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A REVALUATION OF VALUES: JOSEPH CONRAD'S NOVELS AS A CRITICISM OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

by

Michael John DiSanto

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

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For my grandparents,
my father and mother.
my sister,
and especially
Ching-yi
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Abstract

My thesis examines Conrad's novels as criticism of Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud. I argue that his art is a critical response to their thinking and to the forms in which that thinking is embodied. Conrad offers a distinct perspective on nineteenth-century thinkers, writing critiques of their ideas and narrative structures using the novel form. My discussion foregrounds Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim*, *The Secret Agent*, *Under Western Eyes*, and *Victory*. In the first chapter I explore *Heart of Darkness* as criticism of Carlyle's ideals of work and hero-worship. The second chapter focuses on Conrad's *The Secret Agent* as a rewriting of Dickens's *Bleak House*. I argue that Conrad uses elements of Dickens's detective narratives and reworks Dickens's negative grammar of knowing. Chapter Three is a reconsideration of the relationship between Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* and Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* in which I explore Conrad's refashioning of Dostoevsky's use of confessions and idealization of self-sacrificial women. In the fourth chapter I explore how *Lord Jim* is a reassessment of Darwin's and Nietzsche's arguments concerning the instincts for self-preservation and self-destruction, one which anticipates Freud's arguments in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Chapter Five is a discussion of Conrad's ambivalent relationship with Nietzsche which uses *Lord Jim*, *The Secret Agent*, and *Victory* to show that Conrad exposes Nietzsche's opposition to Christ as a complicated form of sympathetic identification. The last chapter is a comparison of *Lord Jim* and Freud's *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* ("Dora") as modernist narratives. While Freud claims to possess a kind of omniscience in relation to his patient in fashioning a kind of detective narrative, Conrad points towards the difficulties in knowing the other with any certainty.
### Abbreviations

For full publication details see Works Cited.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title and Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td><em>The Anti-Christ</em>, Friedrich Nietzsche.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BGE</td>
<td><em>Beyond Good and Evil</em>, Friedrich Nietzsche.</td>
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<td>BH</td>
<td><em>Bleak House</em>, Charles Dickens.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BPP</td>
<td><em>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</em>, Sigmund Freud.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BT</td>
<td><em>The Birth of Tragedy</em>, Friedrich Nietzsche.</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>&quot;Characteristics,&quot; Thomas Carlyle.</td>
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<td>CLJC</td>
<td><em>Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad</em>, Joseph Conrad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNC</td>
<td><em>Conrad in the Nineteenth Century</em>, Ian Watt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td><em>Crime and Punishment</em>, Fyodor Dostoevsky.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td><em>Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria</em> (&quot;Dora&quot;), Sigmund Freud.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EH</td>
<td><em>Ecce Homo</em>, Friedrich Nietzsche.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCP</td>
<td><em>Freud and the Culture of Psychoanalysis</em>, Steven Marcus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FT</td>
<td><em>Fear and Trembling</em>, Soren Kierkegaard.</td>
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<tr>
<td>GM</td>
<td><em>On The Genealogy of Morals</em>, Friedrich Nietzsche.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HA</td>
<td><em>Human, All Too Human</em>, Friedrich Nietzsche.</td>
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<td>HD</td>
<td><em>Heart of Darkness</em>, Joseph Conrad.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td><em>The Interpretation of Dreams</em>, Sigmund Freud.</td>
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<td>LJ</td>
<td><em>Lord Jim</em>, Joseph Conrad.</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td><em>Nostromo</em>, Joseph Conrad.</td>
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<td>NN</td>
<td><em>The Nigger of the &quot;Narcissus&quot;</em>, Joseph Conrad.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
PDP Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, Mikhail Bakhtin.

PP Past and Present, Thomas Carlyle.

PR A Personal Record, Joseph Conrad.

RI The Realistic Imagination, George Levine.

SR Sartor Resartus, Thomas Carlyle.

ST "Signs of the Times," Thomas Carlyle.

T Twilight of the Idols, Friedrich Nietzsche.

TSA The Secret Agent, Joseph Conrad.

UWE Under Western Eyes, Joseph Conrad.

V Victory, Joseph Conrad.

WP The Will to Power, Friedrich Nietzsche.

Z Thus Spake Zarathustra, Friedrich Nietzsche.
Reading Joseph Conrad Reading Nineteenth-Century Thought

In the famous dedication to H. G. Wells inscribed in The Secret Agent, Joseph Conrad describes his novel as a “simple tale of the nineteenth century.” If I may borrow some words from the chief engineer for the railway in Nostromo, “that’s what I call putting the face of a joke upon the body of a truth” (316). While The Secret Agent is, like all of Conrad’s major novels, anything but “simple,” I would argue that Conrad’s identification of the novel as a “tale of the nineteenth century” should be used as an epigraph for several of his works from Heart of Darkness to Victory. ¹ My thesis, which focuses on a selection of Joseph Conrad’s major novels as critical responses to several major nineteenth-century thinkers, is an inquiry into how Conrad engages in critical conversations with other authors concerning the value and significance of certain ideas.

The purpose of my inquiry is to explore Conrad’s novels as a criticism of the ideas expressed in the works of Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Charles Darwin, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Sigmund Freud. One major concern throughout my work is with Conrad as a reader and the books that he read, so I am inquiring into Conrad’s responses to the ideas of these nineteenth-century authors. The first five authors are especially significant in the development of Conrad’s art and thought because he critically rewrites their ideas throughout his works. Although Conrad evidently never read Freud, I have included his most famous and almost exact contemporary in order to compare the thought of two men who worked to revalue nineteenth-century ideas at the beginning of the twentieth century. Another major preoccupation for me is to explore Conrad’s art as criticism. My inquiry begins with questions about Conrad as an artist and thinker at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, one who is preoccupied with making a reassessment of the ideas which enable the intellectual and

¹ Brian Crick discusses the importance of the dedication in the opening of his chapter on Conrad in Love Confounded: Revaluing the Great Tradition (221-3). Crick notes that Conrad almost used “a simple tale” as the subtitle for Lord Jim.
literary culture that he inherits by choosing to become an artist, and more specifically, a novelist. How does Conrad’s art grow out of, and in response to, nineteenth-century forms and values? What ideas does he identify as significant and feel compelled to revalue when confronting his major predecessors? How does Conrad write his critical revaluations in the form of the novel? What do Conrad’s art and thought reveal about the art and thought of other writers?

I have chosen to use an important phrase from Nietzsche’s later writings in the title of this thesis, knowing well that in Nietzsche’s thought “a revaluation of values” usually points towards an intellectual or philosophical inversion of values. Nietzsche is the nineteenth-century master of identifying the antipodes at the basis of our systems of value in order to reorder conventional hierarchies: the highest values in Western Christian culture are turned upside down so that many of Nietzsche’s arguments are demonstrations of how a value that has been counted beneficial is really harmful. While it is necessary to recognize a kind of continuity in moving from Nietzsche’s to Conrad’s thought insofar as Conrad is also preoccupied with testing and questioning values, Conrad does not simply reproduce Nietzsche’s type of revaluation.

