Later on, he confesses to Marlow: "I am satisfied... nearly. I've got to look only at the face of the first man that comes along, to regain my confidence. They can't be made to understand what is going on in me."[76] When Marlow confirms this truth, "you shall always remain for them an insoluble mystery",[77] Jim admits his intention to preserve a wall between him and others, even those among whom he has regained self-confidence;

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75. Lord Jim, p.305.
76. Ibid., p.306.
77. Ibid., p.306.

and he stubbornly insists that this world of the wilderness that helps him to conceal at least a part of himself is his last refuge.

Thus even in the jungle village of Patusan, where Jim seems to have assured his protection against the external world of the sea and civilisation, and where he insists on his success, his situation remains paradoxical. The mystery that still surrounds his character and the concealment of the reality of himself from the natives, though he needs the confirmation of their admiration and love to support his self-image, constitute this paradox. And yet, ironically, it is only in this paradox that Jim's new identity seems to survive. The pattern Jim has built in Patusan to define himself is, therefore, constructed purely in his own self-interest:

> The conquest of love, honour, men's confidence - the pride of it, the power of it, are fit materials for a heroic tale; only our minds are struck by the externals of such a success, and to Jim's successes there were no externals. Thirty miles of forest shut it off from the sight of an indifferent world, and the noise of the

> white surf along the coast overpowered the voice of fame. The stream of civilisation, as if divided on a headland a hundred miles north of Patusan, branches east and south-east, leaving its plains and valleys, its old trees and its old mankind, neglected and isolated, such as an insignificant and crumbling islet between the two branches of a mighty, devouring stream.[78]

This "confinement" of Jim's success, which would mean safety and protection to him, also suggests, on the level of the narrative, or from Marlow's perspective, imprisonment and enslavement.

The double meaning of the word "confinement" raises a significant question about the relationship between the three elements: how far can the wilderness, in the light of the images of sea and city, offer Jim a possible field for the liberation of his self, or does it manifest the opposite? To approach this question in such a way as to do justice to the implications conveyed by the three images, in the frame of their interaction, two points of view should be examined: Jim's point of view and Marlow's. In this

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78. Lord Jim, p.226.

respect, Albert Guérard's warning against complete sympathy with Jim while ignoring the implicit irony and detachment from the hero is very illuminating:

> For the casual reader usually ignores or minimizes the important evidence <u>against</u> Lord Jim, is insensitive to ironic overtone and illustrative digression, assumes that Conrad wholly approved of his hero, and quite certain that Jim "redeemed himself" in Patusan. Thus this casual reader, identifying with Jim so completely, is incapable of responding to the novel's suspended judgements and withheld sympathies; he has committed himself, simply and unequivocally, to a highly equivocal personage.[79]

The personal motives that determine Jim's concept of the sea and his civilisation as unfriendly and hostile also determine the image he has of the wilderness, which he comes to believe in as his final refuge and last chance to fulfil the wishes of his self-image. In other words, Jim manifests a self-interested attachment towards the wilderness:

> Now and then, though, a word, a sentence, would escape him [Jim] that showed how deeply, how solemnly, he felt about that work which had

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79. Albert Guérard, <u>Conrad: The Novelist</u> (Harvard University Press, 1969), p.131.

> given him the certitude of rehabilitation. That is why he seemed to love the land and the people with a sort of fierce egoism, with a contemptuous tenderness.[80]

In contrast to Jim's attachment to the wilderness, the image of 'home' cannot be harmonised with his exalted concept of self, being associated with his moral failure: "The very thought of the world outside is enough to give [him] a fright... because [he] has not forgotten why [he] came here."[81] But the isolated province of Patusan seems to have offered Jim the identity both the sea and his civilisation have denied him, and finally he seems to have accepted this world as his self-defining limit:

> 'You have had your opportunity,' [Marlow] pursued. 'Had I?' he said. 'Well, yes. I suppose so. Yes. I have got back my confidence in myself - a good name - yet sometimes I wish.... No! I shall hold what I have got. Can't expect anything more.' He flung his arm out towards the sea. 'Not out there anyhow.' He stamped his foot upon the sand. 'This is my limit, because nothing less will do.'[82]

Even the image the sea generally wears for characters in Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands, Heart of

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80. Lord Jim, p.248.
81. Ibid., p.305.

Darkness and The Nigger of the "Narcissus" - that is an expression of freedom, a way out of the suffocating darkness of the jungle, and a testing ground from which the mariner may win self-realisation and moral identity - is repudiated by Jim as such. He has gained self-confidence in the wilderness, asserting that his proper environment is "not out there" as he points to the sea.

Although Marlow himself seems to confirm Jim's success in Patusan, he does so with reservations, and his comments concerning Jim's experience in this jungle village reveal to us something different from Jim's concept of the wilderness with all he has achieved in it. Thus Marlow observes:

> ...there could be no question that Jim had the power; in his new sphere there did not seem to be anything that was not his to hold or to give. But that, I repeat, was nothing in comparison with the notion, which occurred to me, while I listened with a show of attention, that he seemed to have come near at last to mastering his fate.[83]

Marlow's irony concerning Jim's safety in the jungle reveals to us a significant image of this world, different from the one presented from Jim's perspective

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83. Lord Jim, p.274.

and similar to the one reflected by other characters such as Almayer, Willems and Kurtz. Reflecting on Jim in a jungle scene, Marlow presents him in these words:

> That was my last view of him - in a strong light, dominating, and yet in complete accord with his surroundings - with the life of the forests and with the life of men. I own that I was impressed, but I must admit to myself that after all this is not the lasting impression. He was protected by his isolation, alone of his own superior kind, in close touch with Nature, that keeps faith on such easy terms with her lovers. But I cannot fix before my eye the image of his safety.[84]

The last sentence of the quotation hints at the existence of hidden dangers in the wilderness, a hostile aspect that will confront Jim, not distinguishing him from the other white men who have tried to subdue it to those principles of order they have identified within their own culture, notably in the idea of the city. Jim's "limited" triumph in Patusan, liberating himself from the discipline of both his civilisation and the sea is indeed paradoxical, which paradox demonstrates once again Conrad's regulated

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84. Lord Jim, pp.175-176.

presentation of the interaction between sea, city and jungle, whereby the character's concept of each remains limited. The dimensions of these images, as given from the perspective of one character, are always counterbalanced by other perspectives and the ironic overtones in the narrative.

The study of Lord Jim thus reveals more of the ways in which the author handles these three images with a notable control, contriving to leave us with a relative conception of each. As we have seen, Jim looks upon his own cultural world and the sea as hostile, the values and regulations that define the individual's position within their context depriving him of his freedom, so that, by contrast, the wilderness comes to represent freedom. Ironically, the latter world turns out to be a new imprisonment for Jim. In other words, Jim becomes the slave of the world of his own making and, not, in the end, much different from the Europeans in other Malaysian stories, he is swallowed up by the wilderness; except, of course, that he does not see it as such nor, as has already been mentioned, does he long for

the sea or his civilisation to regain freedom or find order. Interestingly enough, the irony applied to Kurtz, claiming to be the master of the jungle while he becomes its slave, is to a considerable extent true of Jim in Patusan:

> ...all his conquests, the trust, the fame, the friendships, the love - all these things that made him master had made him a captive, too. He looked with an owner's eye at the peace of the evening, at the river, at the houses, at the everlasting life of the forests, at the life of the old mankind, at the secrets of the land, at the pride of his own heart: but it was they that possessed him and made him their own to the innermost thought, to the slightest stir of blood, to his last breath.[85]

And again:

> If Jim took the lead, the other [Dain Waris] had captivated his leader. In fact, Jim the leader was a captive in every sense. The land, the people, the friendship, the love, were like the jealous guardians of his body. Every day added a link to the fetters of that strange freedom.[86]

Even the relationship between Jim and Jewel brings to mind Willems's enthralment by Aissa and the jungle

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85. Lord Jim, pp. 247-248.
86. Ibid., p.262.

whose forces she embodies in An Outcast of the Islands:

> [Jim] was jealously loved, but why she [Jewel] should be jealous, and of what, I [Marlow] could not tell. The land, the people, the forests were her accomplices, guarding him with vigilant accord, with an air of seclusion, of mystery, of invincible possession. There was no appeal, as it were; he was imprisoned within the very freedom of his power, and she, though ready to make a footstool of her head for his feet, guarded her conquest inflexibly - as though he were hard to keep.[87]

The paradox that lies in Jim's relationship with the wilderness, particularly as conveyed through Marlow's ironical comments and his reservations vis-à-vis his success there, discloses an image of the jungle very similar to the one explored in Almayer's Folly, An Outcast of the Islands and Heart of Darkness. In terms of the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle, therefore, Marlow still supports the view that the first two images can stand for an escape from the wilderness, holding to the 'home' concept that sustains man's identity within the social fabric of his civilisation and the merchant-marine service.

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87. Lord Jim, p.284.

The equivocal image of the wilderness revealed in the combined attitudes of Jim and Marlow is summed up in Auden's interpretation quoted at the beginning of this chapter, that is, the wilderness is where there is no community where the individual is either free from the restraints of society, or he is lonely and alienated and longs for company and home. The absence of the standards of his civilisation and the activities of sea-life entail for Marlow a loss of faith in identity and freedom. On leaving Patusan and entering the sea, Marlow feels again a great relief:

> I breathed deeply, I revelled in the vastness of the opened horizon, in the different atmosphere that seemed to vibrate with a toil of life, with the energy of an impeccable world. This sky and this sea were open to me.... I let my eyes roam through space, like a man released from bonds who stretches his cramped limbs, runs, leaps, responds to the inspiring elation of freedom.[88]

However, it should be noted that Marlow is not unaware of the chaos that lies behind the façade of the set of conventions that define his civilisation and sustain his identity. Such awareness recalls the

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88. Lord Jim, pp. 331-332.

metaphor of the stream of darkness flowing beneath the surface of the city, as discussed in "The Return" and Heart of Darkness, and anticipates Conrad's treatment of the city in connection with the images of sea and jungle in Nostromo and The Secret Agent. Marlow's vision also confirms at the same time the usefulness of conventions, illusory as they might be, in protecting man against the menacing existence of the wilderness and the extent to which they sustain a sense of order against universal chaos. In his interview with Jewel and while listening to her distress about Cornelius's cruelty towards her mother, Marlow is momentarily forced out of his "shelter":

> It had the power to drive me out of my conception of existence, out of that shelter each of us makes for himself to creep under in moments of danger, as a tortoise withdraws within its shell. For a moment I had a view of a world that seemed to wear a vast and dismal aspect of disorder, while, in truth, thanks to our unwearied efforts, it is as sunny an arrangement of small conveniences as the mind of man can conceive. But still - it was only a moment: I went back into my shell directly. One must - don't you know? - though I seemed to have lost all my words in the chaos of dark thoughts I had

> contemplated for a second or two beyond the pale. These came back, too, very soon, for words also belong to the sheltering conception of light and order which is our refuge.[89]

Marlow's glimpse of chaos behind the illusory but useful safeguards which man creates to sustain his existence demonstrates the close relationship between city and jungle and the strict authorial regulation of their dimensions.[90] This relativism in the treatment of city and jungle also elucidates the degree of Jim's success in his journey between the two worlds.

Related to the comparison of Jim's and Marlow's perspectives and what it has revealed about the relationship between sea, city and jungle, is the central theme of solidarity and isolation in Lord Jim. The calculated opposition between the two concepts of 'home' and the 'straggler' gives a deeper significance to the relationship between sea and city - both offering a ground for human solidarity - and the

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89. Lord Jim, p.313.

90. Relating language to these safeguards, Daniel Schwarz comments that it "is part of the shelter because by imposing a pattern on consciousness, it provides the illusion of order and control that man desperately needs." Conrad: Almayer's Folly to Under Western Eyes (The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1980), p.92.

jungle, the world of isolation.

Throughout the novel, Jim insists on standing apart from others, and this, as we have seen, is due in great part to the image he cherishes of himself. On the training ship, as the apprentices are acting, Jim isolates himself and remains passive. Again on board the Patna, to distinguish himself from the crew, Jim insists that he has not participated in the escape operation:

> ...he kept his distance - he kept his distance. He wanted me [Marlow] to know he had kept his distance; that there was nothing in common between him and these men - who had the hammer. Nothing whatever. It is more than probable he thought himself cut off from them by a space that could not be traversed, by an obstacle that could not be overcome, by a chasm without bottom.[91]

During the Court of Inquiry, Jim is setting himself apart from the crew of the Patna, facing the questions alone: he even refuses the money offered him by Brierly and Marlow to run away. His own interpretation of the incident is wholly at odds with the entire procedure of the court itself: "I knew the

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91. Lord Jim, pp.103-104.

truth, and I would live it down - alone, with myself."[92] His concept of truth will drive him even farther from others when he enters the world of Patusan, where he thinks he has finally found a refuge: "Once he got in [Patusan], it would be for the outside world as though he had never existed."[93] Marlow remarks paradoxically that Jim "was protected by his isolation."[94]

Jim's withdrawal from communal life to the wilderness reflects his desire and determination to fight alone and to create a certain identity for himself without the backing of those principles of solidarity within which people of his own culture survive. His achievements in Patusan have proved to him at least that here in the wilderness he has realised the demands of his self and gained the recognition of which the outside world had robbed him. However, the intrusion of Brown and his band, and Jim's misplaced trust in that other outcast of society who brings disaster on him, have proved the

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92. Lord Jim, p.132.
93. Ibid., p.232.
94. Ibid., p.176.

fragility of the identity Jim has created in the jungle and the unexpected vulnerability of the latter to the external danger.

The 'enclosed' world of Patusan, despite its internal turmoil and the permanent hazards that threaten Jim's life, has provided the refuge he has been seeking to redeem his private concept of himself, independent of the white community and the sea. But once this refuge is broken into, Jim again finds himself unprotected and face to face with that external world and the memories he has of it. Very significantly, in his encounter with Brown, Jim is reminded of his past failure, and the whole pattern he has built round him in Patusan crumbles. At this point, Jim has already established himself as the leader of the native community and is responsible for their safety and protection. Dramatically, at this time Jim fails to cope with the challenge Brown introduces and the dark, destructive powers he stands for.

After his betrayal by Brown, to prove his personality, Jim offers himself to Doramin to be

shot, thus admitting his responsibilities towards the natives who have given him a sense of belonging. Once again, Jim is shown fighting alone, always obsessed with the image of himself. By delivering himself to death, he also demonstrates that he has no other alternative and no other cause to fight for, except as this implies his own image of self, and this he probably satisfies by sacrificing himself in the hope of self-redemption by keeping his word. As Jewel, the woman he loves in Patusan, urges him to fight or flee to save his life, he simply replies: "There is nothing to fight for... nothing is lost... There is no escape."[95] Therefore, Jim remains to the end preoccupied with the idea of justifying himself to himself, trying to lead a lonely struggle:

> The crowd, which had fallen apart behind Jim as soon as Doramin had raised his hand, rushed tumultuously forward after the shot. They say that the white man sent right and left at all those faces a proud and unflinching glance.... He passes away under a cloud, inscrutable at heart, forgotten, unforgiven, and excessively romantic. Not in the wildest days of his boyish visions could he

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95. Lord Jim, p.412.

> have seen the alluring shape of such an extraordinary success! For it may very well be that in the short moment of his last proud and unflinching glance, he had beheld the face of that opportunity which, like an Eastern bride, had come veiled to his side.
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> But we can see him, an obscure conqueror of fame, tearing himself out of the arms of a jealous love at the sign, at the call of his exalted egoism. He goes away from a living woman to celebrate his pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct. Is he satisfied - quite, now, I wonder? we ought to know. He is one of us - and have I not stood up once, like an evoked ghost, to answer for his eternal constancy?[96]

Nevertheless, to view Jim simply as a man in search of his identity in complete isolation from others would be a narrow, if not a distorted understanding of the whole novel. Though, paradoxically, Jim is trying to escape from his community to find his identity, he needs in one way or another, the support of others to sustain his concept of self. Even in Patusan, as we have seen, Jim finds his self-confidence only in the trust the natives offer him.

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96. Lord Jim, p.416.

After his "jump" from the Patna, he keeps insisting on finding at least one person who will understand him, which happens to be Marlow, the person who refers to him throughout the novel as "one of us". In one of their meetings, Jim confesses to Marlow: "I don't want to excuse myself, but I would like to explain. I would like somebody to understand - somebody - one person at least! You! Why not you?"[97] Jim's appeal to Marlow to understand him, and the latter's moral interest in his case, demonstrate the centrality and predominance of the concept of human solidarity in Lord Jim; the idea itself is suggested in the epigraph to this novel from Novalis: "It is certain any conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it." In other words, to live in community and communication with others is necessary to man. In the last part of the novel the concept of solidarity and the danger of fighting outside the ranks are again stressed in Marlow's "explanatory letter" to "the privileged man", recalling the latter's own statements:

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97. Lord Jim, p.81.

> You prophesied for him [Jim] the disaster of weariness and of disgust with acquired honour, with the self-appointed task, with the love sprung from pity and youth. You had said you knew so well 'that kind of thing,' its illusory satisfaction, its unavoidable deception. You said also - I call to mind - that 'giving your life up to them' (them meaning all mankind with skins brown, yellow, or black in colour) 'was like selling your soul to a brute.' You contended that 'that kind of thing' was only endurable and enduring when based on a firm conviction in the truth of ideas racially our own, in whose aim are established the order, the morality of an ethical progress.... In other words, you maintained that we must fight in the ranks or our lives don't count.[98]

Earlier in the novel, Marlow himself expressed the same opinion in these terms: "Woe to the stragglers! We exist only in so far as we hang together."[99]

This paradoxical and perilous situation of the individual, escaping from communal life to isolation while he still needs the moral support of other human beings, is also explored in Victory. Like him, Heyst is withdrawing from human community to live on an island, but he keeps betraying his incapacity to

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98. Lord Jim, pp.338-339.

99. Ibid., p.223.

survive without others. Through his experience with the woman he brings to his island, sacrificing herself in an attempt to save his life, Heyst realises the necessity of human love, which negates his father's philosophy:

> 'Look on - make no sound,' were the last words of the man who had spent his life in blowing blasts upon a terrible trumpet which filled heaven and earth with ruins, while mankind went on its way unheeding.[100]

The experience of both Jim and Heyst have shown again that the wilderness is not a complete refuge from the hostility of their civilisation as they have come to conceive of it.

Jim flees from his civilisation and the sea, evading the self-instruction they can provide, and takes up his abode in the jungle. The irony here lies in Jim coming to the conclusion that he would find a moral order - if only for himself - there. Unlike Almayer, Willems and even, to some degree at least, Kurtz, Jim goes not in search of material goods in the jungle, as has been mentioned before,

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100. Victory: An Island Tale, Vol.xv, p.175.

but moral good. Like the sea, the jungle can test a man, and he can win at least a partial victory there, if only of a very personal order.