In Conrad’s thought, values are not simply inverted, nor does Conrad represent a simple repudiation of nineteenth-century ideas. Instead, ideas are tested against one another in order to explore the continuities and discontinuities, the appositions and oppositions between them. In some cases the antithetical ideas are obvious: knowing and not knowing. But in other instances the potential antithesis is more troubling, such as work and thought or suspicion and knowing. And everywhere in Conrad’s novels problems accumulate at a compound rate. Very rarely is there simply one pair of oppositions at issue; more often several ideas are layered in the discussion. So I argue that Conrad is raising questions about ideas and values, not offering new formulas to replace the old. In his works Conrad conducts inquiries which challenge readers to ask, “if this valuation is true” or “if these ideas are simply antipathetic” then “how do we account

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2 The idea of writing a “revaluation of all values” dominates Nietzsche’s thought in the works written in 1888. For instance, see the Foreword to Twilight of the Idols (31-2), but also The Anti-Christ and Ecce Homo.
for this circumstance” or “how do we account for this problem,” thereby revealing serious complications that transform our understanding of the relationships among different ideas. Conrad makes ideas decidedly difficult to know with any assurance: the revaluation of values moves towards a confounding and complicating of how we think. The criticism of thought and language that Conrad makes is meant to challenge readers into questioning the ideas and words that our culture uses and values. It is not that Conrad moves towards an intellectual and moral chaos, but that he proposes several potentially conflicting resolutions through the dramatic action of the novel. If we carefully attend to the subtle interrelationships that Conrad constructs, his novels direct us away from simple-minded thinking in a way analogous to Martha Nussbaum’s argument in Poetic Justice about Dickens’s art: the art proposes a movement away from intellectually confined concepts or theories in favor of the fuller human complexities that exist when the ideas are embodied in individual lives. My claim is that Conrad avoids absolute answers by exploring the conflicts among competing readings and possibilities, many of which are potentially true, yet all of which form but a part of the greater whole which does not wholly resolve the differences. The best description for the quality of Conrad’s thought, the action of his mind as it thinks about problems, is a radical ambivalence wherein combinations of ideas are placed in an unresolved tension.

In this introduction I will examine some important arguments informing my critical assumptions regarding Conrad’s art in relation to nineteenth-century thought. Then I will explain why I perceive ideas as the central preoccupation of Conrad’s novels in order to explore how Conrad’s art is a form of criticism. Finally, I will provide an explanation for the selection of authors included in my discussion and also address some potential objections to the arguments within and the structure of the six chapters that follow.

My thought about Conrad’s novels as criticism is partly informed by how F. R. Leavis and Ian Robinson use Matthew Arnold’s phrase “criticism of life,” specifically in relation to the nineteenth-century novel. Leavis’s arguments in The Great Tradition about Conrad being the
“servant of a profoundly serious interest in life” and also “one of those creative geniuses whose distinction is manifested in their being particularly alive in their time – particularly alive to it... sensitive to the stresses of the changing spiritual climate” hardly need to be rehearsed here (28, 33). However, the argument that Conrad is particularly sensitive to the spiritual climate of his time is important, because Leavis recognizes that Conrad’s writing is an attempt to register and record the signs of the times. Although Leavis does not make the connection explicit, his argument links Conrad with Carlyle, revealing an important analogy between the two authors who write social critiques at opposite ends of the Victorian age. In his writing, Conrad’s preoccupation with the spiritual climate in the late nineteenth century encapsulates the significant ideas in language and thought that enabled the cultural life of his time.

In The Survival of English, Robinson provides a concise statement about how Arnold’s “criticism of life” is a primary element informing the work of nineteenth-century novelists: “Something radically new and different came into the world with the nineteenth-century novel, the acceptance by the artist of the criticism of life as his prime responsibility” (230). In Robinson’s view, the “criticism of life became an attempt to see, as well as to be, ‘the age’” (230). Therefore, making a criticism of the life of a culture involves a “new kind of responsibility to language” because “the critic has to bear everything in language” (225). The novelists attempt to know their age by thinking profoundly about the everyday lived experience of various thoughts and emotions and by questioning the ideas that enable individual and communal being, thinking, and knowing in their culture. The criticism of life is above all a criticism of language and how words and ideas are not only valued, but actually lived. Like Leavis, Robinson points directly towards the artists’ awareness of and sensitivity to the intellectual currents of the age in which they live as a primary element of the criticism of life in the novel. The connection between art and criticism that persists throughout Leavis’s and Robinson’s works makes me want to question not only how Conrad’s art could be read as a form of criticism, but also what or whom Conrad
has in mind when writing his criticism. What are the key words and ideas in Conrad’s thought? Who is Conrad quarrelling with when writing about these words and ideas?

My thesis explores the kinds of questions I have raised with the qualification that my arguments are limited to Conrad’s art. Although I too believe that different novelists engage in a criticism of life, I cannot assert that Conrad’s practice as an artist and critic can be equated with the practices of other writers. Therefore, I am not offering a comprehensive statement about novelists in general or about the novel as a genre, but only inquiring into the preoccupations that mark Conrad’s art.

Another important background for my thesis is Edward Said’s comment, made in a paper entitled “Conrad and Nietzsche,” that “no one could have written such works as Heart of Darkness, with their suggestive dramatization of changes in state of mind, and not been sensitively attuned to the whole psychological culture of late nineteenth-century Europe” (75). Like Robinson, Said is concerned with the question of how the novelist is preoccupied with understanding the changes occurring in a culture, which means he or she attends carefully to the intellectual movements pervasive at the time and to the distinct individual voices within those movements. In the same essay, Said laments that “Conrad has been systematically treated as everything except a novelist with links to a cultural and intellectual context” (66). Since Said delivered his paper much has changed in literary criticism: nevertheless, Conrad’s relationship with his major intellectual and literary predecessors has not been sufficiently examined. Certainly a wealth of articles and chapters in books have been published concerning Conrad’s relationship with Dostoevsky, but there has not been the same kind of interest in investigating Conrad’s relationships with other major nineteenth-century writers. I have been surprised by the relative lack of critical articles on Conrad’s relationships with Carlyle, Dickens, Nietzsche, and others. Part of the problem is in the identification of what constitutes significant backgrounds or

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3 The paper was delivered at the 1974 International Conference on Conrad and later published in a collection edited by Norman Sherry entitled *Joseph Conrad: A Commemoration*. 
sources for Conrad's work. Few critics maintain the dual perspective concerning Conrad's relationship with the nineteenth century that informs George Levine's argument that Conrad both radically undermines and yet redeems the traditions of nineteenth-century English fiction, which "help[s] us to see his fictions as continuous with [George Eliot's] while being, at the same time, radical departures from them" (RI 47, 254). For Levine, understanding Conrad means recognizing how his art and thought both assimilate and reject the art of a major predecessor such as George Eliot. One important question when reading Conrad is what constitutes the relevant "cultural and intellectual context" for his works.

The dominant answer offered by critics since the time of Said's observation can be seen in the materials included in the Norton Critical Editions of Conrad's works. In the critical edition of *Heart of Darkness*, Robert Kimbrough includes current academic histories of the Congo, various historical documents from Maurice Hennessey, Sir Harry Johnston, John Hope Franklin, and George Washington Williams, among other things. In the critical edition of *Lord Jim*, Thomas Moser includes materials he identifies as "sources" for the novel such as a collection of newspaper articles, a court report, various descriptions of the people and the area supposed to be the location for Patusan, among other things. So the context is largely confined to historical documentation. In the opening paragraphs of "Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*: Politics and History," Hunt Hawkins objects to the inclusion of these kinds of materials alongside Conrad's works, because these documents "have no obvious connection with Conrad's story, which does not mention any of it" (207). Although Conrad may have made some use of these materials, I agree with Hawkins's judgement that reading them does little to enrich our reading of Conrad's art and thought. It does even less to further our understanding of Conrad's relationship to the intellectual conditions in which he lived, worked, and wrote. If we are to understand how Conrad is attuned to the whole intellectual and psychological culture of late nineteenth-century Europe, then identifying the authors whom Conrad reads and responds to is vitally important.
The problem can be put into perspective by considering the differences between what editors include as relevant sources and backgrounds in critical editions on Conrad’s works as opposed to Dostoevsky’s works. In the Norton Critical Edition of Dostoevsky’s Notes From Underground, Michael Katz includes not only some important passages from Dostoevsky’s letters and Winter Notes on Summer Impressions, but also excerpts from V. F. Odoevsky’s Russian Nights, I. S. Turgenev’s “Hamlet of Shchigrovsk District,” and N. G. Chernyshevsky’s What is to Be Done? At least part of the assumption guiding Katz’s selection of these texts is that, for readers to understand Dostoevsky’s art, it is important to know the works of literature to which Dostoevsky is responding. Several critics of Notes from Underground have recognized that Dostoevsky is preoccupied with rewriting and answering the ideas that Chernyshevsky advocated in his famous book What is to be Done?, so Katz has substantial reasons for thinking that including passages from the latter book is important and necessary.¹ No similar assumptions guide the decisions made by Conrad’s editors, which is to say that critics have not sufficiently recognized the degree to which the ideas and arguments of writers such as Carlyle and Nietzsche pervade Conrad’s thought. Not many of Conrad’s most influential critics make the kinds of arguments which would change the criteria informing the selections made by editors. This raises the question of why Dostoevsky’s art is perceived as strongly participating in a specific literary tradition, and more importantly, in a specific literary debate, while Conrad’s art is perceived as participating in historical-political rather than artistic or philosophical movements. In my view, it is much more important for the materials included in critical editions to provide an opportunity for readers to recognize at least some of the conversations in which Conrad engages with his literary predecessors. Passages from Carlyle’s early essays such as “Characteristics,” “On History,” and from the lectures published as On Heroes and Hero-Worship should be included in

¹ This piece is from Turgenev’s Notes of a Hunter.
² See Joseph Franks’s discussion, included in Katz’s edition of Notes from Underground, which reveals the important connections in Dostoevsky’s polemical reply to Chernyshevsky’s thought (213-50). The passage is originally from Frank’s Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation, 1860-1865 (310-47).
a critical edition of *Heart of Darkness*, and passages from *On Heroes* as well as from Darwin’s *Descent of Man* and Nietzsche’s writings should be included in a critical edition of *Lord Jim*. Whatever the abstract historical value of the documents often included in these editions, the significance of those materials pales in comparison with the works of art, criticism, and philosophy which enabled Conrad’s thought.

As if written in response to Edward Said’s call for a careful examination of the intellectual history informing Conrad’s work, Ian Watt’s *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* makes a real attempt to provide a deliberate account of “Conrad’s inheritances from the past [which] were so rich and diverse” (ix). Watt’s argument “involves some account of how [Conrad’s] works stand in relation to both the multifarious literary currents of the late nineteenth century, and to what we are still calling the ‘modern’ movement in literature” (ix). I agree with Watt’s idea that “these historical considerations help us to understand the nature and the originality of Conrad’s narrative methods more clearly; and these methods, in turn, are directly related to Conrad’s sensitiveness to the fundamental social and intellectual conflicts of his period” (ix-x). However, judging the overall effect of Watt’s work is difficult because the planned second volume which he promised to publish never materialized, a major loss to criticism on Conrad.⁶ I am unsure of the degree to which I should be critical of Watt’s argument that Conrad’s “basic intellectual assumptions were similar to those of the most original and influential thinkers of the last decades of the nineteenth century” (x). This idea causes Watt to focus too narrowly on the last decades of the century instead of looking at the whole intellectual tradition that Conrad inherited. Writing of Conrad’s relation to Dickens, Robert Caserio finds faults in Watt’s arguments concerning the relevant contexts for Conrad’s art and thought. In Caserio’s mind, “we certainly want to see what Watt promises to show: how Conrad is not incidentally, loosely situated in the nineteenth century but is exactly of that time. We want, that is, to see how the

⁶ Watt describes the scope of the planned second volume at the end of the “Preface” to *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*. See page x. Some parts originally intended for the second volume are published in *Joseph Conrad: Nostromo* and *Essays on Conrad*. 
exposition of a writer’s context is not mere arbitrary juxtaposing of his texts with certain contemporary isms and ideas” (337). To be just, Watt may have discussed Conrad’s relationship with writers such as Dickens, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche in the later critical work. Nevertheless, there is some merit to Caserio’s claims that “the prime fault of [Watt’s] contextualizing method is an evasion of Conrad’s relation to Victorian literature” (337). When Watt does discuss an earlier nineteenth-century writer such as Carlyle in relation to Heart of Darkness, he does not realize the full significance of the presence of Carlyle’s ideas in Conrad’s thought. His readings of Heart of Darkness and Lord Jim would be much richer had he included a more detailed consideration of Conrad’s relationship with Carlyle and considered the importance of other nineteenth-century writers such as Dickens and Nietzsche. So, in one way, I am attempting to provide an addendum to Watt’s work, without pursuing the larger biographical speculations that he includes in his study. Instead, I focus very narrowly on Conrad’s relationship with specific literary predecessors in terms of the language and ideas that he assimilates and reworks. The particular human responses to larger cultural movements and conflicts that Conrad found in the writings of a Carlyle or a Nietzsche are very important for his art and thought. These authors are the very embodiment of the signs of the times in having written critical responses to the age in which they lived. In effect, Conrad writes novels about the spirit of the age in response to other thinkers doing the same work.

While Caserio’s preoccupation with the “persistent critical neglect” of the influence of Dickens on Conrad’s thought and what he identifies as the “Victorian Conrad” differs somewhat from my own critical focus, I can agree with him that a detailed discussion of Conrad’s relationship with significant nineteenth-century authors is sorely lacking (338). More importantly, I attempt to answer Caserio’s call for a “criticism that does more than designate specific passages or sequences” where Conrad works or sounds like another author (338). In questioning the relationship between Dickens and Conrad, Caserio asks for an inquiry into their

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7 Unless otherwise noted, all italics are in the original.
shared “assumptions concerning the novel as a form of literature and of knowledge” (338). The most important element in this “is a pride of art that employs the novel form to criticize other intellectual endeavours – indeed to put most non-novelistic modes of reflection to shame” (339). I agree with Caserio’s view that “Conrad deliberately resists approximation to alternative intellectual spheres” and “the novel as Conrad practices the form challenges the authority of history, sociology, philosophy, and science” (339). Throughout my discussion, I am not interested in merely identifying passages in which Conrad adopts an idea or a style from Carlyle or Nietzsche, but rather with recognizing how Conrad rewrites and critiques the ideas of other authors. As Caserio argues concerning the presence of readily identifiable literary, philosophic, or scientific ideas or words in Conrad’s work, the idea “is more likely criticized than illustrated by a Conradian approximation to it; and a substantial critical contextualizing would have to take the novel’s implicit or potential opposition into account” (341). Throughout this thesis, I am concerned with Conrad’s criticism of the ideas and forms of other authors, although I do recognize that Conrad’s criticism is never wholly antagonistic or oppositional. The dominant perspective here is on Conrad’s critical voice. However, Conrad’s admiration of Dickens causes him to explore some central ideas in Bleak House, providing a revaluation in a different sense. For Conrad, Dickens may be the most important thinker in the nineteenth century.

I read Conrad’s novels very much as expressions of Conrad’s ideas and thoughts in response to the ideas and thoughts of other authors. The novels are manifestations of Conrad’s critical frame of mind that is consistently testing and questioning received ideas and values. The writing of the novels is a thinking through of the important questions preoccupying Conrad’s mind. Undoubtedly some conclusions might be inferred from his works, but in my view Conrad is not primarily interested in the discovery of a solution to the questions he raises and sets in motion; instead, there is an intense interest in the process, movement, and action of ideas in living

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8 Duke Maskell makes a sustained argument in “Politics Needs Literature” about how literary forms criticize other intellectual endeavours such as politics and economics. His work anticipates Nussbaum’s later arguments in Love’s Knowledge and Poetic Justice.
and being. To borrow an idea that George Whalley often discusses, Conrad’s writing is radically heuristic. And to adapt an idea from John Henry Newman’s *The Idea of a University*, I read Conrad’s novels as primarily thought for the sake of thought. When Newman makes a case about attending university for the opportunity to think, for “Knowledge as Its Own End,” he carefully responds to questions about the value of thought such as “what is the use of it?” or “to what then does it lead?” or “what does it do?” (77). His answer is that thinking is a good in itself, independent of any solutions it might propose or ends it might be used to forward. Arnold too recognized the value in thinking independent of doing, and argues repeatedly in *Culture and Anarchy* that the general “preference of doing to thinking” must be corrected by a more just conception of the value of thinking in and of itself (86). The ability to identify a problem or ask the right question is at least as, if not more, important than the ability to formulate an answer. My argument is that Conrad’s responses to his major predecessors realize one of the most important ideas in *Sartor Resartus*, which is the wonder in “Thought kindling itself at the fire of living Thought” (82).