Therefore, the moral success of Jim in search of a proving-ground for his idealised self in Patusan is justified only in terms of his own self-interest. Moreover, the unexpected vulnerability of his new empire in Patusan reveals the same irony Conrad has applied to the order and safety of the city, as we have seen through Almayer, Willems and Kurtz. In other words, Jim's vision of the wilderness as an escape from the hostility of his civilisation is undermined by the author's irony. Once again, Conrad can be seen closely regulating our perspective on the three images of sea, city and jungle, enhancing our relativistic concept of each.

Further to Conrad's manipulation of irony and multiple perspectives to make of the three images a composite image of great sophistication and density, and the way it comes to exist as a modulator of absolutes, the chiaroscuro technique used in Lord Jim also comes into play in this context. The image of

Jim is now and again significantly depicted in an interplay of light and darkness, neither clear nor obscure. Indeed, Jim lies in the intersection of these two opposites, underlining the moral significance of his dilemma and of his journey between civilisation and the wilderness. Marlow formulates his image of Jim in these words:

> I [Marlow] was made to look at the convention that lurks in all truth and on the essential sincerity of falsehood. He [Jim] appealed to all sides at once - to the side turned perpetually to the light of day, and to that side of us which, like the other hemisphere of the moon, exists stealthily in perpetual darkness, with only a fearful ashy light falling at times on the edge.[101]

Marlow's awareness of the coexistence of "the side turned perpetually to the light of day" and "that side of us which...exists stealthily in perpetual darkness" also reveals the author's strategy that sustains the tension between opposites in a certain balanced pattern. In other words, what Conrad tries to convey through the chiaroscuro technique is a relativistic vision of the universe, undermining any concept of absolutes,

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101. Lord Jim, p.93.

questioning the nature of reality and illusion, or "substance" and "shadow". Such questions are conveyed through Marlow's meditation on the sinister moonlight:

> He [Jim] spoke thus to me before his house on that evening I've mentioned - after we had watched the moon float away above the chasm between the hills like an ascending spirit out of a grave; its sheen descended, cold and pale, like the ghost of dead sunlight. There is something haunting in the light of the moon; it has all the dispassionateness of a disembodied soul, and something of its inconceivable mystery. It is to our sunshine, which - say what you like - is all we have to live by, what the echo is to the sound: misleading and confusing whether the note be mocking or sad. It robs all forms of matter - which, after all, is our domain - of their substance, and gives a sinister reality to shadows alone.[102]

This is a very characteristic piece of Conradian writing: the parentheses both assert the value of what follows and deprive that of any absolute value or reality. It intrudes an equivocation into the argument, so to speak. Marlow himself of course declares a partial support for the "sheltering conception of light and order which is our refuge" - which his civilisation offers - but his imaginative insight always tends to

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102. Lord Jim, pp.245-246.

realise itself in - metaphorically or literally - a sombre chiaroscuro, which illustrates so well his "balanced" vision of the universe. Marlow's view of Patusan is thus presented in a panorama where light and darkness intermingle, and where he significantly compares the jungle to the sea - that other composite emblem of both order and chaos - while at the same time hinting at the close intimacy between city and jungle, both being referred to as devourers of light:

> He [Jim] stood erect, the smouldering brier-wood in his clutch, with a smile on his lips and a sparkle in his boyish eyes. I [Marlow] sat on the stump of a tree at his feet, and below us stretched the land, the great expanse of the forests, sombre under the sunshine, rolling like a sea, with glints of winding rivers, the grey spots of villages, and here and there a clearing, like an islet of light amongst the dark waves of continuous tree-tops. A brooding gloom lay over this vast and monotonous landscape; the light fell on it as if into an abyss. The land devoured the sunshine; only far off, along the coast, the empty ocean, smooth and polished within the faint haze, seemed to rise up to the sky in a wall of steel.[103]

The degree of "victory" or self-realisation symbolised for the individual in any single one of the

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103. Lord Jim, pp.265-266.

three settings remains severely limited. In fact, man in his quest for his moral identity reveals that their symbolic meaning is only achieved when they co-exist in some sort of balance where the individual moral property or significance of the one is never wholly cancelled out by that of the others, however antithetical it might seem. The series of paradoxes manipulated in Lord Jim - a pattern created by the use of different points of view and irony - demonstrates the fluid nature of the reality symbolised by the three images, sea, city and jungle, and at the same time the exceptionally sensitive authorial regulation of their moral boundaries.

In novels like The Secret Agent and, to a considerable extent, Nostromo, the city, as a physical scene, becomes the main focus and is, as will be shown, depicted in the light of the images of sea and jungle, showing their significant interaction. Thus, as we are coming to see, the sea, city and jungle, as studied in the mode of their interrelationship, can be highly rewarding leading to a greater and more

precise understanding of Conrad's vision of universal chaos and man's struggle to create a certain moral order for his existence.

CHAPTER IV:

THE EVOLUTION OF A CITY

In the Malay and African tales Conrad relates the three elements, sea, city and jungle to each other although the city does not function as a major physical setting. In Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands, the main events of the story take place in the jungle, while the city usually remains as an outside, distant, but altogether acknowledged world. The European adventurer is trapped in the wilderness and never succeeds in returning to what he imagines as the ideal ordered world of the city.

Again in Heart of Darkness and "An Outpost of Progress", the city as a physical setting gets only limited - though significant - attention and the jungle remains the prevailing world for the story. In this second phase, too, the civilised European cannot disentangle himself from the wilderness, like the two white men in "An Outpost of Progress" and Kurtz in Heart of Darkness. It is, however, important to remind ourselves that in Heart of Darkness Marlow experiences life in the jungle and succeeds in returning to the world of the city, which appears in brief physical descriptions of Brussels and London.

In both Heart of Darkness and The Nigger of the "Narcissus" the city as a physical setting is brought more to the front, linked with the sea and the jungle. In "The Return" included in Tales of Unrest, Conrad makes the city the main physical scene, while the sea and jungle enter the story as images and metaphors to give larger implications to what a man experiences in urban life.

Later in novels like Nostromo and The Secret Agent the city, indeed becomes the major background for the stories. In most of his previous works Conrad usually places a town in the jungle or at the sea's edge. In Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands the white community of traders is concentrated in the small town of Samburan, which is also the point of intersection of sea and jungle and the meeting point of two different races, the Europeans and the natives.

In "An Outpost of Progress" and Heart of Darkness there are several outposts scattered in the African jungle, usually located at the edge of a river where ships call. These outposts are the settlements of

the Europeans, and where ivory is collected and shipped to Europe. In Lord Jim the village of Patusan, a native community surrounded by a tropical jungle, becomes Jim's last refuge. In Victory, too, close to Heyst's island lies a small town of European traders and sailors.

By and large, in these early works about the jungle and sea in Eastern countries and Central Africa, Conrad uses the town or the outpost as a small representation of the city in the civilised world, but it never grows into a city proper. In these works, the city, then, could be said to be related to the jungle and sea either as a simple image outside the wilderness or through some of the features of that wilderness being present in the town or the outpost. In his last major novels, the writer turns to the city as the main physical setting to explore his themes. Nevertheless, the other two elements, sea and jungle, remain significant as frames of reference amplifying the implications of the city itself. In novels where the city predominates, the jungle and sea continue to function strongly as metaphors. The presence

of the three elements, perpetually side by side throughout Conrad's stories, demonstrates the importance and significance of their relationship.

Examined in the light of major works about the jungle and sea on the one hand, and novels about the city on the other, Nostromo can be regarded as a bridge between two "groups" of tales. First of all, Nostromo is, in many ways, similar to the Malay and African stories and major novels about the sea. Like the outposts in the early works, Sulaco functions as an intermediary spot between civilisation and wilderness. In its early days this town is indeed still dwarfed and overshadowed by the wild physical environment, both of sea and land. So, the city as treated in Nostromo is still attached to the literal jungle, like the small towns in the early works.

Nostromo is also similar to the previous works as far as the constitution of the population of Sulaco is concerned. Like the small communities in towns and outposts, in Nostromo Conrad deals with isolated and outcast individuals in a foreign country.

Depicting foreign characters in an unfamiliar environment, the writer dramatises the effect of the wilderness on human beings and also highlights the clash between civilisation and primitive life. Very significantly, most of the characters in Nostromo are foreigners from different nations settling in the town of Sulaco. The native population is mainly centred in the countryside, and most of those who later emigrate to the city settle in villages near the San Tomé mine. Moreover, the mixture of characters from different nations, like the community of sailors in The Nigger of the "Narcissus", gives universal meanings to Conrad's themes.

However, Nostromo also differs from the early works, exploring further aspects of the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle. If in Heart of Darkness and The Nigger of the "Narcissus" Conrad brings the three elements closer to each other despite their geographical distance, in Nostromo he creates an imaginary area where sea, city and jungle are physically linked. More importantly, it is in Nostromo, as opposed to the previous works, that the

novelist seems to focus on the process of a small town or outpost growing into a real city in direct contact with the wilderness and the sea.

While Conrad leaves the small towns in the Malay and African stories at their early stage, he carries on with the transformation of Sulaco into a modern city, compared by the end to large European cities like London. In Nostromo, as a matter of fact, we witness the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle in their complete physical features. The exploration of this complete interrelationship in this novel and its implications contributes to and, in a way, clarifies the meaning of the interrelationship as treated in works where jungle or sea predominates, or where the city is the main setting. In this sense, Nostromo, by virtue of uniting the three elements as physical settings, reveals the fundamental aspects of their interaction explored generally by implication in stories about the jungle, sea and city. By showing how a small town grows into a big city in direct contact with the other two elements, the author tends to give a condensed and complete

picture of their relationship.

In Nostromo, the three elements are used as physical scenes and neither could be said to be the most predominant one, for all of them equally constitute the background of the story as literal and metaphorical settings. To start with, then, how are the three elements defined, and in what way do they relate to each other? This leads to an important question vis-à-vis their interrelationship explicitly raised in Nostromo, namely, how do they affect each other?

In order to show how the town of Sulaco relates to its surroundings, and how the images interpenetrate to constitute the complete pattern of the author's vision, it is necessary to trace a rough topography of the area which serves as the larger setting of the novel. Sulaco is a small town limited by the Placid Gulf on the one hand, and the desert plain and the rocky mountains on the other. In the past it "had never been commercially anything more important than a coasting port with a fairly large local trade in

ox-hides and indigo."[1] Between the town of Sulaco and the mountains lies a vast desert plain that "passes into the opal mystery of great distances overhung by dry haze."[2] Throughout the calm waters of the Golfo Placido are scattered a few islands; the major ones are: the Great Isabel, the Little Isabel and Hermosa. The peninsula of Azuera is another important small area of wilderness, a kind of wasteland:

> a wild chaos of sharp rocks and stony levels cut about by vertical ravines.... Utterly waterless, for the rainfall runs off at once on all sides into the sea, it has not soil enough - it is said - to grow a single blade of grass, as if it were blighted by a curse.[3]

Sulaco as a small but growing town is also located close to the sea, the image of which is represented in this novel by the dark Placid Gulf. Towering over the whole province are the high and rocky mountains of Higuerota. Because of their chaotic image and the crudeness of their landscape, the gulf, the desert plain, the mountains and the desert islands all constitute the wilderness or the world of the jungle

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1. Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard, Vol.VIII,p.3.
2. Ibid., p.8.
3. Ibid, p.4.

that surrounds the town of Sulaco.

Besides its constituting the Placid Gulf, which contributes to the implications of the wilderness, the element of the sea is present in the novel in several other ways. The sea-image associated with the gulf communicates a mood of something that exists not only in the fictitious country of Costaguana but in the whole universe. The darkness the gulf generates, indeed conveys blindness, absence of reality and the imminence of unknowable dark forces that undermine the world, whether constructed like the city or natural like the gulf itself and the rocky mountains.

The importance of the element of the sea is suggested in the subtitle of the novel: "A Tale of the Seaboard". Apart from the gulf, the sea enters the story through several characters associated with it. For example, Nostromo, the main character, is a sailor who was "the bos'n of an Italian ship."[4] Giorgio Viola, too, is an old seaman: and it is through him that we are given the bright side of the

4. Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard, Vol.VIII,p.13.

sea. Praising it, Giorgio declares:

> The priests talk of consecrated ground! Bah! All the earth made by God is holy; but the sea, which knows nothing of kings and priests and tyrants, is the holiest of all ... The spirit of liberty is upon the waters.[5]

Regarding Mitchell, F.R. Leavis remarks that "Captain Mitchell represents the Merchant Service. He is sure and stable to the point of stupidity."[6] In short, the sea is, in one way or another, related to the city and the wilderness in Nostromo, through the prevailing image of the Golfo Placido and some of the important characters.

The way the three settings affect each other also elucidates their interrelationship and implications. Given the importance of the town as a strategic point in the midst of the whole province, it becomes as it grows larger, a point at which the sea and the wilderness meet. What happens on the different social and economic levels in the town is inevitably and necessarily related to the sea and the rocky mountains,

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5. Nostromo: A Tale of the Seaboard, Vol.VIII,p.341.
6. F.R. Leavis, The Great Tradition (Penguin, 1977), p.223.

successively through the harbour and the silver mine. The town of Sulaco, therefore, remains in constant relationship with the sea and the wild hinterland. In other words, the evolution of Sulaco into a modern city in all essential respects - a large population, mechanisation and social and economic organisation - is due to its location close to the sea and the existence of the silver mine in the neighbouring mountains.

The natural environment of Sulaco affects the town both negatively and positively; similarly, the town has a double-edged influence on its environment. These ambivalent influences of the city and the wilderness on each other are demonstrated through the stages of the growth of the small town into a large urban centre. It is thanks to the existence of the silver mine in Costaguana that this country is no longer cut off from the outside world, the world of civilisation. Before the introduction of civilisation in this area, it was nothing but "a remote and savage district."[7]

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7. Nostromo, p.65.

In the past its wild surroundings, the mountains and the Golfo Placido, served the province as protective walls against the intrusion of foreign invaders:

> Sulaco had found an inviolable sanctuary from the temptations of a trading world in the solemn hush of the deep Golfo Placido as if within an enormous semi-circular and unroofed temple open to the ocean, with its walls of lofty mountains hung with the mourning draperies of cloud.[8]

These natural walls both protect the province of Sulaco and shut it off from the world of civilisation, and it is when agents from this world succeed in penetrating Sulaco and crossing the gulf that civilisation reaches and begins to transform the savage area. However, this breaking of the wall between Sulaco and the civilised world is also described as violation of the relative peace of the province. The "development" of the provincial town is directly related to the silver mine in the wild mountains. In this context, the sea is again related to the other two settings.

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8. Nostromo, p.3.

The sea in Nostromo has a similar function to that it has in the early works: that is, it offers hostile forces access to the wild area from the outside world. It is by the sea that the province of Sulaco is invaded by adventurers seeking the treasure in the wilderness; and the American gringos are said to be sailors. Later on, Europeans arrive in Sulaco by ships to exploit the silver mine. On the other hand, the sea also functions as a window open on the civilised world, bringing a kind of progress to the area, as summed up in the transformation of Sulaco into another modern city.

As the city grows it affects the natural wilderness and turns it into a sort of mechanised wasteland:

> Those of us whom business or curiosity took to Sulaco in these years before the first advent of the railway can remember the steadying effect of the San Tomé mine upon the life of that remote province.[9]

This suggests that before industrialisation is introduced in Sulaco there was relative peace. Change transfigures all, however, "with cable cars running

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9. Nostromo, p.95.

along the streets of the Constitution, and carriage roads far into the country."[10] The new technological equipment also affects the natural image of Sulaco, the provincial town: "The material apparatus of perfected civilization which obliterates the individuality of old towns under the stereotyped conveniences of modern life."[11] On the social level, too, there was a kind of peace before the advent of industrialisation: "Nobody had ever heard of labour troubles then. The Cargadores of the port formed, indeed, an unruly brotherhood of all sorts of scum, with a patron saint of their own."[12] In this sense, the growth of Sulaco into a city distorts the landscape of its environment and brings social chaos in the community. In brief, the city affects its surroundings negatively.

The image of the wilderness as depicted in Nostromo,too, is ambivalent: it is destructive yet promises material profit to those who seek it. The

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10. Nostromo, p.95.
11. Ibid., p.96.
12. Ibid., p.95.

wilderness (the mountains, the plain and the islands), like the forest in the Malay and African stories, is both repellent and alluring because of its precious metal surrounded by danger. The silver that plays a great part in the lives of the characters and in the story as a whole is - significantly - buried in the savage gorge of the mountain, like ivory in the inscrutable jungle in Heart of Darkness and "An Outpost of Progress", or the gold mine up the river in An Outcast of the Islands and Almayer's Folly. The wilderness as used by Conrad in his works generally tends to suggest, among other things, both danger and the temptation of wealth.

In Nostromo the gold treasure said to be buried in the peninsula of Azuera, and at the same time "forbidden" and unattainable, is very significant to the implications of the story as a whole, and it elucidates the interrelationship between city and wilderness. The legend of the American gringos, introduced by the author in the first chapter of the novel, is indeed a point of departure for the understanding of the story. The legend, which may be

considered as a kind of myth in the context of Nostromo, prefigures what happens to the individuals concerned directly or indirectly with the search for silver in the mountains. As the story draws to its close, the main characters have already become like the gringos - slaves of the treasure in the wilderness. Very pointedly, even the silver extracted from the San Tomé mine and collected in the city of Sulaco is taken away to the Great Isabel, a savage and desert area in the gulf, and buried there.

The earlier explorers of Costaguana are attracted by its wealth, but as the legend suggests, the search for this wealth in the wilderness is frustrating and takes possession of those who embark upon it. In this respect, Charles Gould is much like Kurtz, who seems to have gone to Central Africa to introduce civilisation and ends up by turning his back on this civilisation and Europe in favour of his pursuit of ivory and his own incohate, primeval instincts. Both characters can be said to have been bewitched by the treasure in the wild environment while rejecting that human civilisation which may offer some kind of comfort

and order in life. In Nostromo the wilderness indeed becomes an obsession with Charles Gould and gradually takes possession of him in the process of his quest for material profits.

The city itself as a whole comes to be bound up with, and possessed by, tne mystery of the treasure. In fact, the whole community of Sulaco is directly or indirectly affected by the silver collected in the city and the mine itself. Because of it the city of Sulaco has become the main target of opposing factions, converging from the land (Montero) and the sea (Sotillo). The removal of the silver from the harbour to the Great Isabel is thus seen to affect not only individuals like Charles Gould, but the whole city.

The characters' adventures in the wilderness have a deeper significance in Conrad's writing than the simple fact of their exploitation of its wealth. The real idea for Conrad is much more profound to his vision of the relationship between civilisation and primitive, chaotic life. The tension between the two elements has also moral implications: equipped with

his belief in the sort of order he has achieved in the world of the city, man sets out to impose it on primitive land. In Nostromo Conrad reveals a paradoxical aspect of the interrelationship between civilisation and wilderness: "civilised" man attempts to impose order on the natural, chaotic environment, and at the same time the latter proves to be a challenging force to the former.