The fundamental premise for my reading is that Conrad’s novels are a product of Conrad’s thinking, and that there is no way to enact a straightforward separation between the artist and his works despite the claims made by writers as different as T. S. Eliot, Roland Barthes, and Michel Foucault. I am very aware of the danger of being accused of literary theoretical naïvety in thinking that the mind of the man Joseph Conrad is written into the style of his prose and the structure of his novels. Nevertheless, I agree with Henry James that novels “are

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9 See Samuel Goldberg’s argument in the last chapter of *Agents and Lives* about the tendency in modern criticism and philosophy towards conduct morality, by which he means thought about how we should act or what we ought to do. He counters this view with an argument about what he calls life morality, which is thought about how we do live, about different lives. The basic distinction is articulated in the second chapter of his book, “‘How to live’ and ‘how to live’” (36-62).

10 In “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” T. S. Eliot’s argument that “the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates” advocates that a critical distinction be made between the artist and his or her works (41). Barthes’s essay entitled “The Death of the Author” and Foucault’s essay entitled “What Is an Author?” are important sources promoting the claims which I allude to here.
successful in proportion as they reveal a particular mind, different from others” and that the “novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life” (“Fiction” 192). The argument Whalley makes concerning the relation between a writer and his or her work is the best thinking about this problem that I can provide. Whalley argues that

behind every utterance there is a person. It is not simply the words that mean; it is a person who means; and what the person means, intends to convey or declare or conceal and for what reason, is physically imprinted into the structure and texture of the language, unless he is using language very badly. (“Scholarship” 82)

The “imprint” of the thinker is important for Whalley, because “in the hands of a competent mind, prose style is the image of the mind that produces it” (“Translating” 54). Therefore, if the critic reads with sufficient deliberation and care, “to the perceptive ear an utterance becomes not only a declaration by a writer but also a disclosure of a writer” (“Scholarship” 82). Whalley’s argument informs my thinking about the relationship not only between Conrad and his works, but also the other authors and their works as well. And as I demonstrate in the chapters that follow, I am responding in a way analogous to how Conrad responds to Dostoevsky or Nietzsche. The works written by all the writers are not only declarations but also disclosures: the styles and the structures manifest the authors’ thoughts. So a major problem for the critic is the discovery of the assumptions, the ideals, and values which enable the writing. The representation of the relationship between Raskolnikov and Sonya discloses some of the characteristic tendencies of Dostoevsky’s thought. The design of Freud’s case histories is not simply a medical convention but the expression of a mind in love with detective fictions that is indulging in a desire to be a successful detective. Hence I will argue that Conrad’s parodies or caricatures of other authors often mix aspects of their lives with aspects of their art: this is evident in Conrad’s troubling caricature of Nietzsche in Stevie in The Secret Agent and of Dostoevsky in Peter Ivanovitch in Under Western Eyes. I do not need to prove that Conrad had sure and certain biographical
knowledge of the authors' personal lives, because all of these authors, including Conrad, write
enough of themselves into their works to make some judgements about their ideas and values and
characteristic thoughts possible. I assume that neither I nor Conrad respond simply to the work,
but always have in mind that there is a person whose mind has formed the work.

The emphasis given in my argument to the importance of ideas in Conrad's works is
necessary because the valuation of the thinking of the scientist, philosopher, or theorist as
superior to the thinking of the artist is pervasive in our culture. Although Freud would, at times,
acknowledge that artists anticipated the insights he codified in his psychoanalytic theory, he is
partly responsible for disseminating the idea that artists are not really thinkers. As I discuss in the
sixth chapter, Freud's distinction between being "a man of letters engaged upon the creation of a
mental state... for a short story" and "a medical man engaged upon a dissection" devalues the
artist's thought (D 95). The artist merely "simplifies and abstracts" whereas the psychoanalyst
reveals a "complication of motives" (D 95). In contemporary criticism, theories are readily
employed to elucidate works of art without sufficiently questioning whether the works of art
cannot also critique the approaches brought to bear upon them. But Freud is not alone in placing
the thought of artists in a rank below the thought of scientists and philosophers, because some
prominent writers in the nineteenth century had paved the way for him.

In "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Matthew Arnold, one of the great
advocates for literature, makes artists dependent upon philosophers and scientists in order to
work. Perhaps inadvertently, Arnold contributes to the intellectual conditions enabling claims
such as Freud's that devalue the thought of artists. In discussing how the "creative power"
requires "materials" with which to work, Arnold explains that "the elements with which the
creative power works are ideas; the best ideas on every matter which literature touches, current at
the time" (260). Arnold argues that the

creative literary genius does not principally show itself in discovering new ideas.

that is rather the business of the philosopher. The grand work of literary genius
is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in
the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual
atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, when it finds itself in them: of dealing
divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive
combinations, – making beautiful works with them, in short. (260-1)

Although the passage is concerned with philosophers, there is a clear anticipation of Freud’s
thought. The philosopher, or in Freud’s case the psychoanalyst, works at discovering new ideas
that inspire and invigorate the “intellectual and spiritual atmosphere” of an age. For Arnold, the
artist depends upon the good fortune of living in an inspired age; otherwise, like the Romantics,
he or she is forced to work “without having its proper data, without sufficient materials to work
with” (262). “Energy” and “creative force” are insufficient if the artist lives in an age that “did
not know enough” (262). Arnold places too much significance in the work of philosophers and
too little value in the intellectual powers of poets and novelists. Conrad was undoubtedly
“inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere” in composing his works, having read
a wide range of writings by his nineteenth-century predecessors, but Arnold is mistaken in
thinking that artists are merely “dealing divinely” with ideas and making “beautiful works with
them.” The idea that artists simply assimilate philosophic ideas is questionable, as is the
argument that only philosophers create ideas. But if there are distinctions to be made, Arnold
does not question whether ideas undergo any significant changes or are altogether transformed
when moved from one form of thought into another, for instance, from a philosophical essay into
a novel.

In “The Novel as Scientific Discourse: The Example of Conrad,” George Levine attempts
to provide a corrective to the kind of unbalanced judgements that Arnold and Freud offer which

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11 In *Joseph Conrad's Reading: An Annotated Bibliography*, David W. Tutein has compiled a
catalogue of Conrad’s reading according to the evidence available from his works and
correspondence, as well as from academic research. The list is impressive, and demonstrates that
Conrad read a number of genres including poetry, plays, memoirs, histories, biographies, novels,
classical works, journals and magazines, as well as philosophic and scientific works.
devalue art as a form of thought. Levine acknowledges that it "would be absurd not to recognize that scientific discourse is another kind of thing from the discourse of the novel," rejecting the notion that the disciplines can simply be treated as equal or without differences (221). Producing Isaac Newton and Henry Fielding as examples, Levine remarks that "one gains nothing from treating them as equivalent, although something might well be gained by thinking of them as related, as expressing in alternative ways certain shared assumptions" (221). Having mentioned Arnold several times in his essay, Levine probably has in mind the passage I quoted from "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." Levine argues,

Here as elsewhere, the assumptions and fundamental values of a culture, as they are formulated in the discourse taken generally to be its most authoritative, will almost certainly inform its art. In a way, that is a truism. But the play of assumptions within fiction is often no mere replication of ideas and attitudes available elsewhere. While the novel will inevitably work with unarticulated cultural assumptions, its form can entail a rich exploration of their implications, sometimes a raising of them to consciousness and a demystifying of them, sometimes direct subversion. (222)

In Conrad's case, the ideas in question are not necessarily unconscious or unarticulated cultural assumptions but rather significant ideas central to Darwin's, Nietzsche's, and later Freud's thought. And Conrad's novels are certainly "no mere replication" of scientific or philosophic ideas. Levine argues that criticism "requires an alertness to the presence of scientific discourse... not only because it helps clarify what the texts are doing, but because the texts themselves often constitute a fictional test of the science" (223). But with the questions that I am examining, I cannot quite agree with Levine that literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and science are simply "expressing in alternative ways certain shared assumptions." The conversation among these authors is also an argument, not only about ideas but about modes of thought and ways in which
to inquire about causes and consequences in thinking and being. At many times, Conrad
disagrees with and criticizes the ideas that Carlyle, Dostoevsky, or Nietzsche advocated.