In this novel Conrad expands further the theme that has been generally implied in his early works, namely the attempt of the city to enter the life of the jungle, to impose on it the kind of order urban man has achieved in the civilised world. The city and its European makers try to establish order in the chaotic province of Sulaco in two ways: to subdue the wild environment by using industrial equipment from the civilised world, and politically, economically and socially by taming the wild rebels and natives.

The increase of the population in Sulaco and the settlement of villages for miners (Village I,V.II, V.III) suggest the attempt of the city to conquer the wilderness and introduce some sort of order, as implied

in the numbering of villages, in the naturally chaotic province. The gathering of workers in small villages is also a way to tame the wild natives and outcast workers from other parts of the world, and above all to "convert" them into urban inhabitants. This fact is also identical to Father Corbelan's efforts to convert savage Indios in the forests to Christianity,

NOTE. It is regretted that, because of a typographical error, pagination proceeds from 306 to 308. There is therefore no 307.

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The introduction of the trappings of a modern industrial society brings a kind of progress and improvement to the savage hinterland. The outward changes such as the railway line, the telegraph cable and carriage roads are attempts to conquer the natural chaos and "civilise" the natives. This positive influence of civilisation is also reflected in the steps made to master the difficult Golfo Placido - attempts represented by the enlargement of the O.S.N. Company and the increased number of ships, and later by the establishment of a lighthouse on the Great Isabel. The equivocal influence of civilisation on the province is apparent in the irony implied in the

word "lighthouse".

The embodiment of sophisticated urban life, which seems to stand apart from the wilderness then comes close to it, apparently not only for its wealth but also to "civilise" it, is the American millionnaire Holroyd. Symbolically, Holroyd seems to stand in a superior position to the wilderness and believes that his mission is to spread civilisation by introducing the product of a modern city into the underdeveloped province of Sulaco.

Through Holroyd, Conrad suggests a subtle relationship between the wilderness and a highly sophisticated Western city, San Francisco. Very significantly too, Holroyd's decisions and plans for the silver mine in Costaguana are formulated in his apartments on the seventh floor of his headquarters in San Francisco, where he delivers judgement in a magisterial manner which brooks no dissent. It is as if the savage province depends on him:

> 'This mine can wait; it has been shut up before, as you know. You must understand that under no circumstances will we consent to throw good money after bad.'

> Thus the great personage had spoken then, in his own private office, in a great city where other men (very considerable in the eyes of a vain populace) waited with alacrity upon a wave of his hand.[13]

Holroyd is also confident that the world he represents can impose its values on the underdeveloped regions of the world:

> We in this country know just about enough to keep indoors when it rains ... Time itself has got to wait on the greatest country in the whole of God's Universe. We shall be giving the word for everything: industry, trade, law, journalism, art, politics, and religion, from Cape Horn clear over to Smith's Sound, and beyond, too, if anything worth taking hold of turns up at the North Pole.[14]

The idea behind such characters as Holroyd is to transplant the urban way of life with all that implies in Conradian terms to the wilderness in order to control it and tame it. Holroyd's building in San Francisco is certainly described as a headquarters controlling the world outside the city or civilisation:

> In the great Holroyd building (an enormous pile of iron, glass, and

13. Nostromo, p.79.

14. Ibid., p.77.

> blocks of stone at the corner of two streets, cobwebbed aloft by the radiation of telegraph wires) the heads of principal departments exchanged humorous glances, which meant that they were not let into the secrets of the San Tomé business.[15]

The irony implied in the brief description within brackets, suggesting an image of shapelessness and disorder, may reveal the close intimacy between city and jungle, and a hint that such a sophisticated urban building is nothing but a heap of gathered "patches", a mere artefact like the city itself. The author's ironic treatment of Holroyd, reveals the paradox that characterises the introduction of civilisation in the wilderness and the contradictions that undermine the values of the city in general.

Holroyd, a typical urban capitalist, has, as I have already pointed out, a religious belief in his mission to spread the city's cultural and economic achievements to "dark " regions of the world. But, his sense of religion is contaminated by his material views. The juxtaposition of two different religions

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15. Nostromo, pp.80-81.

in the character of Holroyd is heavily ironic: the spiritual religion (Christianity) contending with the religion of steel and iron. The "humanitarian" and "spiritual" mission of the "Steel and Silver King" indeed depends on the material profit he makes in Sulaco:

> And as long as the treasure flowed north, without a break, that utter sentimentalist, Holroyd, would not drop his idea of introducing, not only justice, industry, peace, to the benighted continents but also that pet dream of his of a purer form of Christianity.[16]

Mrs. Gould, too, expresses an ironical view of Holroyd's spiritualism pointing out:

> Mr. Holroyd's sense of religion ... was shocked and disgusted at the tawdriness of dressed-up saints in the cathedral - the worship, he called it, of wood and tinsel. But it seemed to me that he looked upon his own God as a sort of influential partner, who gets his share of profits in the endowment of churches.[17]

The truth about Holroyd's attitude to religion, as the engineer-in-chief explains to Dr. Monygham, is that "he's not a missionary, but the San Tomé mine

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16. Nostromo, p.240.
17. Ibid., p.71.

holds just that for him."[18] Moreover, the complacency of civilisation, as embodied in Holroyd, is undermined by the writer showing the strong challenge of the wilderness to the intrusion of industrialisation and urban conditions.

The transformation the city of Sulaco undergoes raises an important question that casts more light on the close interrelationship between city and wilderness. This question is whether industrial and economic improvement brings order and peace to the wilderness, or whether it brings disorder with it. The image of the city as a symbol of civilisation and the apogee of apparent order is still one of Conrad's main themes in the interrelationship of sea, city and jungle. Urban life is introduced in the natural, chaotic environment, and the "paradise of snakes" indeed turned into an inhabitable area.

Nevertheless, however great the efforts of civilisation to bring order and material progress, the city has always been threatened by confusion. The material prosperity the mine brings to the whole region is not

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18. Nostromo, p.317.

necessarily accompanied by peace and justice as Charles Gould believes. The silver mine, which is the main source of wealth, turns into a negative force. Mrs. Gould expresses this change thus:

> The fate of the San Tomé mine was lying heavy upon her heart. It was a long time now since she had begun to fear it. It had been an idea. She had watched it with misgivings turning into a fetish, and now the fetish had grown into a monstrous and crushing weight.[19]

Decoud, too, has a similar insight into the consequences of material progress on Charles Gould:

> Don Carlos Gould will have enough to do to save his mine, with its organization and its people; this 'Imperium in Imperio,' this wealth-producing thing, to which his sentimentalism attaches a strange idea of justice. He holds to it as some men hold to the idea of love or revenge... A passion that is not like the passions we know, we men of another blood. But it is as dangerous as any of ours.[20]

The dangerous growth of the mine affects not only individuals like Mr. Gould and his wife but the whole land:

> There was something inherent in the necessities of successful action which carried with it the moral

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19. Nostromo, p.221.
20. Ibid., pp.244-245.

> degradation of the idea. She [Mrs. Gould] saw the San Tomé mountain hanging over the Campo, over the whole land, feared, hated, wealthy; more soulless than any tyrant, more pitiless and autocratic than the worst Government; ready to crush innumerable lives in the expansion of its greatness.[21]

In this quotation it is also suggested that the material progress of the mine is associated with the wilderness of the mountain and political barbarism and anarchy. Indeed, the treasure in the wilderness brings about political and social anarchy, which becomes the expression of the community of the new city. The presence of foreign occupiers creates more tension and a more complex form of political turbulance than had existed before. In The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad, Eloise Knapp Hay pointed out:

> In Nostromo we have Conrad's most comprehensive and vivid portrayal of that jungle - and one of misguided effort to clear it. Notably, the only foreigners who may be said to be in Costaguana for political purposes are the American Holroyd, the Marxist photographer , and the Englishman of the railway, who illustrates as much as Gould does the new imperialism of capital investment,

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21. Nostromo, p.521.

> through its refusal to jeopardize itself by political commitment, is inviting not only anarchy and war but a rabid xenophobia.[22]

Concerning this transformation of Sulaco into a new form of wilderness from the political point of view, Claire Rosenfield also expresses an opinion similar to that of Knapp Hay:

> This 'paradise of snakes' is a prophecy of the future, of the constant threat of corruption over the Conradian universe, of the evil influence of the traditional in the political affairs of the area.[23]

The change brought to the silver mine and its entourage sums up the paradox of introducing civilisation in the wilderness. The savage landscape of the mine is cleared out, but at the same time it is turned into a kind of wasteland as the fountain is dried up during the clearing of the wilderness:

> The waterfall existed no longer. The tree-ferns that had luxuriated in its spray had dried around the dried-up pool, and the high ravine was only a big trench half filled up with the refuse of excavations and tailings ... Only the memory of the waterfall, with its amazing fernery, like a hanging garden above the

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22. Eloise Knapp Hay, The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad (The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p.212.
23. Claire Rosenfield, Paradise of Snakes (The University of Chicago Press, 1970),pp.68-69.

> rocks of the gorge, was preserved in Mrs. Gould's water-colour sketch .... Mrs. Gould had seen it all from the beginning: the clearing of the wilderness, the making of the road, the cutting of new paths up the cliff face to San Tomé.[24]

The use of modern equipment, therefore, both clears out the jungle and disfigures the natural image of the environment. The main purpose of this transformation of the natural wilderness is, indeed, to get to the silver mine.

The extraction of the silver brings more material development to the region and in particular contributes to the expansion and modernisation of the town of Sulaco. However, the material progress of the area does not necessarily ensure order and peace in the community. Hence, Charles Gould's speculation about giving priority to material improvement in order to bring justice, order and peace to the province is not justified in the context of the novel as a whole. The end of the story confirms the irony that undermines Gould's philosophy. This irony can be summed up in the phrase describing the final achievements

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24. Nostromo, p.106.

and prosperity of Sulaco, the Occidental Republic: "a terrible success."

The source of material interests and the seeming agent of stability and security becomes the mainspring of disorder and savagery. Dr. Monygham observes to Mrs. Gould that

> the time approaches when all that the Gould Concession stands for shall weigh as heavily upon the people as the barbarism, cruelty, and misrule of a few years back.[25]

As the last part of the novel demonstrates, the material improvement of the Republic is inevitably accompanied by moral failure, and in this way Sulaco, despite its industrialisation and social organisation, is turned into a modern wasteland or another form of wilderness. Dr. Leavis expresses this paradox of Sulaco growing rich, but at the same time breeding dark powers, in this way:

> The ironical end of the book shows a Sulaco in which order and ideals have triumphed, Progress forges ahead, and the all-powerful Concession has become the focus of hate for workers and the oppressed and a symbol of crushing

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25. Nostromo, p.511.

> materialism for idealists and defenders of the spirit.[26]

Besides the paradox in the attempt of civilisation to impose itself on the savage environment, Conrad also shows that the wilderness challenges strongly the penetration of urban life. The growth of the city and the modernisation it stands for is always resisted by the hostile environment, which remains at best indifferent to the new changes taking place in the city and the propagation of technology and industrialisation. In his "Author's Note" to Nostromo Conrad underlines the indifference of the natural scene to the struggle of characters: "I had the first vision of a twilight country which was to become the province of Sulaco, with its high shadowy Sierra and its misty Campo for mute witnesses of events flowing from the passions of men short-sighted in good and evil."

The resistance of the wilderness to the intrusion of all that is represented by the city is also suggested in the legend of the gringos in Azuera. The failure of the American gringos and the fate of the foreigners

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26. The Great Tradition, p.219.

in Sulaco may suggest, in general terms, how the city or civilisation introduced in the province from the outside world fails to impose itself on it. Throughout this novel Conrad presents the savage surroundings as a challenging force to the invasion of the city and the latter's fragility and inability to subdue the wilderness. This is indicated in the image of the towering and unshakable mountains of Higuerota, the opacity and impenetrability of the Golfo Placido and the mystery that surrounds the peninsula of Azuera.

The power of the landscape, like the natural setting in The Nigger of the "Narcissus" and Heart of Darkness, menaces and belittles the human community and their activities in the province of Sulaco. A picture of the rebels on the desert plain presents them as tiny creatures playing a futile game:

> Giorgio saw one fall, rider and horse disappearing as if they had galloped into a chasm, and the movements of the animated scene were like the passages of a violent game played upon the plain by dwarfs mounted and on foot, yelling with tiny throats, under the mountain that seemed a colossal embodiment of silence.[27]

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27. Nostromo, pp.26-27.

The Golfo Placido, too, manifests indifference and generates a mass of darkness that seems to wrap the whole area and obliterate it: "[Decoud] had the strangest sensation of his soul having just returned into his body from the circumambient darkness in which land, sea, sky, the mountains, and the rocks were as if they had not been."[28] Significantly, silence is stressed in the description of both the mountain and the gulf. The "deathlike stillness"[29] of the latter again suggests the indifference and resistance of the wilderness to the city. Later on as Decoud shoots himself and rolls overboard into the sea "[the] glittering surface [of the Placid Gulf] remained untroubled by the fall of his body."[30] Even by the end of the story, the gulf is still a place of darkness as Nostromo is still able to cross it unseen to steal a few silver ingots from the Great Isabel.

The location itself of the city in the midst of the wild environment composed of mountains, desert

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28. Nostromo, p.262.
29. Ibid., p.279.
30. Ibid., p.501.

plain, gulf and islands, shows not only how these elements are physically related, as has already been indicated, but especially how the environmental wilderness defies the penetration of the city products. In spite of the introduction of "the material apparatus of perfected civilisation", the real jungle remains a challenging force as has been argued by a number of critics.

Both Jacques Berthoud and Juliet MacLauchlan agree on the overwhelming power of the natural surroundings in Nostromo:

> Nature is felt as a largely untamed presence, often dwarfing the activities of man.[31]

> Human efforts are puny, dwarfed by the vastness of the natural scene.[32]

The challenging power of the wilderness is also conveyed through the persistence of rebellions and revolutions in the province. Jacques Berthoud compares the function of revolutions in Nostromo to the natural elements in The Nigger of the "Narcissus" and Heart of Darkness in these words: "The 'storm' of revolution

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31. Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase, p.95.
32. Juliet MacLauchlan, Conrad: Nostromo (Edward Arnold Publishers Ltd., 1969), p.50.

works in the same way as the more literal tempest of the Narcissus or the forest of Heart of Darkness."[33] The bandit Hernandez and his men are a good example of the defiance of any organised army in the country. The integrity of Hernandez and his friends' loyalty to him is a significant ironical comment on the army of the Government itself.

The challenge of the jungle to civilisation and the former's overpowering presence on the fabricated scene of Sulaco reveal the way in which Conrad expresses his irony vis-à-vis the complacency of the world of the city in relation to the wilderness, and the subtle influence of the latter on the former. In this view, it may be said that the world of civilisation is apparently defeated by the wilderness. Related to this idea are two themes central to the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle and their implications: the withdrawal of the main characters into the wilderness and the growth of the city in a sort of jungle.

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33. Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase, p.99.

The tendency to withdraw from the city to the wilderness is well reflected in the character of Charles Gould. It actually appears early in his life even before he comes to settle in Sulaco, when he is still studying in Europe to become a mining engineer. Gould is fascinated by abandoned quarries and mines. He develops a kind of emotional attachment to them as to human beings. This anticipates his later relationship with the San Tomé mine and his abandoning of his life in the city for the sake of the rocky mountains. This early attachment to quarries, in other words, foreshadows the gradual perversion of his emotions, which divert from human beings to objects and in particular to the silver mine:

> Left after he was twenty to his own guidance (except for the severe injunction not to return to Costaguana), he had pursued his studies in Belgium and France with the idea of qualifying for a mining engineer. But this scientific aspect of his labours remained vague and imperfect in his mind. Mines had acquired for him a dramatic interest. He studied their peculiarities from a personal point of view, too, as one would study the varied characters of men. He visited them as one goes with curiosity to call upon remarkable persons. He

> visited mines in Germany, in Spain, in Cornwall. Abandoned workings had for him strong fascination. Their desolation appealed to him like the sight of human misery, whose causes are varied and profound.[34]

Further to Gould's early experience with the wilderness of abandoned mines and quarries and his attraction to them, his father's letters from Costaguana curiously establish a kind of relationship between him and the silver mine in Sulaco. In one of his letters, his father calls the mine "that cavern of thieves, intriguers, and brigands."[35] Despite his father's warnings against the dangers of the San Tomé mine, at the age of twenty Charles Gould had already "fallen under the spell of the San Tomé mine. But it was another form of enchantment, more suitable to his youth, into whose magic formula there entered hope, vigour, and self-confidence, instead of weary indignation and despair [of his father]."[36]

Thus, through Gould's initial attachment to wild and deserted places, the writer prepares us for his

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34. Nostromo, p.59.
35. Ibid., p.57.
36. Ibid., p.59.

possession by the mine in the jungle-grown mountain, which becomes his final dwelling, leaving behind the human comfort in the city of Sulaco. This rejection of the city by man and the choice of the wilderness, as seen through Gould, have moral implications regarding his relationship with his wife. His dedication to the mine acquires a spiritual value as it comes to stand for everything to him. As his wife tries to appeal to his feelings, he tells her, defending the mine:

> 'But there are facts. The worth of the mine - as a mine - is beyond doubt.... But its safety, its continued existence as enterprise, giving a return to men - to strangers, comparative strangers - who invest money in it, is left altogether in my hands.'[37]

Significantly, Charles Gould often leaves the city and his wife to spend a long time in the mountain. Towards the end of the novel he belongs more to the mine than to his wife. Even his contribution in bringing modernisation to Sulaco is useful to him only in so far as it serves as a protection to the Gould Concession and preserves its value as a source of

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37. Nostromo, p.72.

material interests. When the city is besieged by opposing forces, Gould's and the other Europeans' main preoccupation is how to save the rest of the silver still in the mine. Thus, they turn their backs on the city and focus on the silver mine.

At a critical moment, Gould is even ready to blow up the mine instead of sacrificing it in exchange for the city's security. During the chaotic situation in the city, the other elements - the sea and the wilderness -, too, enter into play. Decoud and Nostromo retreat to the Great Isabel to save the silver. Dr. Monygham and Mitchell, like Gould, are concerned with the mine in the mountain. In other words, although the city is the main theatre it is not the only area of conflict, and thus the link between the three elements remains constant in all circumstances.

Nostromo's withdrawal into the wilderness is, like Gould's, gradual. After his night-journey to the Great Isabel with Decoud, Nostromo returns to the city while the former remains there for ever. Although Nostromo keeps travelling between the city and

the island after he has decided to keep the silver for himself, his final trip is back to Sulaco, a fact that gives the latter a positive note in relation to the wilderness. However, Nostromo's destruction and mastery by the wilderness is inevitable and he returns to the city already bearing a fatal wound while trying to steal more silver from the island.