In making this argument my thesis engages with a significant discussion about the
importance of the distinct kinds of thinking found in literature and, more specifically, in the
novel.12 Knowing that I cannot possibly survey the mass of critical essays and books that have
contributed to this discussion, I will appeal to Martha Nussbaum’s and Samuel Goldberg’s
arguments about literature as a distinct and irreplaceable form of thinking and knowing. While
my thesis is not primarily focused on the distinctions between literature and philosophy or on
questions of ethical conduct, both of which I see as significant components in their criticism,
Nussbaum and Goldberg are relevant to my discussion because their arguments, in some ways,
approximate and anticipate my critical practice.13

Both Nussbaum and Goldberg argue that the novel offers a kind of thinking that is
distinct from other genres.14 In examining Nussbaum’s “formal claim” about the difference
between philosophical and literary works, Rohan Maitzen identifies the importance of “her
contention that the philosophical significance of novels is to be found not in whatever theories or
principles they might overtly discuss or dramatize but in their literary form and in their style” (1).
Maitzen’s identification is true for Goldberg as well. Both Nussbaum and Goldberg argue that
literary form cannot be separated from content and that the form itself makes a vital contribution

12 I am appealing to the wide-ranging debate among articles in the journal Literature and
Philosophy, and collections of critical essays such as Spilka’s and McCracken-Flesher’s Why the
Novel Matters: A Postmodern Perplex, Adamson’s Freadman’s, and Parker’s Renegotiating
Ethics in Literature, Philosophy, and Theory, and Davis’s and Womack’s Mapping the Ethical
Turn.
13 While invoking both Goldberg and Nussbaum here, I am aware that Goldberg includes a strong
criticism of how readers who are primarily working in philosophy or working on the relationship
between philosophy and literature often think about literature in a manner which is limited to
considerations about the morality of conduct. See the last chapter of Agents and Lives.
14 In Goldberg, see especially Chapter Three: “Agents and lives: Making Moral Sense of People”;
Chapter Four: “Doing good to others: Some Reflections on Daniel Deronda”; and Chapter Five:
“Moral Thinking in The Mill on the Floss.” Nussbaum has written a wealth of material; however,
hers introduction to Love’s Knowledge, “Form and Content, Philosophy and Literature,” seems to
me to be a relatively comprehensive statement of the claims she wants to make.
to the manner in which the ideas are questioned and examined.\textsuperscript{15} For instance, in \textit{Poetic Justice} Nussbaum uses Dickens's \textit{Hard Times} to demonstrate how the complexity of the novel can be located in the representations of the concrete lives and circumstances with which Dickens makes a criticism of abstract philosophical systems such as utilitarianism, thereby separating the specificity of the prose in the novel from the more abstract prose of utilitarian philosophers. One of Nussbaum's primary preoccupations is with how the novelist provokes responses that not only involve our rational and conscious minds but the emotional and unconscious elements of our being as well. As Goldberg argues, the form of the novel is important because in representing the lived experiences of different lives in fiction, the novelists demand a kind of reading that is not limited to one or another of our mental and emotional faculties, but instead demands what Goldberg identifies as “a wholeness of response” (92).\textsuperscript{16} For both critics, the writing and the reading of novels involves the whole of a person's being. The novel is identified as a special kind of thought because, as Goldberg argues, “the novel can capture of moral lives” what the “moral philosopher, even one who thinks he values literature very highly, cannot capture in 'discourse,' which inevitably gives priority – logical and evaluative priority – to its own kind of conceptual terms and argument, and consequently sees literature as simply exemplifying or instantiating them” (285). Goldberg agrees with Nussbaum in suggesting that “literature is not a storehouse of examples for use in traditional philosophical discourse” because ideas are not “prior to art” (289). Conrad's novels are an important example of how the genre can be a distinct kind of criticism, of critical art and thought, and I am keenly aware of Goldberg's warning that “moral thinking in the novel [is] so difficult to untangle” (151).

\textsuperscript{15} Cora Diamond's “Martha Nussbaum and the Need for Novels” offers a concise statement of Nussbaum's arguments.

\textsuperscript{16} Goldberg's argument echoes D. H. Lawrence's argument in “Why the Novel Matters” about how “in their wholeness [novels] affect the whole man alive” and provoke a response that involves “the wholeness of a man, the wholeness of a woman” (207, 209).
There should be little doubt that Conrad’s novels raise profound questions about ideas.17 Everywhere in his major works Conrad reminds readers that he is thinking about the problems inherent in the ideas informing our living. He repeatedly asks readers to recognize that ideas are at issue at every moment in his writing. Conrad’s challenge to Edward Garnett to recognize that “I am concerned with nothing but ideas, to the exclusion of everything else” is also a challenge to all of his readers (LJC 4, 489). For instance, in Lord Jim the relation between ideas and beliefs is questioned through the representation of the passengers who board the Patna in order to undertake their pilgrimage “at the call of an idea” (14). Throughout the novel, Conrad shows how Marlow is disconcerted by the potential dangers in ideas which threaten like “tramps, vagabonds, breaking at the backdoor of your mind” (30). In depicting Brierly’s suicide, Conrad invokes the danger posed by “some thought with which a man unused to such a companionship finds it impossible to live” (39). Knowing the terrible dangers of ideas, especially in their power to change our living and being, Conrad often provides warnings about how “ideas may be poison to you” (UWE 60). In Under Western Eyes, Conrad raises questions about “times... when men were sacrificing themselves to ideas,” and shows the potential consequences and dangers when a character gets “any ideas into his head” (58-9). Haldin’s assassination is enabled by revolutionary ideas; he acts upon a way of knowing, upon a kind of thinking. Razumov’s angry questions to Kostia could be read as analogous to Conrad’s own demands to his readers: “What do you know of my ideas?”; “What have you got to do with ideas?” (60). These are the most elementary questions Conrad could ask of us. Conrad constantly explores how ideas pass among and through different human consciousnesses and asks readers to recognize the changes that occur in these transformations. The idea can become a catalyst for some change in the knowing and thinking and being of a person, or the idea can become transformed by the knowing and thinking of a character into something radically different. Undoubtedly having Dostoevsky’s

17 I disagree with George Levine’s argument that in Conrad’s “works ‘ideas’ are not as central as they are in George Eliot’s” (RI 274).
Notes From Underground in mind when writing “A man of ideas – and a man of action too,” Conrad is constantly concerned with the relationship between ideas and actions (59). In Conrad’s work, no man of action is not also the embodiment of certain ideas, and no man of ideas is not also the cause of certain actions, whether performed by himself or others.

All of Conrad’s novels should be read as sustained meditations upon the kinds of reflections on ideas that I am raising here. Although the narrator of Under Western Eyes holds that listening for ideas is a “peculiarity of Russian natures,” I would argue that Conrad wants his readers to be engaged with the ideas in his novels: he asks “that, however strongly engaged in the drama of action, they are still turning their ear to the murmur of abstract ideas” (208). Of course, the ideas in Conrad’s fiction are never entirely abstract because the ideas are embodied in the lives and actions of his characters, but the constant murmur of ideas is the same. One of the great challenges in Conrad’s fiction is articulated through Tekla. She reflects upon the time in which “I began to think by myself” and realizes that “it is not very easy, such thinking. One has got to be put in the way of it, awakened to the truth” (107). While Conrad’s art may not offer “the truth,” it does make ideas and thought primary considerations for readers. To paraphrase Arnold’s characterization of Edmund Burke’s writings, Conrad’s novels are saturated with thought (“Function” 266).