More significantly, Nostromo returns to Mrs. Gould, who embodies the positive aspects of the city. He confesses to her the cause of his destruction and tries to tell her where the silver is concealed. In the light of this confession, then, his final trip from the wilderness to the city suggests an affirmation of the latter as a human community, setting the two elements slightly apart from one another. Nostromo's story describes his movement from the city to the wilderness and reveals some important aspects of the interrelationship between the two elements. His life can be roughly divided into two parts: the first one within the city of Sulaco, and the second outside it in deserted places.

While living in the city, Nostromo is totally committed to its activities and acts as an agent of order and peace. He restrains the thieves and troublemakers in the town and helps the Europeans to save Ribiera in order to secure their interests. In this respect Captain Mitchell heaps praise upon him, remarking:

> But without him Señor Ribiera would have been a dead man. This Nostromo, sir, a man absolutely above reproach, became the terror of all the thieves in the town. We were infested, infested, overrun, sir, here at that time by ladrones and matreros, thieves and murderers from the whole province.[38]

As a member of this society, what concerns him is his name and reputation. Then the first step towards the wilderness occurs the night he escapes with the silver to the Great Isabel, and in particular, after his decision to keep the secret of the treasure for himself. He first crosses the dark and insecure gulf and reaches the deserted island where he and Decoud bury the silver in a ravine, a kind of rehearsal of the gringo legend.

After swimming back to the mainland, Nostromo

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38. Nostromo, p.13.

symbolically sleeps in "a lair of grass"[39] like Decoud himself. As he wakes up the first sight his eyes fall upon is a vulture, now his only witness. These two details indicate Nostromo's retreat, both metaphorical and literal, into the wilderness and isolation. Even in his beliefs he is making a step backward as he becomes more and more superstitious.

Nostromo's journey out of the city, nevertheless, gives him the advantage of looking upon his previous life from an attitude of detachment and self-awareness. He actually realises that he has been used as an instument by the Europeans of Sulaco, hence the prophetic words of Teresa Viola come true. Moreover, as Sulaco grows into a larger and more complex city, Nostromo can no longer cope with it or enjoy his public fame. He begins to have doubts about everything and keeps wondering whether he is alive or dead. This moral degradation Nostromo suddenly undergoes reveals how he has begun to abandon his previous life in the city for the new life in the wilderness. On his awakening he realises that:

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39. Nostromo, p.411.

> It was more like the end of things. The necessity of living concealed somehow, for God knows how long, which assailed him on his return to consciousness, made everything that had gone before for years appear vain and foolish, like a flattering dream come suddenly to an end.[40]

Concerning his identity, there occurs a shift from the name given to him by society to one based on the material value of the silver, which also confirms his gradual withdrawal from the city into the world of the jungle. In the new circumstances, Nostromo, so to speak, has exchanged the moral "treasure", which was always rather uncertain being based a little uneasily on reputation or public identity, for material treasure. His identity as an individual belonging to a community of men begins to vanish the moment he embarks upon his desperate adventure to conceal the silver in the Great Isabel. In Paradise of Snakes Claire Rosenfield formulates Nostromo's change in these words:

> After his symbolic rebirth, he cannot bridge the gap between the two worlds - the logical simple world he has created for himself and the dark world of the

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40. Nostromo, p.414.

> unknown. This new life begins the moment he awakens on the mainland, for he must live both concealed himself and concealing the hiding place of the silver... As Nostromo's secrets grow, so his isolation from the community grows. The town for which he undertook the quest is forgotten.[41]

Symptomatically, Nostromo, after his return from the Great Isabel, looks upon the city as a world closed to him, similar to Hervey's impression following his glimpse of the stream of darkness beneath the city. The new vision of the town is very suggestive:

> And behind the pale long front of the Custom House, there appeared the extent of the town like a grove of thick timber on the plain with a gateway in front, and the cupolas, towers, and miradors rising above the trees, all dark, as if surrendered already to the night. The thought that it was no longer open to him to ride through the streets, recognized by everyone ... made it appear to him as a town that has no existence.[42]

The image of the city as Nostromo sees it is like a forest, suggesting danger and hostility; hence his sense of being alienated from it. The city where he

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41. Paradise of Snakes, pp.68-69.

42. Nostromo, pp.414-415.

used to enjoy publicity and to live in safety has now reverted to a hostile wilderness. He then turns away from the city to the actual wilderness where, in his present situation, he finds security in darkness and concealment. Losing all confidence in the city and its people, he resolves to take refuge in dark and deserted places like the Great Isabel.

Decoud's last view of the city, too, is much similar to Nostromo's as described in the above quotation. As he leaves the city to join Nostromo in the harbour, Decoud is confronted with a black picture, which anticipates his expulsion from Sulaco. In a letter to his sister he describes this picture of the city:

> The street was dark, the houses shut up, and I walked out of the town in the night. Not a single street-lamp had been lit for two days, and the archway of the gate was only a mass of darkness in the vague form of a tower.[43]

The city Decoud leaves for the wilderness presents an image resembling the Golfo Placido and the uninhabited islands, and in this way, the two elements are

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43. Nostromo, p.246.

brought into an intimate relationship.

In the second part of his life, Nostromo significantly adheres to the secret societies of workers, who are preparing to overthrow the new, established order in the city. He becomes a member of potentially anarchist groups, which is compatible with his gradual withdrawal from city to wilderness, from the ordered side of the city to its dark and secret side. This latter is indeed the point of intersection between the city as a whole and the wilderness. Furthermore, Nostromo's absence from the city increases as he becomes obsessed with the lighter, presented to him by Captain Mitchell and Mrs Gould. He stealthily sails during the night to the Great Isabel to steal silver ingots and disappears for several days at a time to sell them in far away ports.

The city, then, loses all the previous significance it had for Nostromo. Instead, he frequently visits the desert island, abandoning the city; and although it is not long before he returns to it, he is no longer the same man. This is to say that

Nostromo is generally giving up life in the human community or the city in favour of the wilderness. Nostromo's moral change reveals the difference between life in the city as an organised human community and life in the wilderness or isolation. This kind of withdrawal from the city to the wilderness of the individual is further dramatised in Decoud's experience.

Decoud is a typical representative of the city: he is the journalist of Sulaco, "an idle boulevardier", "he imagined himself Parisian to the tips of his fingers" and "the adopted child of Western Europe."[44] When he is in the city and in the midst of a human community, he is sceptical and scornful, believing in nothing but the power of intelligence. But once he leaves the city and confronts the indifference of the gulf and the complete absence of continuity it discloses to him, neither his scepticism nor his intelligence is able to protect him: "Intellectually self-confident, he suffered from being deprived of the

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44. Nostromo, pp.152-153, p.156.

only weapon he could use with effect. No intelligence could penetrate the darkness of the Placid Gulf."[45]

What Decoud glimpses during his stay on the island exposed to the dark mass of waters is the sense of an immense continuity without meaning and fear of the void, - an image of a universe that does not accommodate itself to man. Decoud's first day on the Great Isabel is, indeed, a new experience, deprived of the familiar conditions whereby he survives:

> And he had not heard a sound, either, all day but that one now of his own muttering voice. It had been a day of absolute silence - the first he had known in his life.[46]

On his tenth day on the island surrounded by the gulf, Decoud finds himself in a sort of limbo:

> the solitude appeared like a great void, and the silence of the gulf like a tense, thin cord to which he hung suspended by both hands, without fear, without surprise, without any sort of emotion whatever.[47]

It is this glimpse of the absence of meaning in the universe that actually drives him to death. The

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45. Nostromo, p.275.

46. Ibid., p.496.

47. Ibid., p.498.

presence of annihilating powers on the island and in the gulf brings the city and the wilderness into a position of two opposing elements, thus recalling the opposition between the "habitual" and the "unusual", or the city and jungle expressed in "An Outpost of Progress".

In the city Decoud at least finds objects to direct his scepticism against, which makes his survival possible despite his attitude of detachment. In other words, his philosophy needs society to reject it. Hence his partial commitment to Sulaco's life, for to be sceptical he has to be in society. In short, in society Decoud is sure of his individuality, while in the complete emptiness on the deserted island nothing can reassure his sense of identity or existence:

> Solitude from mere outward condition of existence becomes very swiftly a state of soul in which the affectations of irony and scepticism have no place. It takes possession of the mind, and drives forth the thought into the exile of utter unbelief. After three days of waiting for the sight of some human face, Decoud caught himself entertaining a doubt of his individuality.[48]

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48. Nostromo, p.497.

Decoud's tragedy reveals, by implication, the positive side of life in the city as opposed to isolation in the wilderness - an aspect of the inter-relationship between city and jungle Conrad emphasises throughout his works and explicitly stated in "An Outpost of Progress":

> They [Kayerts and Carlier] were two perfectly insignificant and incapable individuals, whose existence is only rendered possible through the high organization of civilized crowds. Few men realize that their life, the very essence of their character, their capabilities and their audacities, are only the expression of their belief in the safety of their surroundings. The courage, the composure, the confidence; the emotions and principles; every great and every insignificant thought belongs not to the individual but to the crowd: to the crowd that believes blindly in the irresistible force of its institutions and of its morals, in the power of its police and of its opinion.[49]

Decoud's experience on the Great Isabel also recalls Heyst's in Victory. The relationship between Sulaco and the island on the one hand, and the small town of the white community and Heyst's island on the other, reveals the advantages of living in society and the danger of isolation in the wilderness.

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

However, Decoud differs from Heyst in that he adopts a radical attitude, which he generalises in terms of the whole universe. Thus, to Decoud both the city and the wilderness become confused, wearing a black and pessimistic image. Unlike him, Heyst at least keeps visiting the small town in the neighbourhood. Decoud dramatically reaches a drastic conclusion, and the city of Sulaco does not seem to him a possible escape from the dark powers the island and the Placid Gulf disclose to him; rather, he thinks of his life among the people in Sulaco as a nightmare:

> He resolved not to give himself up to these people in Sulaco, who had beset him, unreal and terrible, like jibbering and obscene spectres. He saw himself struggling feebly in their midst, and Antonia, gigantic and lovely like an allegorical statue, looking on with scornful eyes at his weakness.[50]

In short, the tragedies of both Heyst and Decoud confirm by implication the importance of the community and the civilised appearance of the city as a fabricated

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50. Nostromo, pp.497-498.

setting constructed by man to protect himself against the evils of the wilderness. Yet, the relationship between sea, city and jungle becomes more complicated in Conrad's works as the city itself usually tends to turn into a form of wilderness.

The theme of withdrawal from the city, a socially organised community, into the wilderness, an area of savage nature and isolation, seen through three major characters, Charles Gould, Nostromo and Decoud, expresses the growth of the city into a jungle and the extent to which the latter is still an overwhelming force. The focus of the main characters on the hostile, desert environment may also suggest their dissatisfaction and disillusionment with urban and industrialised life which, in spite of its material progress, does not ensure a permanent and solid stability and order.

Indeed, Decoud is, as I have already indicated, disappointed with both the city and the wilderness, concluding that there is no possibility for order in the whole universe. Charles Gould, on the other hand, remains until the end fascinated by the wealth buried

in the gorge of the mountain. The city is frustrating in the case of Nostromo, too. His identity as a product of his performance in Sulaco proves to him to be false. After his journey to the Great Isabel he becomes aware of the corrupting conditions of the city and its people.

This sense of dissatisfaction with urban life - its betrayal of the individual and its lack of stability and security - exhibits something in common between the city and the wilderness: the lack of a solid ground that offers order and peace. Hervey's experience in the city of London ("The Return") has already demonstrated the permanent existence of the jungle within the sophisticated environment of the city and the intimate interrelationship between the two settings.

In Heart of Darkness, too, we have noted that Conrad explores through brief details of London and Brussels how far urban life still preserves some aspects of the jungle. Later, in The Secret Agent the writer contents himself with the city as a sufficient physical scene to explore his themes,

which are not different from those expressed against the background of the natural jungle, the desert islands or the sea.

In Nostromo, even at its final stage of modernisation the city of Sulaco maintains some features of the wilderness that surrounds it and which it tries to subdue during its stages of growth, from the earlier adventurers in search of gold until the introduction of technological equipment and urban institutions and conditions in the form of banks, big stores and clubs. Even when Sulaco grows larger and more sophisticated, it becomes identical to the Golfo Placido, engendering new forces of chaos and disorder. Thus, the natural chaos and darkness that characterise the wild surroundings, both sea and countryside, find their equivalents in the urban area of Sulaco.

In this view, as we are coming to see, Conrad's use of the city does not stand for an absolute symbol of order and a world completely different from the jungle, for the city itself generates dark powers similar to the ones in the wilderness. In Nostromo,

by virtue of dealing with the growth of a town in the midst of the wilderness into a sort of modern city, Conrad seems to demonstrate that as the city grows and develops signs and symptoms of modern industrial progress, what grows in its shadows is the jungle. There are, so to speak, other significant changes that happen along with the material progress: "Material changes swept along in the train of material interests. And other changes more subtle, outwardly unmarked, affected the minds and hearts of the workers."[51]

So, the jungle is not totally eradicated from the city: inevitable, chaotic forces persist in undermining urban life and prevent any peace or order in spite of its social organisation and the economic improvement it brings. Paradoxically enough, as the economy of the province thrives, secret forces are taking shape to overthrow the newly-established system. The discontented working-class is the new form of chaos brought into being by the development

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51. Nostromo, p.504.

of urban conditions. This bleak prospect of the city is conveyed by Dr. Monygham in a conversation with Mrs. Gould:

> There is no peace and no rest in the development of material interests. They have their law, and their justice. But it is founded on expediency, and is inhuman; it is without rectitude, without the continuity and the force that can be found only in a moral principle.[52]

In short, despite the material progress of Sulaco, the change hinted at towards the end of the novel suggests that there is, indeed, no permanent order or stability, and that the community of the so-called regenerated city is in a constant state of flux.

Thus, the image of the city as portrayed in Nostromo at its final stage of "development" is much similar to the city in The Secret Agent, where London generates its own darkness and anarchic social forces. On the social and political level, Sulaco is truthfully turned into a form of jungle. From this point of view, the city is regressing to its earlier stages: as a theatre of rebellions and

52. Nostromo, p.511.

revolutions. D. Van Ghent sums up the kind of wilderness that accompanies industrialisation in these words:

> [Sulaco] a frontier world, where a sleepy, pastoral Campo has been invaded by industrialization, bringing with it all the complex energies, confusion or racial histories and attitudes, and moral anxieties that industrial revolution introduces to a pastoral colonial people.[53]

This reversion of the city from an ostensible agent of order into a source of chaos is itself reflected in the change Nostromo undergoes, as we have already seen. Order and security, supposed to be brought by the city, now ironically flow from the wilderness:

> For the San Tomé mine was to become an institution, a rallying point for everything in the province that needed order and stability to live. Security seemed to flow upon this land from the mountain-gorge.[54]

The source of material interests and the apparent agent of stability and security also becomes the mainspring of disorder and savagery. Dr. Monygham

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53. Joseph Conrad: A Collection of Criticism, edited by F.R. Karl (Mc Craw-Hill, Inc., 1975), p.48.
54. Nostromo, p.110.

remarks to Mrs. Gould: "The time approaches when all that the Gould Concession stands for shall weigh as heavily upon the people as the barbarism, cruelty, and misrule of a few years back."[55]

The growth of the city into a new wilderness is particularly manifested in the impact of the new changes on the human conscience of the individuals. Like the moral shock of Hervey in the city of London, as he becomes aware that the whole city is turning into a desert island wherein the individual confronts dark powers alone, the main characters in Nostromo ultimately undergo the same feeling.

The sense of complete isolation and lack of communication have the same intensity on the individual's conscience as the physical isolation Heyst suffers from in Victory, or Decoud on the Great Isabel. Moreover, the desolation of the individual in the city of Sulaco is much like that of the white man's experience in the Malay or African jungle. The impact of the wilderness, literal or metaphorical, is one of the

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55. Nostromo, p.511.

main preoccupations of Conrad in works with different settings. Conrad's irony lies in bringing the city into an intimate relationship with the wilderness, despite its constructed environment and progress of civilisation.

Conrad's vision of the city is very similar to the one conveyed by other modern writers, whose attitude towards it is that of a wasteland. Examples of such writers are James Joyce, in particular his depiction of Dublin in Ulysses and other works; D.H. Lawrence, whose main preoccupation is the impact of industrialisation on the human conscience; and T.S. Eliot in his well-known poem The Wasteland. The image of the city as portrayed by these writers is indeed a modern wasteland where human values and emotions are corrupted; and generally the individual is presented as a solitary figure in a populous city. In Nostromo, too, the city gradually acquires the features of the wilderness, especially as far as human relations and the individual's conscience are concerned.

Perhaps the most touching example of the human tragedy which results from the transformation of the city into a wilderness and its effect on the human feelings is the character of Mrs. Gould. Conrad dramatises her fate in the light of the irony he conveys through Charles Gould's complacent belief that order and justice can be achieved only if material interests are successful. As Sulaco grows materially successful something more precious, the "human treasure", is lost in the process. Mrs. Gould is the character associated with this "human treasure":

> Dr. Monygham had grown older, with his head steel-grey and the unchanged expression of his face, living on the inexhaustible treasure of his devotion drawn upon in the secret of his heart like a store of unlawful wealth.[56]

As the Gould Concession prospers, Mrs. Gould gradually loses her husband's affection. From the beginning Mrs. Gould is indeed suspicious about the prosperity of the silver mine, while her main concern is for human beings in themselves. Symbolically,

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56. Nostromo, p.504.

the Goulds have no children, which indicates the wasteland in which human relations end. Concerning the effect of the silver mine on the Goulds' life, D. Van Ghent pointed out: "The San Tomé mine is to make her [Mrs. Gould's] married life barren."[57]

The impact of materialism on human feelings is also associated with the expansion of industrialisation in the area. Mr. Fleishman remarks that "the people stand in danger of that primary evil of industrialization: dehumanization."[58] The silver and the material progress it brings to Sulaco indeed turn the people into machines sapping their affections and emotions. Mrs. Gould fails to detach her husband from that gorge in the mountain, where he is being swallowed up. And thus she remains alone in the city where her home, like Hervey's in "The Return", is turned into an empty dwelling:

> Had anybody asked her of what she was thinking, alone in the garden of the Casa, with her husband at the mine and the house closed to the street like an empty dwelling, her frankness would have had to evade the question.[59]

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58. Conrad's Politics, p.73.
59. Nostromo, p.520.

The same theme of materialism that comes between human beings is also suggested in the relationship between Nostromo and Viola's younger daughter, and Decoud and Antonia Avellanos. On the whole, most of the main characters in Nostromo are destroyed morally or physically, or both, because of their association with the silver. At the end the city of Sulaco becomes a dwelling of forlorn and lonely individuals.

In Nostromo, as we have seen, the three elements, sea, city and jungle, are related to each other, not only geographically but also thematically. What Conrad explores through the growth of Sulaco in contact with its hostile environment is the reduction of a city to the condition of a jungle. In this novel, like the other works, the city and the wilderness do overlap and tend to become fused when the former acquires characteristics of the latter.

The reduction of the city to a form of wilderness reveals, amongst other things, Conrad's suspicion of the growth of sophisticated and mechanised life in urban areas. The writer suggests that the more

complex urban life becomes, the more the city regresses to a primitive level, which brings it close to the chaotic image of the natural jungle and sea. However, this interaction between the three major settings is always finely regulated and therefore they remain distinct despite the aspects they share. For example, while Decoud adopts a pessimistic view of the whole universe after his experience on the Great Isabel, Conrad's attitude towards the relationship between city and wilderness is, to some extent, like Marlow's in Heart of Darkness. Although Conrad seems to insist on their close intimacy, he at the same time suggests that the achievements of the city, as distinct from the wilderness, can offer a possibility for man's survival, a modus vivendi against the chaos inherent in the universe. While suspecting some aspects of civilisation, such as industrialisation and materialism and the negative impact of urban life on the human conscience, Conrad does not deny the utility of a fabricated artefact - the city - to control the chaotic elements in the natural jungle.

By insisting on the theme of the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle, Conrad also expresses a strong scepticism about the complacency of the city and its claim to an absolute achievement whereby man would be able to subdue the natural chaos and convert it into order: hence the pervading presence of the wilderness behind the artifice of civilisation. However, in spite of the negative aspects of the city, at least it serves as a protective artefact against the destructive forces in the wilderness. What Conrad seems to convey through the interrelationship between the three elements and their implications is that the city, as a symbol of human progress and civilisation, is indeed a step toward imposing order of some sort on the natural chaos; but at the same time it remains far from being an absolute instrument with which to master the wilderness. Thus Conrad's regulating technique never shows the elements of the interrelationship in question in complete, morally exclusive, contrast or in full permeability.

In his later major novels, Conrad turns to the city as the main mise-en-scène for the story, like The Secret Agent. Limiting his tale to the city as the main physical setting, he finds it a sufficient ground for the themes and that vision of human nature which he has explored in novels where the sea and the jungle predominate. The human strife and frustrations he conveys through lonely characters on an island, in a forest or on board a ship cut off from the land, also form his main preoccupation in dealing with man in an urban context.

As far as the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle is concerned Nostromo, then,could be considered, broadly speaking, as a bridge between works about the sea and jungle on the one hand, and works with a purely urban background on the other. This is suggested in the topography Conrad creates in this novel, where he gathers in one single area the three elements in their physical form. This and the process of the small town growing into a real urban centre and its ambiguous concomitants give Nostromo a particular individuality among Conrad's works.

CHAPTER V:

THE VISION OF THE CITY

Conrad started writing The Secret Agent just after finishing Nostromo and The Mirror of the Sea. As far as the study of the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle and their implications in Conrad's works are concerned, it is important to take notice of this fact. On the one hand, Nostromo deals with an imaginary province in South America, where the town of Sulaco is depicted as growing into a city in contact with the sea and the wilderness; on the other, The Mirror of the Sea is perhaps Conrad's best record of his experiences and memories of the sea and sea-life. In his "Author's Note" to The Secret Agent he refers to the book's immediate precursors, hinting at the influence of their settings and meanings on his imagination while writing The Secret Agent. He declares:

> The inception of The Secret Agent followed immediately on a two years' period of intense absorption in the task of writing that remote novel, Nostromo, with its far off Latin-American atmosphere; and the profoundly personal Mirror of the Sea. The first an intense creative effort on what I suppose will always remain

> my largest canvas, the second an unreserved attempt to unveil for a moment the profounder intimacies of the sea and the formative influences of nearly half my life-time.[1]

In the works before Nostromo the writer seems to be relying mainly on the settings of sea and jungle to explore his themes. Apart from the short story "The Return" and Nostromo, the city in the works so far discussed does not come into picture quite as much as the other elements, the sea and the jungle. In the Malay tales, the city is mainly presented as a "house of cards", an image that suggests its fragility and fictional character. In the African stories it is mentioned, though briefly, in itself through two European cities, Brussels and London.

Throughout these works the city is at times set against and apart from the jungle and the sea, and at times it shares something of their metaphorical life. This makes their interrelationship more pertinent and intricate. It is notable that whenever Conrad deals with the sea or the jungle as a

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1. The Secret Agent, Vol.X, "Author's Note", pp.viii-ix.

physical setting, the idea of the city is never left out, often interweaving with the other two elements despite their apparent distinctions. We may conclude from the study of these works in terms of the interrelationship in question that the city is a complementary setting.

In the works before Nostromo, Conrad does not seem to be interested in the city as a major physical setting in itself, hence its partial eclipse by sea and jungle. However, this is not to say that its significance is negligible in comparison with the sea and the jungle. The frequent appearance of the city along with the two other elements confirms the importance of its function in the totality of the novel or short story. What is more, as Conrad's literary career progresses, it is worth noting that the notion of the city becomes gradually more central until it comes to compete with the other elements as a major physical setting in its own right.

Reference to the city in itself in the works that precede Nostromo, as has already been mentioned, tends to be brief but certainly not unimportant to the

story and its themes. With Nostromo, however, the city takes on a heightened interest as a setting alongside sea and wilderness, acquiring more significance in relation to these two others. In Nostromo, a novel dealing with a far-off country in South America, the city of Sulaco increases in size and comes to play a part almost equal to the sea and the wilderness as a setting. From Almayer's Folly to Nostromo the city is never really disentangled from the other two settings. Instead, it has always gained its significance from its juxtaposition with the other images, but while sharing a few aspects with them it preserves certain characteristics that set it apart from them.

It is in The Secret Agent that Conrad seems to be finally ready to make the city a setting in itself, detaching the story from the physical scenes of sea and jungle. Literally speaking, the author confines his story to the large urban area of London, and thus brings the city to the foreground, while its image has, significantly, been more of a leitmotif in the previous works (with the exception of Nostromo and

"The Return"). In The Secret Agent the characters do not move between the city and jungle or sea as in Heart of Darkness, for example; instead, all the events of the story take place within the city. Moreover, the story does not focus on one main character but deals more generally with urban man.

The story in The Secret Agent is based on the attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory in 1894 and the conflict between the Metropolitan police and agents of anarchy and terrorism. All this is explored against a background of the city, which tends to rival in importance the activities of individual characters. In his "Author's Note" Conrad insists more on his interest in the presentation of his vision of the city and man's experience in urban conditions than on his concern with anarchism as the subject of this novel.

The main subject of The Secret Agent is indeed the urban setting itself and the human response to it. Here, Conrad finally turns to the city as the main background for a major novel, confident in it as a setting to convey his themes without resorting to the

adjuncts of the physical scenes of sea and jungle. This is how he introduces his vision of the city that becomes the centre of the novel:

> It was at first for me a mental change, disturbing a quieted-down imagination, in which strange forms, sharp in outline but imperfectly apprehended, appeared and claimed attention as crystals will do by their bizarre and unexpected shapes. One fell to musing before the phenomenon - even of the past: of South America, a continent of crude sunshine and brutal revolutions, of the sea, the vast expanse of salt waters, the mirror of heaven's frowns and smiles, the reflector of the world's light. Then the vision of an enormous town presented itself, of a monstrous town more populous than some continents and in its man-made might as if indifferent to heaven's frowns and smiles; a cruel devourer of the world's light. There was room enough there to place any story, depth enough there for any passion, variety enough there for any setting, darkness enough to bury five millions of lives.[2]

The critics' views of The Secret Agent naturally vary according to their critical approaches. While the setting for some is not a central argument to the novel, certain thematic issues are political,

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2. The Secret Agent, Vol. X, "Author's Note", pp.xi - xii.

symbolic and psychological. From the political point of view, Irving Howe, for example, supports the view that anarchism is the central theme in The Secret Agent. He agrees with Thomas Mann who regards this novel as an expression of Conrad's Anglophilism and in which he finds "the whole conflict between the British and the Russian political ideology." Irving Howe concludes that "The Secret Agent is the work of a man who looks upon the political spectacle - as, a little too often, the whole of life - from a great and chilling distance, and who needs to keep that distance in order to survive."[3]

Robert W. Stallman in "Time and The Secret Agent" adopts a symbolical approach to the novel, insisting on the prevalence of circles and their implications. His thesis is that "Verloc's mission, in the intended bombing of Greenwich Observatory, is to destroy Time-Now, Universal Time, or life itself."[4] Avrom Fleishman has a similar approach: his main argument in "The Symbolic World of The Secret Agent" is that

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3. The Secret Agent, edited by Ian Watt, Casebook Series (The MacMillan Press Ltd., 1973), pp.142-143.
4. Joseph Conrad: A Collection of Criticism, p.61.

characters, events and scene are representatives of larger realities, conveying a metaphorical world-view. Among those who interpret the novel from a psychological point of view is Thomas Moser. He sees The Secret Agent through Freudian views, underlining the sexual overtones in the novel.

Many other critics, however, have emphasized the central importance of the urban scene in this novel, pointing out how the city becomes Conrad's main preoccupation and the focal point of The Secret Agent. Although Claire Rosenfield finds the Jungian theory very appropriate to her study of The Secret Agent, insisting on "the fact of historical change and the continuity of human experience" and "the recurrence of past motifs in the author's works"[5], she makes a great deal of the meaning of the topography of the city comparing it to what she calls "the confusions of classical labyrinths."[6] Drawing attention to the centrality of the city in the novel she goes on:

> To deny that the city is, first of all, a particular vision of urban

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5. Paradise of Snakes, p.9.
6. Ibid., p.91.

> reality, is a forceful and detailed description of the author's 'solitary and nocturnal walks all over London', is to ignore one of the levels of the novel's appeal.[7]

In Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile, Mr. Leo Gurko examines The Secret Agent in a chapter he calls "Dark Vision of Megalopolis", where he is much concerned with the city as the main focus of the novel, arguing that the theme of anarchism is only secondary:

> the anarchist theme supplies the novel with its physical scaffolding. But no more. Underneath lies the heart of the book, the dominant idea that determines its movement and is responsible in the first place for the selection of anarchism as the sheath of the plot. That heart is London, and the idea stemming from it is the life of man in the great city.[8]

In any approach to The Secret Agent it is indeed essential to insist on the central place of the city and its implications as these critics contend. However, although there is no doubt about the city being the heart of the novel, it is also very significant to note how the writer does not abandon the other two

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7. Paradise of Snakes, p.90.
8. Joseph Conrad: Giant in Exile, p.190.

elements, sea and jungle, in their function as metaphors. The focus of my approach to The Secret Agent is mainly on the interaction of the city with the images of sea and jungle and on the extent to which it acquires its full meaning only in their light.

The fact that the writer keeps constantly referring, in one way or another, to the three elements side by side is highly revealing about their interrelationship and the flexibility of their definitions and categories. In other words, the persistent link between the three settings, explicitly or implicitly, in a novel that apparently deals primarily with urban life, is relevant and indeed fundamental to the understanding of Conrad's themes and their connection with the settings. Regarding the interpenetration of the sea and jungle with the city in The Secret Agent, F.R. Karl makes a significant remark, pointing out that:

> The exotic settings of Almayer's Folly, Lord Jim and Nostromo have been subtly transformed into the city settings of London, and in their ramifications these city images are

> even more mysteriously suggestive than the jungle backgrounds of the Malayan novels.[9]

In The Secret Agent the three elements are used together but on a larger scale than in "The Return", for example. To focus on the city alone without taking into consideration how it relates to the other images and the implications behind their inter-relationship would be an incomplete view, not only of the themes of the story but also of the writer's vision of the city in general. In his "Author's Note" to The Secret Agent there are plenty of hints at the necessity of considering the city in relation to the other two settings. The city of London, is indeed, seen by Conrad as a setting larger than itself, a setting that encompasses other settings. The London of The Secret Agent is "a monstrous town more populous than some continents ... There was room enough there to place any story, depth enough there for any passion, variety enough there for any setting."[10]

On the whole, the city is always seen by Conrad

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9. F.R. Karl, A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad (Thames & Hudson, 1960), p.191.
10. The Secret Agent, "Author's Note", p.xii.

as a large setting embracing other settings. This is suggested in the characteristics he applies to it, namely of monstrosity and immensity as he has already done in Heart of Darkness.

To begin with, the element of the sea and its function in The Secret Agent is no less significant than that of the jungle and its derivatives in an overall understanding of the central image of the city. In effect, in the "Author's Note" to this novel, Conrad draws our attention to the importance of the sea in the context of a story about the city. He contrasts the sea with the city: the first, we recall, is the "reflector of the world's light" and the second the "devourer of the world's light."[11] This contrast suggests the writer's concept of the sea as a less sinister and depressing setting than the city.

In Heart of Darkness, as we have seen, the element of the sea is generally contrasted with the jungle and the two cities of London and Brussels. Marlow's steamer provides him with a kind of protection

11. The Secret Agent, "Author's Note", p.xii.

against the demoralising scene of the jungle. Also, the book on seamanship Marlow discovers in the African forest is an indicator of the attempts civilised man makes to subdue chaos to order. Throughout Chance Conrad generally reveals a sharp contrast between city and sea: the former is "dark" and "restless", and the "shore gang" are inefficient and referred to as "human shapes as if sprung from the dark ground"[12]; while "the exacting life of the sea has this advantage over the life of the earth, that its claims are simple and cannot be evaded."[13] By the end of The Nigger of the "Narcissus", too, the sea, in comparison with the black shore, appears cleaner and more promising than the city. Once the crew of the "Narcissus" leave the world of the sea, they are swamped in the darkness of the urban scene.

However, the sea itself assumes ambivalent implications in Conrad's works as I have already indicated in the last section of Chapter II. In short, the sea comes at times to stand for chaos and embodies the

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12. Chance, Vol.XIV, p.346, p.4, p.26.
13. Ibid., p.32.

dark powers that threaten the relatively ordered community of the ship. It is this side of the sea that Conrad emphasises more in The Secret Agent, and which overlaps with the sinister image of the city. In this novel, as it were, the negative aspect of the sea serves better the writer's purpose than its positive one, though he contrasts it with the city in the "Author's Note". More importantly, the allusions to the sea and its images, which become efficient vehicles in The Secret Agent, reveal a kind of continuity between works that record Conrad's experiences at sea and his approach to urban life.

Whenever the writer refers to the sea in his novels it usually stands for something larger than itself; it is "the mistress of [the seaman's] existence and as inscrutable as Destiny"[14], as he puts it in Heart of Darkness. In The Secret Agent, the city takes up this function and is significantly compared to the sea throughout the novel. The whole city as presented in this novel is indeed engulfed in what might be called a sea-ambience, which is supplied

14. Heart of Darkness, p.48.

by images of fog, rain and mist, a sinister aspect of the sea.

In The Secret Agent characters are generally menaced by a sense of drowning in a mass of dark waters that surrounds their buildings: "And still the Assistant Commissioner did not turn away from the darkness outside, as vast as a sea."[15] Looking outside, Mr. Verloc sums up the description of the urban environment conveyed through images that explicitly point to the sea:

> He got up, unfolding himself to his full height, and with a heaviness of step remarkable in so slender a man, moved across the room to the window. The panes streamed with rain, and the short street he looked down into lay wet and empty, as if swept clear suddenly by a great flood. It was a very trying day, choked in raw fog to begin with, and now drowned in cold rain. The flickering, blurred flames of gas-lamps seemed to be dissolving in a watery atmosphere. And the lofty pretensions of a mankind oppressed by the miserable indignities of the weather appeared as a colossal and hopeless vanity deserving of scorn, wonder, and compassion.[16]

As the last sentence in this quotation indicates, the

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15. The Secret Agent, p.102.
16. Ibid., p.100.

urban scene clearly relates to the jungle in its indifference and inscrutability, reducing man into a hopeless creature. And this is a street described in terms that curiously recall the impassibility of the mountain of Higuerota in Nostromo: "In its breadth, emptiness, and extent it had the majesty of inorganic nature, of matter that never dies."[17]

One of the most significant images that recurs throughout The Secret Agent and enhances the sinister aspect of the sea and city is the image of the abyss (the abyss also meaning a deep mass of water). The inhabitants of the city are often presented as though walking on the edge of a damp abyss, and the streets are generally depicted as muddy ditches: "The Assistant Commissioner walked along a short and narrow street like a wet, muddy trench."[18] On several occasions the street is also equated with an "aquarium": "His [the Assistant Commissioner's] descent into the street was like the descent into a slimy aquarium from which the water had been run off.

17. The Secret Agent, p.14.
18. Ibid., p.135.

A murky, gloomy dampness enveloped him."[19] In his thesis, Mr. Michael Haltrecht develops this image of the abyss in The Secret Agent by pointing at the frequency of the imagery of "descending, slipping, stumbling or falling ... of sinking, drowning, near drowning, or dissolving in water ... of bodies of murky or dark water, of deep or low places, or abysses."[20]

At one point, Ossipon talking to Yundt about the future plan of the anarchists and the economical systems, recommends "a clean sweep and a clear start for a new conception of life", then he suddenly feels as though he "had been mentally swimming in deep waters, [and] seized upon the last word [detonator] as if it were a saving plank."[21] The fear of drowning is always associated with the image of the river, here characterised by dreariness, sullenness and sinister-ness, usually applied to the jungle and city.

Michaelis's prison, for example, lies "in the

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19. The Secret Agent, p.147.
20. Michael Haltrecht, "Characterization, Symbol, and Theme in Conrad's Nostromo and The Secret Agent" (PhD.thesis, University Microfilm, A Xerox Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1970),p.167.
21. The Secret Agent, p.73.

sepulchral silence of the great blind pile of bricks near a river, sinister and ugly like a colossal mortuary for the socially drowned."[22] Towards the end of the story, as Ossipon abandons Winnie to her fate, he passes by a river that recalls the bleak image of the jungle: "The river, a sinister marvel of still shadows and flowing gleams mingling below in a black silence, arrested [Ossipon's] attention ."[23] After Winnie Verloc has murdered her husband, "the river was her present destination"[24]; and she eventually commits suicide by drowning.

Thus the theme of drowning and the image of a large sea engulfing the whole city can be said to be encapsulated in the fate of Mrs. Verloc, whose story, Conrad declares in his "Author's Note", is the core of The Secret Agent: "This book is that story, reduced to manageable proportions, its whole course suggested and centered round the absurd cruelty of the Greenwich Park explosion."[25] Concerning Mrs.

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22. The Secret Agent, p.44.
23. Ibid., p.300.
24. Ibid., p.270.
25. Ibid., p.xii.