The notion that Conrad’s novels are about thought, about the ways in which we think, is difficult to explain; my practical discussions in the chapters that follow provide a much better demonstration. In the next section I will provide some justification for this idea by appealing to other critics. What follows is significant for understanding how I read Conrad as embodying ideas in his characters and the narratives of his novels. I will invoke Aristotle’s ideas about narrative action before turning to Mikhail Bakhtin’s, D. H. Lawrence’s, and Goldberg’s arguments about how novels work. I am not insisting that these critics are in agreement, only that each writer helps to clarify a subject that is difficult to summarize.
My first inclination is to point towards Aristotle’s Poetics and the introduction to the translation containing Whalley’s excellent discussion of art as radically the making of an action.\textsuperscript{18} Although Aristotle discusses the relation between the thinking of the author and the whole of the work several times throughout the Poetics, I am especially concerned with his discussion of “The Primacy of Plot over Character,” in which he argues that

tragedy is a \textit{mimesis} not of men [simply] but of actions – that is, of life. That’s how it is that they certainly do not act in order to present their characters: they embrace their characters for the sake of the actions [they are to do]. And so the [course of] events – the plot – is the \textit{end} of tragedy, and the end is what matters most of all. (73)

While Aristotle is primarily interested in tragedy, I would argue that his ideas apply to the novel as well. The primacy given to the overall structure of the art and the action is important, because, as Whalley emphasizes, Aristotle is concerned with “the poet as ‘maker’” and with art as “radically the \textit{process} of making” (“Translating” 59). The importance of the individual characters to the thought of the whole work is in them articulating the trajectory of the action. The characters exist as an expression of that action as a realization of an idea within the thought of the plot. The writer inscribes ideas into the thoughts and actions of the characters; the ideas are embodied in the trajectory of the plot or action of the work of art. As the characters are used to express the action, they embody the ideas.

A modern critic such as Mikhail Bakhtin makes a similar argument. In discussing “The Idea in Dostoevsky” in Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics, Bakhtin is preoccupied with how “the idea really does become almost the hero of the work” (78). He challenges readers to “remember first of all that the image of an idea is inseparable from the image of a person, the carrier of that

\textsuperscript{18} See Whalley’s article “On Translating Aristotle’s Poetics” in Studies in Literature and the Humanities or in the introduction to Whalley’s translation Aristotle’s Poetics (3-37).
idea” and that “we see the hero in the idea and through the idea, and we see the idea in him and through him” (85).

Goldberg argues that “dramatic art can work differently” than non-dramatic works of literature because “it provides a form in which moral issues can be thought about more adequately because they can be thought about not only in general terms, but also concretely, in the given particulars” (173). For Goldberg, the importance of the novel form is the manner in which it represents the universal and the particular simultaneously by “present[ing] human beings immediately in the very activity and flow of life” and as “specific moral lives” with distinct histories (173–4). Characters in Conrad’s art should be read as the embodiments of ideas and the actions interconnected with those ideas. In this, Conrad is drawing upon an important argument that Carlyle makes early in the nineteenth century. Carlyle employs an argument about actions, things, and people as embodiments of ideas in constructing the clothes philosophy in *Sartor Resartus*: “Who am I; what is this ME? A Voice, a Motion, an Appearance;—some embodied, visualized idea in the Eternal Mind?” (42). And most importantly, Conrad himself explicitly meditates on similar ideas in his novels. As if quoting from Carlyle’s ideas concerning every thing or person being the embodiment or realization of a thought, Conrad writes in *Under Western Eyes* that “life is a thing of form. It has its plastic shape and a definite intellectual aspect. The most idealistic conceptions of love and forbearance must be clothed in flesh, as it were, before they can be made understandable” (77). Conrad’s art invokes ideas by clothing them in the flesh of the characters. In this, Conrad was attracted to both Carlyle’s ideas and Dostoevsky’s methods, testing the ideas through the actions of the characters within the trajectory of the plot.

In all of the chapters that follow, I discuss how Conrad explores ideas taken from his major predecessors in the characters and plots of his novels. For example, in *Heart of Darkness*

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19 Although it is difficult to point to one particular passage of *Sartor Resartus* to identify an argument, I would suggest that the chapters on “The World in Clothes” and “The World Out of Clothes” in Book One are the best place to see the development of Carlyle’s idea.
Conrad does not make the character of Marlow merely speak about or reflect upon the ideas of hero-worship and work, but instead enables Marlow’s thoughts and actions and the very telling of his story by the living through of those ideas, both in the past experience and the present retelling of that experience. My argument is that readers can hardly grasp the significance of Marlow’s thinking and telling without recognizing the significance of the presence of Carlyle’s ideas informing his character. This is not to suggest that Conrad is reproducing Carlyle’s ideas verbatim: in forming Marlow’s character around the ideas, Conrad shows what potentially happens to the ideas when they are “clothed in flesh.” Marlow’s judgements of the Company Accountant, the brick maker, and the African men, his response to the grove of death, and his ambivalent relationship with Kurtz are all enabled by the ideas of hero worship and work that inform his character. With other perspectives in the novel, the Company Accountant, the brick maker, and the manager are all commentaries on the potentialities in the ideal of work when realized in life, and the same can be said for the frame narrator and the Russian in relation to hero worship. Of course, there is a significant difference between Marlow’s criticism of work or the Russian’s hero worship and Conrad’s thought about the ideas through the novel as a whole. Whatever the shortcomings or faults readers might identify in the art, Conrad’s thought cannot be equated with anything less than the complexity of the novel as a whole. Conrad designs the action of the novel to emphasize certain aspects of Carlyle’s ideas that are not within Marlow’s understanding. Therefore, Marlow cannot wholly understand his ambivalent relationship with Kurtz, nor can he wholly understand his compulsion to work before and during the voyage up the river. Marlow’s understanding is limited within the living and thinking that his particular experience makes possible. Never does Conrad merely illustrate the ideas, but instead tests the possibilities inherent in the thinking and living of the ideas.

In the chapters that follow, I make the necessary demonstration of how Conrad’s thinking is manifested in the design of his novels, so here I am merely providing a kind of summary that cannot do justice to Conrad’s actual practice. As Aristotle argues, the artist is concerned with
making the action or the plot as a whole, and each of the characters embodies some aspect of that larger, controlling action. But since Aristotle is not reflecting upon the novel, I will turn to the critical arguments of D. H. Lawrence, who in my mind remains one of the most important critics of art and the novel, and Bakhtin, whose insights into Dostoevsky's art can also be read in relation to Conrad's art.