Verloc's suicide, Mr. C.B. Cox goes even further when he generalises Winnie's fate to the whole city:

> Mrs. Verloc's suicide by drowning becomes a kind of consummation to which the whole of London seems inevitably moving ... When she actually jumps into the sea, she is only entering a condition of nothingness into which London itself is hopelessly sinking, and which the novel has already imaginatively realized for us.[26]

Alongside the image of the river, the sea and city are also interrelated through the references to the images of the stream, boating and the ship. Winnie Verloc, recalling her first boy-friend and comparing him with Mr. Verloc, speaks of them as two boat-owners sailing different streams:

> Affectionate and jolly, he [the butcher boy] was a fascinating companion for a voyage down the sparkling stream of life; only his boat was very small. There was room in it for a girl-partner at the oar, but no accommodation for passengers. He was allowed to drift away from the threshold of the Belgravian mansion while Winnie averted her tearful eyes ... There was no sparkle of any kind on the lazy stream of his [Mr. Verloc's] life. It flowed through

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26. C.B. Cox, "Joseph Conrad's 'The Secret Agent': The Irresponsible Piano", A Critical Quarterly, Vol.5, n.3 (Autumn, 1973), p.267.

> secret places. But his barque seemed a roomy craft, and his taciturn magnanimity accepted as a matter of course the presence of passengers.[27]

On another occasion in the story, Mr. Verloc's house becomes identical to a decaying ship from which the "crew" are trying to escape. Winnie's mother is the first person to run away from this "hulk" on the verge of sinking, to take refuge in the alm-house: "Mr. Verloc was not a well-read person; his range of allusive phrases was limited, but there was a peculiar aptness in circumstances which made him think of rats leaving a doomed ship."[28]

So much does the sea come into this urban picture that even the inhabitants themselves are presented as fishes. Walking in the wet and gloomy street, the Assistant Commissioner evokes the image of a sea creature; he "might have been but one more of the queer foreign fish that can be seen of an evening about there flitting round the dark corners."[29] The anarchists, too, are compared to fish, as Toodles tells

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27. The Secret Agent, p.243.
28. Ibid., p.178.
29. Ibid., p.147.

the Assistant Commissioner: "he's [Sir Ethelred] sitting all alone in his room thinking of all the fishes of the sea."[30] Mr. Verloc, the secret agent, is considered as "a sprat ... thrown away sometimes to catch a whale."[31]

The element of the sea, then enters The Secret Agent in several ways and details; and in this way it becomes a means of describing the city, enlarging it and contributing to Conrad's vision of it. The city, therefore, being in great part expressed through the many layered significance of the sea, comes to coexist with the latter's implications and meanings.

The vision Conrad has of the city in The Secret Agent seems to engross the element of the sea, along with all the images which derive from it and which contribute to its full meaning. That is to say, the sea in this novel is portrayed as a function of the city rather than materially present in itself. Hence it is that the writer, in order to dramatise the urban environment, employs and emphasises the chaotic

30. The Secret Agent, p.215.

31. Ibid., p.216.

and dangerous side of the sea as a parallel to the prevalent and all-encompassing atmosphere of the city. In other words, the images borrowed from the sea and transferred to the context of the city are assimilated in such a way that they become vehicles serving the portrayal of the writer's concept of urban life.

Apart from this aspect of the sea, as providing imagery relevant to the city, rather than as a concrete presence, the fact that sea metaphors are frequently used to support his vision of the city reveals something more than an urge to convey his concept of urban life. In fact, the extent to which city and sea are significantly related to each other and the importance of their interrelationship as a central concern of Conrad's works, from Almayer's Folly to The Secret Agent, is belied in this. Ultimately, although the sea is used more as a metaphor than a setting or material presence, its value in terms of the interrelationship in question is far from peripheral; the city does depend on it to establish its wider ramifications.

The image of the city, as presented in this novel interrelates not only with the image of the sea, but also with that of the jungle, this last element perhaps contributing more to the underlying sinister ambience of the city. In the previous stories, the element of the sea has always been linked, on one level or another, to the jungle. This link is very often established on a more literal level, with the sea entering the world of the jungle through the minds of the main characters, who generally do have experiences connected with the sea, rather than the link being established in terms of common characteristics (such as the constant potential chaos of both settings). However, at times the jungle does indeed become akin to the sea, as has been discussed in the Malay and African tales.

Ultimately, the jungle and sea share a similar rhetorical function in that they both stand for a moral ground on which to test the individual's integrity and identity. Furthermore, the sea, in its negative capacity, becomes like the forest, the outward romantic mystery of which attracts, but

simultaneously discloses confusion and danger. In The Secret Agent, the focus is on this concealed area, shared by sea and jungle, in order to portray the dominating image of the urban environment.

In Mimesis and Metaphor, Mr. Donald C. Yelton explores the use of both images of the sea and jungle in The Secret Agent and shows their contribution to Conrad's depiction of the urban scene. He points out:

> The more immediately thematic images may be classified into two composite series, in one or two instances impinging upon each other through some particularity of reference: a series of images referring to disease, narcosis, and death; a series principally directed at evoking the atmosphere of the city, referring to forest or jungle, to some variously defined abyss or damp darkness.[32]

Then he goes on to argue about the significant implications the reference to the jungle as a metaphor supplies to the meaning of the city:

> Like the landscape and other visual imagery of Heart of Darkness, it [the metaphoric imagery] contributes to the 'sinister resonance' Conrad strove for, composing in

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32. Donald C. Yelton, Mimesis and Metaphor (Mouton and Co., Publishers, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1967), p.184.

> fact into an apocalyptic image of the city hardly to be matched since Dickens.[33]

Besides the significance of the link between the sea on the one hand, and the jungle and city on the other, the reference to the jungle, desert and wilderness in connection with the city is very frequent in The Secret Agent. Like the sea, the jungle functions as a metaphor in this novel to amplify Conrad's vision of the city. The close interrelationship between jungle and city is widely hinted at in Conrad's previous works. But this theme is examined in greater depth throughout The Secret Agent where the city is no longer treated as an outside world to the jungle but is coterminous with it.

In the same way, the city is compared on many occasions to a jungle. This idea is particularly suggested through the descriptive details ascribed to the urban scene, which makes up the background of the story. For example, two details pointing to the city and jungle merge in one single image -

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33. Donald C Yelton, Mimesis and Metaphor (Mouton and Co., Publishers, The Hague, The Netherlands, 1967), p.186.

the image of a victoria in the street - to convey the metaphoric coexistence of the two major settings. ("Here and there a victoria with the skin of some wild beast inside and a woman's face and hat emerging above the folded hood.")[34] Going out from his office into the street, the head of the Special Crimes Department has the impression of walking in an unfamiliar and hostile environment. The description of Brett street and the response of the police officer to it suggest the close interrelationship between the world of the city and the world of the jungle:

> Brett Street was not very far away. It branched off, narrow, from the side of an open triangular space surrounded by dark and mysterious houses, temples of petty commerce emptied of traders for the night. Only a fruiterer's stall at the corner made a violent blaze of light and colour. Beyond all was black, and the few people passing in that direction vanished at one stride beyond the glowing heaps of oranges and lemons.... The adventurous head of the Special Crimes Department watched these disappearances from a distance with an interested eye. He felt light-hearted, as though he had been ambushed all alone in a jungle many thousands of miles away from departmental desks and official ink-stands.[35]

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34. The Secret Agent, p.11.
35. Ibid., p.150.

Brett street is, like the forest in the Malay novels, a scene of contrasts between light and darkness. The artificial glare of "the glowing heaps of oranges and lemons" makes Verloc's shop and house seem even more grimy and obscure. In addition to the interplay of light and darkness, the reference to foreign elements, such as temples and oranges, relates the city to exotic milieux.

The prevailing atmosphere is of total ambiguity where even the individual is unable to retain his identity:

> On going out the Assistant Commissioner made to himself the observation that the patrons of the place had lost in the frequentation of fraudulent cookery all their national and private characteristics. And this was strange, since the Italian restaurant is such a peculiarly British institution. But the people were as denationalized as the dishes set before them with every circumstance of unstamped respectability. Neither was their personality stamped in any way, professionally, socially, or racially .... One never met these enigmatical persons elsewhere. It was impossible to form a precise idea what occupations they followed by day and where they went to bed at night

> And he himself had become unplaced. It would have been impossible for anybody to guess his occupation.[36]

The loss of identity in the city also manifests the link between the lawlessness of the jungle and the moral lawlessness of urban community. More significantly, the dividing line between policeman, the so-called guardian of law and order, and anarchist, the agent of chaos, is disturbingly non-existent:

> The policeman on the beat projected his sombre and moving form against the luminous glory of oranges and lemons, and entered Brett Street without haste. The Assistant Commissioner, as though he were a member of the criminal classes, lingered out of sight, awaiting his return. But this constable seemed to be lost for ever to the force. He never returned: must have gone out at the other end of Brett Street.[37]

Very ironically, urban man is presented as a stranger in his own environment: both the Assistant Commissioner and Inspector Heat appear as foreigners in the city. Heat's look reminds the Assistant Commissioner of the image of a native chief in a

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36. The Secret Agent, p.149.

37. Ibid., pp.150-151.

colony: "But does not Alfred Wallace relate in his famous book on the Malay Archipelago how, amongst the Aru Islanders, he discovered in an old and naked savage with a sooty skin a peculiar resemblance to a dear friend at home?"[38] The Assistant Commissioner himself, catching his own image reflected in a sheet of glass, "was struck by his foreign appearance."[39] And again, in Sir Ethelred's office where significantly the "shades of green silk fitted low over all the lights imparted to the room something of a forest's deep gloom", the Assistant Commissioner catches another glimpse of his foreign appearance; "in the dim light, the salient points of his personality, the long face, the black hair, his lankness, made him look more foreign than ever."[40]

The urban environment is thus, like the unmitigated savagery of the forest in the Malay and African stories, hostile and alien to man. Mr. Jacques Berthoud emphasises the similarity between the two

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38. The Secret Agent, p.118.
39. Ibid., pp.148-149.
40. Ibid., p.217.

environments: "scenes of opulent ease have given place to an alien and ominous landscape; the city that seemed sprinkled with "powdered old gold" has become the grim setting for a struggle for survival."[41] The unfriendliness of the urban environment is further dramatised through Verloc's social position, providing us with a glimpse of the dark powers at work in an urban community:

> There is no occupation that fails a man more completely than that of a secret agent of police. It's like your horse suddenly falling dead under you in the midst of an uninhabited and thirsty plain.[42]

And again even in his domestic sphere, Mr. Verloc has a sense of being abandoned in a desert:

> Mr. Verloc went on divesting himself of his clothing with the unnoticing inward concentration of a man undressing in the solitude of a vast and hopeless desert. For thus inhospitably did this fair earth, our common inheritance, present itself to the mental vision of Mr. Verloc.[43]

His wife, too, expresses the same feeling as Hervey in "The Return":

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41. Joseph Conrad: The Major Phase, p.147.
42. The Secret Agent, pp.56-57.
43. Ibid., p.179.

> [Winnie] looked round thoughtfully, with an air of mistrust in the silence and solitude of the house. This abode of her married life appeared to her as lonely and unsafe as though it had been situated in the midst of a forest.[44]

The city of Geneva in Under Western Eyes is described in terms very similar to London, and man in the crowd being depicted ironically as lonely: "in the movement of the busy streets [Razumov felt] isolated as if in a desert."[45]

The comparison of the city to a desert or wilderness is revealing and helps to close the gap between the two elements. The relationship is, indeed, quite remarkable, especially here in the predominance of descriptive detail and the constant use of linking images. It is altogether striking that Conrad should make such ample use of images and similes from the jungle in a novel based mainly on urban life.

Thus far, we have been concerned with the way the sea, city and jungle interrelate particularly on

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44. The Secret Agent, p.201.
45. Under Western Eyes, Vol. XII, p.297.

a descriptive level, and the connection has been seen virtually symbiotic. However, more attention must now be given to a major theme that necessarily derives from this approach and is central to the inter-relationship under examination, and that is the relationship between chaos and order. First of all, the theme of darkness, which, as the description has shown, is a common characteristic of the three settings. More than this, it has moral implications in Conradian terms and is not dissociated from its opposite force, the attempt of man to impose order on it.

In Chance, a novel where Conrad repeatedly underlines the contrast between city and sea, calling the first "this abominable world of treacheries and scorns and envies and lies" and the second "the blue sea, the sure, the inaccessible, the uncontaminated and spacious refuge for wounded souls"[46], he says: "Darkness and chaos are first cousins."[47] The London of The Secret Agent, while supposed to be a symbol of light, is enveloped in darkness. Mr. Verloc's

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46. Chance, pp.364-365.
47. Ibid., p.210.

living quarters where the domestic drama is centered, and indeed sums up the urban scene as a whole, is "hidden in the shades of the sordid street seldom touched by the sun, behind the dim shop with its wares of disreputable rubbish."[48] Even the lamps in the streets seem to be overwhelmed by the darkness generated by the city:

> He [the Assistant Commissioner] advanced at once into an immensity of greasy slime and damp plaster interspersed with lamps, and enveloped, oppressed, penetrated, choked, and suffocated by the blackness of a wet London night, which is composed of soot and drops of water.[49]

Darkness always lies behind the main events in the story and dramatises the moral situation of the characters. Mr. Verloc is haunted by a kind of fear of darkness: in his bedroom "he felt horribly wakeful, and dreaded facing the darkness and silence that would follow the extinguishing of the lamp."[50] Even agents of anarchism, who work in darkness, are ironically vulnerable to it. After the murder of Mr. Verloc,

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48. The Secret Agent, pp.38-39.
49. Ibid., p.150.
50. Ibid., p.58.

darkness intensifies the moral situation of Comrade Ossipon and Winnie:

> There was a silence, while the mist fell, and darkness reigned undisturbed over Brett Place. Not a soul, not even the vagabond, lawless, and amorous soul of a cat, came near the man and the woman facing each other.[51]

And just after Verloc's murder, darkness increases in intensity and seems to blot out the lights of the whole city:

> ...the whole town of marvels and mud, with its maze of streets and its mass of lights, was sunk in a hopeless night, rested at the bottom of a black abyss from which no unaided woman could hope to scramble out.[52]

As Ossipon and Winnie abandon the corpse of Mr. Verloc, darkness has again invaded the house and the whole street, reducing the two persons to mere shadows:

> Brett Place was all darkness, interspersed with the misty halos of the few lamps defining its triangular shape, with a cluster of these lights on one stand in the middle. The dark forms of the man and woman glided slowly arm in arm along the walls with a loverlike and homeless aspect in the miserable night.[53]

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51. The Secret Agent, p.280.
52. Ibid., pp.270-271.
53. Ibid., p.273.

In the Malay novels, we may recall, the prevailing atmosphere is that of corruption, rottenness and imprisonment from which human beings as well as the plants themselves are struggling towards the sun and light. In The Secret Agent a similar atmosphere is reflected in the urban background, where characters are shown struggling against the sooty clouds that envelop their ugly surroundings and where even light itself is more obscuring than clarifying.

The chaos that links city to jungle is well-illustrated in this symbolic light reflected against the urban background; whether natural like the sun-light or artificial like that produced by lamps, it never clarifies things. The London sun is described in such a way that it heightens the sinister image of the city, casting on the landscape as well as upon people the colour of rustiness which conveys an atmosphere of decay, rottenness, and even a suggestion of blood:

> And a peculiarly London sun - against which nothing could be said except that it looked bloodshot - glorified all this by its stare. It hung at a moderate elevation above Hyde Park Corner with an air of punctual and benign vigilance.

> The very pavement under Mr. Verloc's feet had an old-gold tinge in that diffused light, in which neither wall, nor tree, nor beast, nor man cast a shadow. Mr. Verloc was going westward through a town without shadows in an atmosphere of powdered gold. There were red, coppery gleams on the roofs of houses, on the corners of walls, on the panels of carriages, on the very coats of the horses, and on the broad back of Mr. Verloc's overcoat, where they produced a dull effect of rustiness.[54]

Under this diffused light, reality is blurred and distorted: objects as well as living beings are deprived of their shadows which testify their substantiality and distinguish their individuality, thus the urban scene seems to be designed to convey an image of confusion and chaos. Analysing the same passage, Mr. Hillis Miller offers us illuminating observations with reference to the function of light. However, although he insists on "the transformation of the usual look of things" under the effect of this light and the absence of "one evidence of the solidity of objects, the fact that they interrupt the light and cast shadows", thereby pointing out that "no

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54. The Secret Agent, pp.11-12.

thing or person has a shadow, and it is as if they did not exist as massive forms, but had been dissolved into scintillations of light",[55] he still maintains that these objects do not totally lose their identity:

> These objects exist with three-dimensional solidity between the spectator and the veil of light which forms the background of the scene. They can be identified, but nothing more can be said of them.[56]

The image of this blurring light is significantly often accompanied by the pervasive image of mist and fog, intensifying the chaos that lurks behind the urban scene. Everything seems to be wrapped in mist, including light itself, dissolving in a mass of darkness, which also evokes the equivocal image of the sea:

> Winnie Verloc turning about held [Ossipon] by both arms, facing him under the falling mist in the darkness and solitude of Brett Place, in which all sounds of life seemed lost as if in a triangular well of asphalt and bricks, of blind houses and unfeeling stones.[57]

As Winnie steps out of the shop after her husband's

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55. The Secret Agent, Casebook Series, p.185.

56. Ibid., p.186.

57. The Secret Agent, p.267.

murder, she finds herself in a street that seems to have been turned into a real river and she fades in the dampness:

> The street frightened her, since it led either to the gallows or to the river. She floundered over the doorstep head forward, arms thrown out, like a person falling over the parapet of a bridge. This entrance into the open air had a forestate of drowning; a slimy dampness enveloped her, entered her nostrils, clung to her hair. It was not actually raining, but each gas lamp had a rusty little halo of mist.[58]

This atmosphere of confusion and darkness that connects the three images of sea, city and jungle becomes an expression of a cosmic chaos, central to Conrad's moral vision of the universe. In The Secret Agent, Stevie represents man struggling in the middle of chaos, trapped in the confusion that seems to typify his existence:

> ... the innocent Stevie, seated very good and quiet at a deal table, drawing circles, circles; innumerable circles, concentric, eccentric; a corruscating whirl of circles that by their tangled multitude of repeated curves, uniformity of form, and confusion of intersecting lines suggested a rendering of cosmic chaos, the symbolism of a mad art

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58. The Secret Agent, p.269.

> attempting the inconceivable. The artist never turned his head; and in all his soul's application to the task his back quivered, his thin neck, sunk into a deep hollow at the base of the skull, seemed ready to snap.[59]

The conflict between chaos and order suggested in this quotation lies at the heart of the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle. On a superficial level, the city as a man-made environment is supposed to be an instrument of order against chaos; but in its deeper implication the city itself wears the image of chaos, hence its conjunction with the forest and the sea. The leitmotif of Stevie's circles throughout The Secret Agent reveals the writer's preoccupation with writing, or the task of the artist in general as an expression of bringing order into chaos. The task of the writer himself and the manipulation of his material to construct a story imply a kind of hope for man in general in his struggle to conquer the universal chaos. Related to this theme is the idea that the city, despite its juxtaposition with the wilderness, is not totally denied by the writer as an

59. The Secret Agent, pp.45-46.

NOTE. It is regretted that, because of a typographical error, pagination proceeds from 393 to 395. There is therefore no 394.

artefact that might serve as a refuge from natural chaos. However, what Conrad suggests through the subtle intimacy of sea, city and jungle is his mistrust of the city as an absolute symbol of order opposed to the dark powers visible in the other two elements.

The struggle between chaos and order is also manifested in the theme of anarchism and social discord emanating from the urban community in particular. In The Nigger of the "Narcissus", Conrad has already hinted at this theme through Donkin, an anarchist who tries to persuade the community of the ship to rebel against their officers. In Nostromo, too, Conrad takes up this theme of social and political anarchism by weaving out of the revolutions and the struggle for power the texture of this novel. In The Secret Agent, anarchism is one of the main themes, though not the main subject as has already been pointed out and as the writer himself confirms in his letters. Writing to John Galsworthy à propos of The Secret Agent, Conrad says:

> After all, you must not take it too seriously. The whole thing is

> superficial and it is but a tale.
> I had no idea to consider Anarchism
> politically, or to treat it seriously
> in its philosophical aspect; as a
> manifestation of human nature in its
> discontent and imbecility.[60]

And in another letter to Ambrose J. Barker on 1 September, 1923, he wrote:

> My object, apart from the aim of
> telling a story, was to hold up the
> worthlessness of certain individuals
> and the baseness of some others.
> It was a matter of great interest to
> me to see how near actuality I
> managed to come in a work of imagination.[61]

Hence, since anarchism is not intended to be dealt with politically, and thus not limited in its meaning, it enhances the metaphor of the "jungle" within the city and larger human communities. In this reading, any idea of order conveyed by the city-symbol remains on the surface, whereas chaos lurks eternally in its depths.

The notion of anarchism in opposition to order is thus a central theme of The Secret Agent, and one which is, above all, common to the world of the city

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60. Gérard Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters, Vol.II (William Heineman Ltd., 1927), pp.32-33.
61. Ibid., p.322.

and the jungle, suggesting the permanent threat that undermines man's safety. In The Secret Agent the inhabitant of the city, in no wise different from the man exposed to the real wilderness, needs protection against hostile forces. If the European in the Malay or African jungle is overwhelmed by fear of malign and crude nature, in the city urban man demonstrates the same sense of fear, though less openly; for he is in perpetual search for safety within his familiar neighbourhood.

Watching people passing in the street, Verloc meditates on man's situation in the city:

> All these people had to be protected. Protection is the first necessity of opulence and luxury. They had to be protected; and their horses, carriages, houses, servants had to be protected; and the source of their wealth had to be protected in the heart of the city and the heart of the country; the whole social order favourable to their hygienic idleness had to be protected against the shallow enviousness of unhygienic labour.[62]

Nobody in the city seems to escape from this sense of menace. Even the police, the agents of protection,

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62. The Secret Agent, p.12.

are affected by insecurity in the city, which the writer explicitly and frequently compares to the jungle.

Nevertheless, Conrad always suggests some hope of protecting man against this chaos. In the Malay and African stories, as we have seen, the European adventurer takes refuge from the hostile surroundings in the settlement or the outpost, which provides order of some sort. In The Secret Agent the inner door of houses and buildings is always opposed to the outer door and the open streets. Although the inner door is not totally safe, at least it is more secure than the outer door. This opposition is implied in the difference between the offices of the Special Crimes Department, for instance, which is safe, and the jungle-like Brett Street, which is dangerous.

Very significantly, Mr. Verloc's house - what might be considered the centre of human tragedy in this urban area - is compared to a ship, while the city is, as has been suggested through descriptive details, like a large sea. These comparisons point to the relationship between sea and ship, consecutively

standing for chaos and order, thus supporting the recurring reference to buildings as shelters from the chaos surrounding them.

Whether through a descriptive approach to The Secret Agent or through the analysis of the themes of anarchism and the link between chaos and order, the three elements are demonstrated to have many points in common. And it is this area of conjunction which is the heart of the interrelationship under study and in the light of which the three images could be comprehended in their full meanings.

In order to appreciate the interrelationship between the images of sea and city in Conrad's writings, the reader has to approach them not in their literal sense but according to the implications the writer draws from them to give his stories an organic and complete pattern, where they intertwine and become functions of one another. More significantly, seen in the light of each other, the sea and city usually transcend their definitions of physical settings to become metaphors. In this view, they overlap with

one another and, by virtue of their relationship in different contexts, each becomes an expression of wider implications. The city in The Secret Agent is, indeed, as the writer himself tells us in his preface, something larger even than some continents. Elsewhere, he applies the same proportions to the sea, which becomes an expression of the cosmos.

In terms of description, the urban environment is also, as has already been shown, very similar to the forest surroundings, suggesting a great part of their area of conjunction. The city in The Secret Agent, like the jungle, is generally portrayed as dark, repellent and sinister. The superficial polarity between these two elements - particularly as presented in Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands - does not, therefore, hold in Conrad's works in general, and to some extent the gap is closed between the city and the jungle.

Conrad's constant preoccupation with exploring the two settings interlocked throughout his works, and in The Secret Agent in particular, gives deeper insight into his attitude towards urban life and

civilisation, stressing a sort of disillusionment with modern life. In Under Western Eyes, Haldin, though not free from Conrad's irony, expresses a deep mistrust of modern civilisation opposing it to the reality of the individual's soul:

> No man's soul is ever lost. It works for itself - or else where would be the sense of self-sacrifice, of martyrdom, of conviction, of faith - the labours of the soul? ... My spirit shall go on warring in some Russian body till all falsehood is swept out of the world. The modern civilization is false, but a new revelation shall come out of Russia.[63]

In a letter to R.B. Cunninghame Graham, Conrad expresses a pessimistic view of the universe, echoing and elucidating his vision of modern civilisation and the city that symbolises it:

> There is a, - let us say, - a machine. It evolved itself (I am severely scientific) out of a chaos of scraps of iron and behold! - it knits. I am horrified at the horrible work and stand appalled. I feel it ought to embroider, - but it goes on knitting. You come and say: "This is all right: it's only a question of the right kind of oil. Let us use this, - for instance, - celestial oil and the machine will

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63. Under Western Eyes, p.22.

> embroider a most beautiful design in purple and gold." Will it? Alas, no! You cannot by any special lubrication make embroidery with a knitting machine. And the most withering thought is that the infamous thing has made itself: made itself without thought, without conscience, without foresight, without eyes, without heart. It is tragic accident, - and it has happened. You can't interfere with it. The last drop of bitterness is in the suspicion that you can't even smash it. In virtue of that truth one and immortal which lurks in the force that made it spring into existence it is what it is, - and it is indestructible![64]

In his fiction this vision is particularly well-conveyed by the conjunction of city and jungle and the ironical portrayal of urban citizens as savage people and the moral identification between civilised and primitive man. In The Secret Agent a consideration of the major characters explores again the area where city and jungle meet.

The Assistant Commissioner as the head of the Metropolitan police is the archetypal guardian of law and order against anarchism and social disorder in the city. Stevie, for instance, is one of the

64. Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters, Vol.I,p.216.

characters who naively believes in the power of the police to maintain order: "Like the rest of mankind, perplexed by the mystery of the universe, he had his moments of consoling trust in the organized powers of the earth. 'Police,' he suggested, confidently."[65] However, the police force itself is always viewed ironically by the author in this novel:

> the great edifice of legal conceptions sheltering the atrocious injustice of society.[66]

And again:

> the true nature of the world, whose morality was artificial, corrupt, and blasphemous.[67]

The Assistant Commissioner, who is supposed to represent this body, is portrayed as an individual living both in the city and in the world of the jungle, and thus the two apparently opposed sphers share him.

Following his experience in a primitive land (for "[his] career had begun in a tropical colony"), even in the city he seems still placed in the midst

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65. The Secret Agent, p.172.
66. Ibid., p.80.
67. Ibid., p.81.

of the jungle. Very significantly, in both offices of Sir Ethelred and the Assistant Commissioner, the objects that attract more attention are those reminders of the jungle:

> The Assistant Commissioner entering [Sir Ethelred's office] saw at first only a big pale hand supporting a big head, and concealing the upper part of a big pale face. An open despatch-box stood on the writing-table near a few oblong sheets of paper and a scattered handful of quill pens. There was absolutely nothing else on the large flat surface except a little bronze statuette draped in a toga, mysteriously watchful in its shadowy immobility.[68]

> At headquarters the Chief Inspector was admitted at once to the Assistant Commissioner's private room. He found him, pen in hand, bent over a great table bestrewn with papers, as if worshipping an enormous double inkstand of bronze and crystal. Speaking-tubes resembling snakes were tied by the heads to the back of the Assistant Commissioner's wooden armchair, and their gaping mouths seemed ready to bite his elbows.[69]

The whole situation of the Assistant Commissioner suggested in this paragraph identifies him with the atmosphere of the jungle, with objects he seems to worship like idols and speaking-tubes like snakes.

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68. The Secret Agent, p.217.
69. Ibid., p.97.

In other words, while the Assistant Commissioner stands for order and law, he is seen disturbingly frequently in the context of jungle savagery. It is by such significant detail and "trigger-words" that the writer draws our attention to the close relationship between jungle and city.

If the Assistant Commissioner embodies order and legality, albeit with some equivocality, the Professor represents the opposite force. The aspect of the "jungle" in the Assistant Commissioner, so to speak, is fully manifested in the character of the Professor, who can be considered as the typical example of the anarchistic powers. The Professor is subversive and his pitiless savagery is pushed further to become fully representative of an agent of disorder and a denial of any kind of legality. This character recalls the other outcasts and outlaws in Conrad's earlier works, like Brown and his gang in Lord Jim, James Wait and Donkin in The Nigger of the "Narcissus", and Jones and his companions in Victory.

Even the Professor's identity is not clear; "his

parentage was obscure, and he was generally known only by his nickname of Professor."[70] As with other Conradian outlaws, the Professor does not fit into the social community and repudiates it: "[he] had genius, but lacked the great social virtue of resignation."[71] For this reason he hates any social organisation and is always planning for "a blow fit to open the first crack in the imposing front of the great edifice of legal conceptions sheltering the atrocious injustice of society."[72]

The Professor indeed represents the typical terrorist, a wild character who rejects any kind of morality or authority: "My device", he tells Ossipon, "is: No God! No Master".[73] Moreover, his main preoccupation is to perfect a detonator in order to annihilate the established social order. Criticising Michaelis's theory of the weak, he confesses to another anarchist:

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70. The Secret Agent, p.75.
71. Ibid., p.75.
72. Ibid., p.80.
73. Ibid., p.306.

> 'Conceive you this folly, Ossipon? The weak! The source of all evil on this earth!' he continued with his grim assurance. 'I told him that I dreamt of a world like shambles, where the weak would be taken in hand for utter extermination. Do you understand, Ossipon? The source of all evil! They are our sinister masters - the weak, the flabby, the silly, the cowardly, the faint of heart, and the slavish of mind. They have power. They are the multitude. Theirs is the kingdom of the earth. Exterminate, exterminate! That is the only way of progress.'[74]

The Professor combines the character of Donkin in The Nigger of the "Narcissus" in his refusal to recognise any kind of authority and law, and the cruelty of Kurtz in Heart of Darkness echoing even his very words: "Exterminate, exterminate!" Thus the lawlessness and nihilistic views of the Professor place him in the world of the jungle.

To underline the Professor's embodiment of the lawlessness and savagery that link anarchism to the chaotic nature of the jungle, Conrad delineates him against a background made up of jungle details, showing him in accord with this environment. Meditating on the mass of mankind he cannot destroy and

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74. The Secret Agent, p.303.

of which he has "moments of dreadful and sane mistrust", the Professor moves away from the crowded street and seems to have entered a world of wilderness where he feels "safe":

> A despicable emotional state this, against which solitude fortifies a superior character; and with severe exultation the Professor thought of the refuge of his room, with its padlocked cupboard, lost in a wilderness of poor houses, the hermitage of the perfect anarchist.[75]

On his way home, he significantly passes through "a narrow and dusty alley", which calls forth the image of decay and disorder, and where a shop is described as a forest:

> On one side the low brick houses had in their dusty windows the sightless, moribund look of incurable decay - empty shells awaiting demolition. From the other side life had not departed wholly as yet. Facing the only gas-lamp yawned the cavern of a second-hand furniture dealer, where, deep in the gloom of a sort of narrow avenue winding through a bizarre forest of wardrobes, with an undergrowth tangle of table legs, a tall pier-glass glimmered like a pool of water in a wood.[76]

Ironically, "the only human being making use of the

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75. The Secret Agent, p.82.
76. Ibid., p.82.

alley besides the Professor" is Chief Inspector Heat of the Special Crime Department; thus the representatives of two apparently opposite spheres are brought together. Through his use of Verloc as his private informer, Inspector Heat offers another illuminating aspect of the area where chaos and disorder meet. Very significantly, it is in this jungle-like alley that the Professor seems to regain confidence in his power against Inspector Heat and the forces he represents:

> The unwholesome-looking little moral agent of destruction exulted silently in the possession of personal prestige, keeping in check this man armed with the defensive mandate of a menaced society. More fortunate than Caligula, who wished that the Roman Senate had only one head for the better satisfaction of his cruel lust, he beheld in that one man all the forces he had set at defiance: the force of law, property, oppression, and injustice. He beheld all his enemies and fearlessly confronted them in a supreme satisfaction of his vanity.[77]

The character of the secret agent, Mr. Verloc, is different from that of the Professor, but rather similar to the Assistant Commissioner's. The inter-

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77. The Secret Agent, p.83.

relationship between the city and jungle is more fully epitomised in Mr. Verloc. His job can be considered as the intersection of two apparently different spheres: that of the metropolitan police and the anarchists, including the Embassy people. In other words, through the secret agent two social/political groups, police and anarchists, meet. Moreover, Conrad insists on the coexistence of the two groups: they know the tactics of each other and, in spite of their differences, they act according to the same conventions and laws. This idea is well-expressed by Karl Yundt to Ossipon in The Secret Agent:

> 'You revolutionists...are the slaves of the social convention, which is afraid of you; slaves of it as much as the very police that stands up in the defense of that convention.... The terrorist and the policeman both come from the same basket. Revolution, legality - counter moves in the same game; forms of idleness at bottom identical.'[78]

Although Mr. Verloc is involved with the anarchists he is, as far as society is concerned, a conservative, whose duty it is to preserve the established

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78. The Secret Agent, p.69.

system. But Verloc is involved with both the defenders of the law and order and the anarchistic movement, whose aim is to destroy this order. Thus Verloc comes, in a sense, to represent the common area between the police and the agents of anarchy, suggesting both the opposition and juxtaposition of "city" and "jungle", consecutively standing for order and chaos. Above all, the police are both dealing with - and thus acknowledging - the power of the jungle. The very existence of the police proves the jungle's existence. This intricate and complex aspect of the interrelationship between city and jungle has already been illustrated mainly by Heart of Darkness and "The Return", where the author explores in detail the area of conjunction of the two elements, while insisting at the same time on the slight but significant way they remain distinct from one another.

In The Secret Agent the city and jungle are also closely linked through the significant references to the animal-imagery, butchery and cannibalism. Man

in urban society is often compared to an animal or called a savage. Stevie, for example, is like "an unhappy domestic animal",[79] who "prowled round the table like an excited animal in a cage."[80] Mr. Verloc, too, is compared to "a large animal in a cage."[81]

The animal image interpenetrates with the theme of cannibalism, suggested through frequent references to meat and butchery. Even the colour of the sun in London, "a peculiarly London sun - against which nothing could be said except that it looked blood-shot"[82], reflects an atmosphere of murder and butchery. Light, too, is often referred to in association with blood: "in the black street the curtained window of the carters' eating-house made a square patch of soiled blood-red light glowing faintly very near the level of the pavement."[83] After Mrs. Verloc has stabbed her husband to death, she keeps repeating to herself: "Blood and dirt. Blood and dirt."[84]

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79. The Secret Agent, p.185.
80. Ibid., p.55.
81. Ibid., p.237.
82. Ibid., p.11.
83. Ibid., p.269.
84. Ibid., p.290.

The word butchery itself becomes a kind of leitmotif in the novel and is associated with murder and cannibalism. Preparing Verloc for the attack on the Greenwich Observatory, Mr. Vladimir dismisses murder as an ordinary crime, inefficient to affect the public:

> I would never dream of directing you to organize a mere butchery, even if I expected the best results from it. But I wouldn't expect from a butchery the result I want. Murder is always with us. It is almost an institution.[85]

Winnie Verloc's first boy-friend is a butcher's boy, and when her husband returns from his expedition, she offers him cold roast beef while she is examining the carving knife. Mr. Avrom Fleishman in "The Symbolic World of The Secret Agent" examines this theme in detail and relates it to Conrad's vision of the modern world - "the ultimate reduction of man, even beyond fragmentation into flesh and transformation into matter, in his total annihilation."[86]

The theme of cannibalism is well epitomised by

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85. The Secret Agent, p.33.
86. The Secret Agent, Casebook Series, p.177.

Stevie's accident. His body is found rendered into small pieces in the Greenwich park, "an accumulation of raw material for a cannibal feast"[87], or "what may be called the by-products of a butcher's shop with a view to an inexpensive Sunday dinner."[88] The whole urban community and its economic system are indeed related to the jungle. The crowd in the street is compared to a colony of locusts or ants struggling for survival:

> He [the Professor] was in a long, straight street, peopled by a mere fraction of an immense multitude; but all round him, on and on, even to the limits of the horizon hidden by the enormous piles of bricks, he felt the mass of mankind mighty in its numbers. They swarmed numerous like locusts, industrious like ants, thoughtless like a natural force, pushing on blind and orderly and absorbed, impervious to sentiment, to logic, to terror, too, perhaps.[89]

Capitalism, as Michaelis expresses it, is linked with cannibalism: "He saw Capitalism doomed in its cradle, born with the poison of the principle of competition in its system. The great capitalists devouring the

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87. The Secret Agent, p.86.
88. Ibid., p.88.
89. Ibid., pp.81-82.

little capitalists."[90] Yundt, another anarchist, affirms the same opinion:

> I would call it [the nature of the present economic conditions] cannibalistic. That's what it is! They [the rich] are nourishing their greed on the quivering flesh and the warm blood of the people - nothing else.[91]

The close relationship between city and jungle, or the area of their conjunction, is also well expressed in moral terms through the instinctive identification between civilised man and primitive man. It is this "intimate impression of the savage instincts hidden in the heart of mankind",[92] as Conrad puts it in The Arrow of Gold, that gives a deeper meaning to the interrelationship between the city and jungle. This theme is perhaps better illustrated in Heart of Darkness than in any other of Conrad's stories, conveyed as it is through the encounter of civilised man with the wilderness and his identification with primitive man in the process.

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90. The Secret Agent, p.49.
91. Ibid., p.51.
92. The Arrow of Gold, Vol.XVII, p.272.