Lawrence argues that the writer makes the action and the individual characters embody aspects of the complexity of the whole. In "The Novel" Lawrence raises the question, "in every great novel, who is the hero all the time?" and answers "not any of the characters, but some unnamed and nameless flame behind them all" (183). For Lawrence, the author's thought is the primary consideration, which means attending to the design of the novel as a whole. If "the novel is the highest example of subtle inter-relatedness," then one of the most important aspects of the form for Lawrence is that the novel is "so incapable of the absolute" and "contains no didactive absolute" ("Morality" 174, 179. "Novel" 183). Lawrence argues that "in a novel, everything is relative to everything else, if that novel is art at all" ("Novel" 179). I agree with Lawrence's view that every element in the novel exists only in relation to every other element and must be valued accordingly. The form is radically comparative in the way the various actions and the utterances of the characters are placed in relation to one another. To use a word that Lawrence would probably repudiate as too scientific, the novel is constructed analogically, or the structure is designed so that all the elements within the design are understood only through the analogies that can be drawn with other elements in the design.20 Bakhtin's arguments about the dialogic nature of Dostoevsky's art are in many respects similar to Lawrence's insistence upon the "inter-

20 In Joseph Conrad and the Fictions of Skepticism, Mark Wollaeger discusses Conrad's use of a "technique of an encompassing network of analogies" in comparing Conrad's and Dickens's art (84). In his view, "it is analogy that structures the text" (85). In "The Plot in The Secret Agent," Paul Dolan makes a similar argument in observing that "Conrad is careful to work always by analogy" (228). For Dolan, "Conrad's most characteristic technique is the creation of analogous relationships which the reader must discern if he or she is fully to experience the reality of the novel" (228). See also Ian Watt's arguments concerning thematic opposition, demonstrating the narrative rhythms that Conrad creates through subtle repetition and variation (CNC 270-86).
relatedness" of the novel form. Bakhtin is preoccupied with "the dialogic nature of human thought, the dialogic nature of the idea" (87). For Bakhtin, "the idea begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas, with the ideas of others" (88). Both critics ask readers to read the analogical relations among the ideas and actions as they are embodied in the characters.

To read Conrad’s novels with sufficient care and deliberation, it is necessary to read analogically. Throughout my thesis I demonstrate the degree to which Conrad structures his novels so that elements seemingly unrelated or opposed are actually interconnected or identical. Conrad carefully crafts the representation of the different characters as related aspects of a complex whole so that each can almost be read as an independent embodiment of certain ideas, impulses, and emotions, but never completely so. The relationships among characters are highly uncertain; depending upon which ideas are emphasized at any given moment or through which character’s perspective the relationship is seen, the relation of the ideas that the characters embody can change. For instance, if resentment is taken as a key idea in Lord Jim, then a wealth of analogies can be detected in the novel. But if self-preservation is the dominant idea, then different relations become prominent. If work is identified as a central problem in Under Western Eyes, then not only do Haldin and Razumov come together in a closer relation, but many other analogies are recognized between Tekla, Sophia, and Peter Ivanovitch. If greatness or heroism is emphasized, then a different set of relations becomes evident. Perhaps the best example I offer is contained in Chapter 4, where I discuss Conrad’s complex design that uses Carlyle’s ideal of heroism, Darwin’s ideas about self-preservation and self-sacrifice, and Nietzsche’s ideas about self-sacrifice as self-destruction, and how Conrad’s thought anticipates Freud’s later theories about the antipodal relationship between self-preservation and self-destruction. Not only are the different ideas included in the novel as a whole, but they are all embodied within Jim, being tested in relation to one another through the trajectory of Jim’s existence. But the greater
problem is to recognize that while I can write sentences that neatly summarize one or another aspect of Conrad’s design, the thought in the art as a whole is compounded. Conrad is never simply thinking about work or resentment or self-preservation but exploring the relations among all three simultaneously.

So why did Conrad write his criticism in the form of the novel? While I can recognize some ways in which Conrad’s art and thought works, I cannot offer a definitive answer to the question of why Conrad chose to become a novelist or make his criticism of life in the novel. Part of the problem of suggesting that Conrad made some kind of wholly individual choice is in recognizing that throughout Conrad’s art the conversations, whether written or spoken, are often forced dialogues. I am never sure whether Conrad imagines himself more as a person forced to hear others speak or as a person forced to write. Most likely, it is a combination of both. The best analogy may be to compare Conrad’s thought about writing to the aspect of Razumov’s life wherein he is compelled by Haldin to listen and by Mikulin to write, or to the aspect of Marlow’s life wherein he is compelled to listen to Jim and also compelled to speak and write about him. A characteristic moment in Conrad’s thinking can be recognized in the style of this exchange between Mikulin and Razumov:

Again Councillor Mikulin glanced down his beard with a faint grimace; but he did not pause for long. REMARKING WITH A SHADE OF SCORN THAT BLASPHEMERS ALSO HAD THAT SORT OF BELIEF, he concluded by supposing that Mr. Razumov had conversed frequently with Haldin on the subject.

“No,” said Razumov loudly, without looking up. “He talked and I listened. That is not a conversation.”

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21 One very important aspect of the story in A Personal Record that Conrad tells about his first reader’s favourable response to Almayer’s Folly is the degree to which the passsage divides the responsibility for Conrad’s becoming an author between the author and the reader. In a way, Conrad denies being solely responsible for becoming a novelist by attributing significant weight to the reader’s judgement about the value of the work. See A Personal Record (15-19).

22 This is one of the most important arguments in Aaron Fogel’s Coercion to Speak. See especially Chapter 1 (1-38) and Chapter 5 (180-218).
“Listening is a great art,” observed Mikulin parenthetically.

“And getting people to talk is another,” mumbled Razumov. (UWE 67)

In some way analogous to the forced conversations which Razumov must endure, Conrad seems to be compelled in some way to listen to the conflicting ideas expressed by his literary predecessors and write in response to them. But developing the next step in the argument is yet more difficult. Having been forced to listen to Haldin’s confession, Razumov begins writing a confession. That is, he responds in kind, so that being compelled to listen is interconnected with the compulsion to write. To what degree is Conrad compelled to write his responses in the form of the novel? In my view, Conrad’s choice of form is interrelated with his reading of novels and other literary works, particularly Shakespeare’s plays. This is not to say that other forms are not important, only that nineteenth-century novelists and Shakespeare are vital influences on Conrad’s art and thought.

While my study is not primarily an investigation into literary influence, the argument throughout my work is partly concerned with which authors in Conrad’s reading are especially important for his writing. Therefore, I am willing to speculate that the subtlety and complexity of Conrad’s thought is at least partly enabled by his reading of Shakespeare. The total effect of Conrad’s experience reading Shakespeare is difficult to measure. The encounter is a continuing element through his life, from the initial discovery of the translations in his father’s study to the pocket edition of Shakespeare’s plays which Conrad kept with him as a sailor. I am convinced

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23 Several writers have explored the importance of Shakespeare’s art and thought for Conrad’s writing. For instance, see Adam Gillon’s essays on the two writers originally published in Conradiana and later collected in Joseph Conrad: Comparative Essays, and the essay on Hamlet and Lord Jim by Thomas Schultheiss. As Schultheiss states, “that Conrad read and was substantially influenced by Shakespeare’s works is a matter of simple fact” (102).

24 The discovery of Shakespeare’s works in his father’s study marks a significant moment of initiation into literature for Conrad. In Chapter 4 of A Personal Record, Conrad records his memories, or lack thereof, concerning the morning he began writing what would become his first novel. His memories lead him back to his “first introduction to English literature” (71). He describes a childhood experience when “instead of going out to play in the large yard” he “lingered in the room in which my father generally wrote” (71). Fascinated by his father’s translation of Shakespeare’s The Two Gentlemen of Verona, he stopped to read:
that Conrad's lifelong preoccupation with Shakespeare informed his use of the novel form as a way of exploring the problems and questions which were important to him. Certainly, Conrad's reading of Dostoevsky and Flaubert and other novelists also caused some predisposition in Conrad's mind towards the novel. And his reading of Carlyle, Dickens, and James also informed his decision to write in the English language. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's influence casts a shadow across Conrad's work.

Despite Bakhtin's claims to the contrary, Shakespeare is the dialogic thinker par excellence. Shakespeare's inquiries into ideas through the perspectives of multiple voices and styles are unparalleled. The styles Shakespeare employs to create the human intelligences of his characters are a product of his thinking, but not equivalent to the capacity for thought in his mind. Despite Freud's inability to comprehend how Shakespeare could imagine so many differing lives and psychological conditions, Shakespeare's mind cannot be equated with the thoughts of King

What emboldened me to clamber into his chair I am sure I don't know, but a couple of hours afterwards he discovered me kneeling in it with my elbows on the table and my head held in both hands over the MS. of loose pages. I was greatly confused, expecting to get into trouble. He stood in the doorway looking at me with some surprise, but the only thing he said after a moment of silence was:

"Read the page aloud."