In The Secret Agent, too, this theme is very suggestive as characters are often referred to as savage or primitive. Winnie Verloc, for example, is "that savage woman of his [who] was guarding the door - invisible and silent in the dark and deserted street."[93] When she clings to Ossipon she behaves in the same manner as Aissa, the savage woman in An Outcast of the Islands. Ossipon himself reminds us of the savage woman's possessiveness towards Willems in the jungle: "He [Ossipon] positively saw snakes now. He saw the woman [Winnie] twined round him like a snake, not to be taken off. She was not deadly. She was death itself - the companion of life."[94]

At some point in the novel Winnie comes to embody the urban wilderness that surrounds her, as Aissa symbolises the dark powers in her environment. In other words, Winnie and the savage woman in the Malay novel are consecutively associated with the city and the jungle:

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93. The Secret Agent, p.285.

94. Ibid., p.291.

> A tinge of wildness in her [Winnie's] aspect was derived from the black veil hanging like a rag against her cheek, and from the fixity of her black gaze where the light of the room was absorbed and lost without the trace of a single gleam.[95]

In her "black gaze" that seems to swallow the light of the room, Winnie becomes like the city of London itself, of which, we may remind ourselves, Conrad says in his preface that it is "a cruel devourer of the world's light."

This identification of civilised man with primitive man is significantly summed up in what may be considered the climactic incident of The Secret Agent. This incident, indeed, summarises all the aspects of the interrelationship between city and jungle discussed so far, and in particular their area of intersection. It is of course Winnie Verloc's murder of her husband that conveys this theme:

> Into that plunging blow, delivered over the side of the couch, Mrs. Verloc had put all the inheritance of her immemorial and obscure descent, the simple ferocity

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95. The Secret Agent, p.259.

> of the age of caverns, and the unbalanced nervous fury of the age of bar-rooms.[96]

The coexistence of primitivism and "civilisation" in Winnie's act of murder reveals Conrad's preoccupation with the moral significance of the interrelationship between city and jungle. Moreover, Conrad seems clearly to express a general statement that applies to mankind at large, not only to Winnie as an individual; thus suggesting the persistent link between the origin of man, "the age of caverns", and modern man, "the age of bar-rooms." This subtle interrelationship between civilisation and primitive life is well summed up in Bertrand Russell's opinion of Conrad and the philosophy of life as he believes Heart of Darkness expresses:

> I felt, though I do not know whether he would have accepted such an image, that he thought of civilized and morally tolerable human life as a dangerous walk on a thin crust of barely cooled lava which at any moment might break and let the unwary sink into fiery depths.[97]

The image of the area where the three elements,

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96. The Secret Agent, p.263.
97. Bertrand Russell, Portraits from Memory and other Essays (George Allen & Unwin Ltd.,1956), p.82.

sea, city and jungle, meet, particularly in terms of their moral implications, is well formulated in Conrad's metaphorical vision of a universe composed of the interaction of different waves. In a letter to Edward Garnett on 29 September 1898 he says:

> The secret of the universe is in the existence of horizontal waves whose varied vibrations are at the bottom of all states of consciousness. If the waves were vertical the universe would be different. This is a truism. But, don't you see, there is nothing in the world to prevent the simultaneous existence of vertical waves, of waves at any angles; in fact these are mathematical reasons for believing that such waves do exist. Therefore it follows that two universes may exist in the same place and in the same time - and not only two universes but an infinity of different universes - if by universe we mean a set of states of consciousness.[98]

In this context, Conrad's irony lurking behind this interrelationship between city and jungle is very telling, in that in undermining the achievements symbolised by the former, he tends to reduce it to the latter's level. Thus, the city as depicted in The Secret Agent is transformed into a large wilderness, far from standing for the world of order and light.

98. Edward Garnett, Letters from Joseph Conrad 1895-1924 (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merril Company, 1928), p.148.

But at the same time the writer does not ironise the value of the city out of existence. Therefore, for all their close interconnectedness, the city and jungle are not totally confused or interchangeable; the line that separates them and avoids their confusion has already been illustrated by Heart of Darkness and "The Return". What Conrad actually seems to insist on through the recurring theme of the interrelationship in question is that the three images, sea, city and jungle, coexist and meet on certain fundamental points; and consequently, whatever man has achieved in the world of the city is not an absolutely reliable instrument to subdue the dark powers inherent in the universe.

The way Conrad regulates the interrelationship of the three elements is rhetorically conveyed through the constant distance that remains between him and his material, usually achieved by his use of irony. In his "Author's Note" to The Secret Agent Conrad draws our attention to his attitude of detachment and his deliberate adoption of irony:

> ...the whole treatment of the tale, its inspiring indignation and underlying pity and contempt, prove my detachment from the squalor and sordidness which lie simply in the outward circumstances of the setting.[99]

Then he adds:

> Even the purely artistic purpose, that of applying an ironic method to a subject of that kind, was formulated with deliberation and in the earnest belief that ironic treatment alone would enable me to say all I felt I would have to say in scorn as well as in pity.[100]

Many critics have widely studied the use of irony in The Secret Agent and its artistic achievements. F.R. Leavis regards The Secret Agent as a masterpiece from an artistic point of view, and this is basically due to Conrad's subtle and mature handling of irony. Comparing The Secret Agent with Jonathan Wild, another ironic novel, Dr. Leavis pointed out:

> For The Secret Agent is truly classical in its maturity of attitude and the consummateness of the art in which this finds expression; in the contrast there is nothing for it but to see Jonathan Wild as the clumsy piece of hobbledehoydom, artistic and intellectual, that it is. The irony of The Secret Agent is not a matter of an insistent and obvious 'significance' of tone, or the endless

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99. The Secret Agent, "Author's Note", p.viii.
100. Ibid., p.xiii.

> repetition of a simple formula. The tone is truly subtle - subtle with the subtlely of the theme; and the theme develops itself in a complex organic structure. The effect depends upon an interplay of contrasting moral perspectives, and the rich economy of the pattern they make relates The Secret Agent to Nostromo.[101]

From a moral approach, too, both Christopher Cooper and Jeremy Hawthorn agree that irony is based on the dichotomy between public and private morality. However, while Hawthorn contends that "Conrad's very ironic method rests on a revealed disjunction between private and public"[102], Cooper finds that this method also supplies the overall moral view of the novel with positive overtones. Defending the view that Conrad's moral attitude in The Secret Agent cannot be interpreted as pessimistic, he claims that

> ... the pessimism which must emerge from the lives of the characters in this particular novel is a quality arising directly from their motivation. This relates closely to the ironic mode which is so predominant in [The Secret Agent, Nostromo and Under Western Eyes]... Only deviations from morality, those codes of

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101. The Great Tradition, p.240.
102. Joseph Conrad: Language and Fictional Self-Consciousness, p.78.

> behaviour which ... have been defined as immorality or amorality, are ironic. For it is the supreme irony that, in acting against morality out of what is ultimately nothing more than self-interest, the characters are, in the final analysis, being their own worst enemies.[103]

Conrad's manipulation of irony also provides him with a certain control over the world of the novel and acts as a device which enables him to be detached from the negative powers in the narrative. Seen from this point of view, irony is also an effective rhetorical device that regulates the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle. Related to this device is the function of the form of the novel itself, which suggests some kind of order that persists in Conrad's concept of life. Even when the vision is dark, the writer and the reader are at least kept aware of it; thus the formal text becomes part of the drama. In this context Daniel Schwarz makes the following comment upon the value of language in The Secret Agent:

> ...the language is constantly evaluating, controlling, and restraining the nihilism of the imagined world. For The Secret Agent depends upon a tension between

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103. Christopher Cooper, Conrad and the Human Dilemma (Chatto and Windus, 1970), p.151.

> disintegration of the content and integration and cohesion of the form.[104]

In Heart of Darkness, for example, Marlow's real journey may be interpreted as a quest to find a moral language; and Kurtz's whisper is to some extent a great achievement, in that, as he manages to articulate "the horror", he detaches himself from chaos. In terms of the relationship between art and reality, André Maurois makes an observation very appropriate to this approach to The Secret Agent:

> In this imaginary world [the world of art] there are conflicts just as in the real world, but the conflicts are not painful, nor are they without cure ... The conflict is resolved. In music there are storms, tempests of sounds and emotions which at times overwhelm the audience; but the music, in its order, brings storm and tempest under 'control', and this gives us the illusion of victory over the disorder of the world.[105]

The regularising control suggested in Conrad's treatment of the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle is indeed central to his philosophy of life

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104. Conrad: Almayer's Folly to Under Western Eyes, p.157.
105. Illusions, pp.77-78.

in general, implying that there is always a glimpse of order in the midst of chaos. Because the writer fully controls and finely adjusts their interactions, the three elements never interrelate in such a way as to become confused with each other.

The frequent use of images from the sea and the jungle to express Conrad's vision of the city in The Secret Agent demonstrates to what extent their interrelationship is a central aspect of his fiction. The function of the three elements in terms of their interaction, achieved by a large pattern of cross-references, contributes to the understanding not only of the three elements as settings, but also - and in particular - to an elucidation of the writer's concept of man's place in the universe. For this reason, it would be misleading to divide Conrad's works into three separate categories, as some critics have done, that is: jungle novels, sea novels and city novels. Across the whole canon, the three images are always found together, implicitly or explicitly, which demonstrates that the author's

concept of reality indeed can be described not in terms of any one of these images but in the way they interact and partake of each other.

CONCLUSION

It has been demonstrated that the three elements, sea, city and jungle, are found side by side in nearly all of Conrad's works. They interlock with each other even where one of them provides the predominant background to the story. Thus, to emphasise exclusively one of the three settings while ignoring its interplay with the other two, has been shown to limit the dimensions of the story as a whole and the themes the writer strives to convey through it. For the three settings always refer to each other, in one way or another, in order to expand and ultimately complete their meanings and the ideas they generate in the story.

Moreover, the writer's treatment of the three settings, not separately, but in a frame of interconnectedness, has proved to be a consistent aspect of his fiction and is indeed central to his vision of life in general, in that in this way alone can he do justice to his complex notion of reality.

This study of the interrelationship between the three elements also provides us with their approximate

definitions as seen in the context of Conrad's works. Generally speaking, the jungle stands for an expression of chaos and disorder in the world; the city symbolises the desire of mankind to create civilisation in order to impose order and safety on the wilderness; the sea, a vast natural element, confronting man with perpetual challenge.

These definitions, however, are not by any means strictly exclusive to each of the three elements in turn as they operate in the author's works. Seen in the light of their interplay, their definitions become modified and expand in such a way that they come to overlap with each other, which reflects the intimacy of their interrelationship. Thus, the city, for example, also becomes a place of chaos and restlessness, like the jungle and sea, which, in their turn, usually appear in the world of the city to throw into light its sinister, threatening aspect. Therefore, the study of the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle provides us with an understanding of their wider definitions and implications.

In this subtle relationship between three different yet similar elements, three areas that overlap with each other and yet are constantly kept distinct, it is the author's finely modulated regulating technique that enters into action to control their interrelationship. It is a technique which also provides a clue to Conrad's concept of life and man in general, and of that which lies at the heart of his philosophy as an artist. As an instance, whenever he seems to suggest pessimism in life we are aware that he leaves a margin for other possibilities, since his regulating technique is always present in his attitude. The same fact can be applied to optimism, an optimism always suggested within limits. In this effect, we may conclude that Conrad leaves the possibility of creating moral balance open, though his work seems, while admitting this possibility, still to veer towards the pessimistic view. The idea of regulation, as a matter of fact, also points to an ambivalence in his themes in general. Concerning the relationship between city and jungle, as has been demonstrated, while he compares the former to the latter, he does

not wholly repudiate the value of the city or the civilisation it stands for.

More importantly, the regulating technique that informs his themes in general, and the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle in particular, reveals and confirms the persistence of a certain order lying at the heart of a universe undermined by chaos. Conrad also suggests throughout his works that it is the individual's responsibility to 'organise' his inner nature in order to create order in his life. Thus, as the treatment of the interplay between sea, city and jungle implies, order is always present in the midst of chaos, optimism within pessimism. The two themes coexist, proving the existence of each other, while neither can be said to be the one most favoured, far less adopted by the author to the exclusion of all else. Such are the major ideas that can be deduced from Conrad's concept of the interrelationship between the three elements attempted in the foregoing chapters.

Briefly, the first chapter concentrated on two major Malay novels: Almayer's Folly and An Outcast of the Islands. Here, the jungle prevails as the mise-en-scène to the stories. The sea is connected with it through the European adventurer as well as through the image of the river, literally the link between the jungle and the sea. The image of the city is always present, shadowed in behind the other images functioning as a significant frame of reference to the story and the character. Compared with the powerful physicality of the jungle, the city, as presented in these two novels, is generally characterised by illusoriness and fragility. In the mind of Almayer, however, the city stands for the world of order and civilisation as opposed to the hostility and chaos of the jungle. The jungle is presented as a tempting but fatal world. Both Almayer and Willems meet their death in it, while, till the very end, they dream of going back to the world of the city. However, the author's attitude sharply contrasts with the characters'. In fact, the deployment of the images of jungle, city and sea is all part of the apparatus of Conradian

irony and a means of allowing us to distinguish between authorial perception and characters' perception. The former's ironic treatment of the city, by bringing it into close intimacy with the primitive, chaotic world of the jungle, reveals the fact that the city is far from being an absolute. The other important ironic treatment of the city in the Malay phase lies in the recurring reference to the "house of cards", which again demonstrates Conrad's mistrust of the city or Western civilisation as an absolute achievement with the capacity to subdue the chaos manifested in the jungle. Because of the writer's ironical treatment of the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle, a risk of confusing the three elements may be suggested. In the next chapter, however, this apparent confusion is shown to have been clearly avoided.

In chapter two, three stories were studied together to explore further aspects of the interrelationship between the three elements: "An Outpost of Progress" and Heart of Darkness, whose main back-

ground is the jungle of Central Africa, and "The Return" where the main setting is the city of London. This chapter provided us with an additional elucidation of the interrelationship in question and, above all, revealed the writer's technique by which he avoided any confusion of the three elements. The intrinsic idea drawn from the study of these three stories is that the sea, city and jungle may be morally coterminous and that the world of the jungle is revealed to be ever-present in the world of the city. This idea is expressed by the reiteration of the use of the "stream of darkness" and its implications. The other major theme that reflects the subtle interrelationship between the three settings, and in particular between city and jungle, is the identification of civilised man with primitive and unsophisticated man. The uncomfortable affinity between jungle and city suggested in this theme is more fully elaborated and stressed in Heart of Darkness than in the other novels and short stories.

Again, the writer's regulating technique comes

into play in order to limit this affinity, as he keeps hinting at the slight but meaningful line that separates them. This authorial attitude implies both the utility of the city or civilisation as an attempt to bring some kind of order to the universe. In this sense the three elements of the interrelationship can overlap without becoming confused or interchangeable.

The third chapter brought further comment on the interrelationship between the sea and city. This was especially demonstrated by The Nigger of the "Narcissus", by the end of which the city of London is significantly portrayed as a dark place, and is also compared to a large vessel. Additionally, the interrelationship between the three elements was further explored through a series of associations, between sea and land, island and city, and desert and city.

"The Secret Sharer", Lord Jim and Victory provided us with interesting illustrations of these relationships and comparisons. "The Secret Sharer" demonstrated the perpetual link between sea and shore;

Lord Jim and Victory depicted the protagonist always striving to escape from the human community and civilisation into the wilderness. Yet, the journeys of both Lord Jim and Axel Heyst proved perhaps the inevitable failure of their attempt to find a convincing identity outside an organised, social community.

The study of Nostromo in the fourth chapter showed that as far as the interrelationship between the three major settings was concerned, this novel could be considered as a bridge between works where the sea and jungle prevailed as physical settings, and works whose main background was the city. This chapter also revealed that the city was still literally linked to the sea and jungle.

Like the image of the city in the Malay and African tales, the city in Nostromo in the early days of its development fulfils the functions of the outposts and the small towns established by the white man and expresses the attempt of civilisation to impose itself on the wilderness and primitive life. Nevertheless, in Nostromo the interrelationship between the three elements witnesses a new stage of

development, in that the city proves to be more challenging to the other two elements as Sulaco gradually grows into a large urban area more sophisticated than the outposts and the small towns in the previous works. The importance of the interplay between the three settings is particularly emphasised through the perpetual shift of the events of the story and the movements of the main characters between sea, city and wilderness. The general inclination of the major characters to withdraw from the city to the wilderness and the emergence of the new dark powers of chaos that Sulaco generates in the process of its modernisation, express and correlate with the city's paradoxical tendency to grow into a wasteland; thus the city and wilderness come to be juxtaposed.

Again, although the city as presented in Nostromo overlaps metaphorically with its surroundings, the sea and wilderness, it remains slightly distinct from them, because of the writer's regulating treatment, which remains consistent throughout his works. At any rate, although more emphasis is put on the city in this novel, compared with the previous works, putting aside

the short story "The Return", it is still viewed in full perspective with the other two elements, the sea and the jungle.

The fifth chapter concentrated particularly on The Secret Agent and its comparison with the previous works in the light of the interrelationship between sea, city and jungle. In this novel, where Conrad limits the physical setting to the city of London, there are further comments on the urban environment. The vision of a big city is the novel's main subject. However, the importance of studying the three elements in conjunction with each other is again confirmed in The Secret Agent through the recurring references to sea and jungle against the urban background. The fundamental function of the sea and jungle implicitly reveals the inseparability of the three elements. The vision of the city Conrad tries to convey in this novel depends, for implications and meanings, on its metaphorical link with the sea and jungle. Their contributions to the dimensions the writer strives to give the city's definition proves the significance of their interrelationship.

With respect to themes, The Secret Agent is shown to be strongly linked to the novels and short stories whose main scenes are the sea and jungle. The common themes these works share, from Almayer's Folly to The Secret Agent, also point to the permanent connection between the three settings. Darkness and chaos, applied to the city and jungle, emphasise again their close intimacy. Furthermore, the sea and jungle enter The Secret Agent in such a way that they highlight the chaotic aspect of the urban scene. This area where the three elements overlap demonstrates that the city is far from being totally separate from the other two elements, or that it stands exclusively for order and organised life.

Despite the close intimacy of the three elements, the writer's attitude in controlling their interrelationship is very suggestive in The Secret Agent: although there is certainly more emphasis on the area where sea, city and jungle overlap, it is also very remarkable how the writer prevents them from becoming interchangeable. Conrad's treatment of the interrelationship between the three images is therefore

demonstrated to be consistent throughout his works. First, it has been demonstrated through this comparative study of Conrad's works that it is more rewarding and even necessary to deal with the three major settings together than separately. Secondly, the use of these images throughout his works gives the latter a kind of unified structure and defines the writer's moral vision. Thirdly, their kinship, or the area of their intersection, is certainly underlined, while at the same time their separateness persists. Finally, the author's regulating technique is always present behind their interrelationship, and accordingly, the three elements are neither presented as antithetical nor permutable.

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