Luckily the page lying before me was not over blotted with erasures and corrections, and my father's handwriting was otherwise extremely legible. When I got to the end he nodded and I flew out of doors thinking myself lucky to have escaped reproof for that piece of impulsive audacity. (71-72)

His father's test to see whether Conrad could read "earned, in my father's mind, the right to some latitude in my relations with his writing table" (72). Conrad makes use of his memories regarding the "half-crown complete Shakespeare" he kept with him while sailing by placing the same edition in Jim's hands in Lord Jim (143).

25 In arguing against Lunacharsky's position that Shakespeare is a polyphonic writer in Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, Bakhtin does not recognize the faults in his own position. Being determined to prove Dostoevsky is the "great culminator" of dialogic thinking and that "Dostoevsky alone can be considered the creator of genuine polyphony," Bakhtin declares that it is "impossible" to have a genuine "polyphonic quality" in Shakespeare's works because the drama "cannot contain multiple worlds," "contains only one fully valid voice, the voice of the hero," and "the voices in Shakespeare are not points of view on the world to the degree they are in Dostoevsky" (35). See pages 34-35.
Lear or Hamlet. Of course, Conrad is not a master of polyphonic thinking of the same magnitude as Shakespeare. I would judge his talents as closer to those of Dickens or Dostoevsky. But this is only to acknowledge the relative distance between Conrad and Shakespeare and the relative importance of Dickens and Dostoevsky in enabling Conrad’s thought. As with the latter two authors, some aspects of Conrad’s characters can be close to aspects of Conrad’s own characteristic thinking: he projects certain limited yet strong elements of himself into Jim or Razumov. But never are the characters simply equivalent to Conrad’s own mind. Each of the characters is an inquiry within the novel, and one aspect of the larger combination of ideas and impulses within the action of the novel. The language and style employed by the characters is part of that inquiry. The characters are never completely aware of the implications of their language and thought to the same degree as Conrad. Conrad’s inquiry is the novel as a whole, and the characters are interconnected elements in the movement of Conrad’s thought as a whole.

The dialogic nature of Shakespeare’s drama also informs the structure of Conrad’s novels. Above all, Shakespeare’s dramatic works are thought in which ideas are placed in different forms of conversation with one another and characters are composed to embody different combinations of various ideas. Through the trajectory of the action of the work, the ideas are explored perspectively through conversations, arguments, as well as economic, familial, political, and sexual relations. How the ideas work and live in relation to each other is tested through the action of the drama. Conrad’s novels work in a similar fashion, except Conrad never wholly eliminates an authorial or narrational presence in his work. But as Bakhtin observes, in Dostoevsky’s novels the narrator’s presence is not a guarantee of his infallibility or omniscience, so that the narrator’s voice must be placed in comparison with the knowing revealed by the novel as a whole. If Conrad’s knowing is to be located, then it should be identified as equivalent to the structure of the novel and the trajectory of the plot as a whole, and not equated

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26 In *The Western Canon*, Harold Bloom quotes the essential passages from Freud’s letters in which the psychoanalyst makes the mistake of equating Shakespeare with his tragic heroes. See pages 345-49.
with one character or one passage. To whatever degree the making is conscious and unconscious, Conrad’s mind is not smaller or narrower than the thinking contained in the work as a whole.

Having read and learned the lessons in the works of Shakespeare and novelists such as Dickens, Dostoevsky, George Eliot, and Henry James, Conrad realizes that the subtle inter-relatedness available in the novel form offers a profoundly thoughtful writer the opportunity to test the connections between and the limits of many ideas simultaneously. Each character in a novel synthesizes a number of ideas, and then the contact among the numerous characters in the novel can be used to explore the lived experiences that those ideas and values produce. The actions of the characters embody a proposed living and being of the ideas, creating what Lawrence would call a remarkable accumulation of “concurrent dramas,” each of which offers a concrete example to be questioned and explored (“Review” 159). In Bakhtin’s language, the novel offers a “concrete event made up of organized human orientations and voices” (PDP 93). Although I think I know what Bakhtin means in arguing that “two thoughts are already two people, for there are no thoughts belonging to no one and every thought represents an entire person,” I want to add the qualification that every thought is a combination of interrelated ideas, emotions, instincts, and impulses, conscious and unconscious, and all these things come into play in the different voices in a novel (PDP 93). Also, while a novel often works “by juxtaposing whole, profoundly individualized voices,” it is important to recognize that those voices may nevertheless share any number of ideas which each voice represents in some variation (PDP 93). The ideas can be explored as both causes and consequences depending upon the temporal structure of the novel. As Leavis and Robinson argue, the novelists write representations which ask readers “this is so, isn’t it,” which acts as an invitation to respond “yes, but.”

For Lawrence, the subtle inter-relatedness and comprehensiveness of the art makes the novelist a superior thinker. In “Why the Novel Matters,” Lawrence’s argument is that being a whole man wholly attending to all the complexities in life is
the reason I am a novelist. And being a novelist, I consider myself superior to
the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet, who are all great masters of
different bits of man alive, but never get the whole hog.

The novel is the one bright book of life. Books are not life. They are
only tremulations on the ether. But the novel as a tremulation can make the
whole man alive tremble. Which is more than poetry, philosophy, science, or
any other book-tremulation can do. (206)

But, while part of me wants to cheer when I read the passage, I must object to Lawrence’s self-
praise as unreasonable and exaggerated. The novel in and of itself does not make for profound
thinking; it takes a profound and thoughtful writer to use the novel form to enact the kinds of
inquiries I am investigating in Conrad’s novels.

Therefore, a creative or intellectual disposition towards writing novels rather than essays
or philosophical works does not automatically guarantee that Conrad is a more profound thinker
or a more insightful critic than Carlyle or Nietzsche simply because they are not primarily
novelists. The quality of his art and the penetration of criticism is a manifestation of his capacity
as a thinker. As Henry James argues, “no good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind”
(“Fiction” 205). In short, a lesser writer will not think profoundly about difficult ideas nor have
the capacity to be critical of a Dostoevsky or Nietzsche simply because he or she writes a novel.
The astonishing quality of Conrad’s art is a product of his immense reading and complex
thinking. And while I would rate Conrad’s thought much higher than many other authors I have
read in my life, I am not asserting in the chapters that follow that Conrad is infallible in his
criticism nor that he is always on every question superior in his criticism to Dickens or
Dostoevsky or Nietzsche. No valuation can be so straightforward. In my reading, I cannot see
that Conrad habitually imagines himself superior to the other authors; he does not write
condescendingly or patronize the earlier writers in order to prove that he has intellectually
surpassed them. With all the authors, Conrad is engaging in criticism which presupposes some
level of respect: the authors with whom he is arguing are worth arguing with and against. As Nietzsche argues, it is not the weak upon whom we must expend our energy, but the strong, the conquerors, those who have done the most to create the values; hence his attack on Christianity. Conrad does not engage with Carlyle or Nietzsche simply to trample on them and their ideas but rather to take a critical measurement of their thought in order to assess the significance of their ideas at the end of the nineteenth century. This brings me to a considerable problem concerning genre and modes of thought.

While reading all the various primary works I have included in this thesis, I have been constantly aware of the kinds of questions Conrad raises about knowing and identifying which I make a major focus in the fourth chapter. Genre is a consistent problem because these authors write works which consistently defy categorization. In some cases, Stein’s categorization of butterflies and beetles may be useful, but only if the distinctions are balanced by a just appraisal of the similarities. In many ways, almost all of the authors included in this thesis might be described, like Carlyle’s Professor Teufelsdröckh, as philosophers of things in general. Except perhaps with Darwin, the range of thoughts the authors pursue defies categorization. Depending upon which elements are emphasized, the authors can appear remarkably alike so that conventional labels are not very helpful and actually obscure the necessary relations: Carlyle is a critic or historian; Conrad, Dickens, and Dostoevsky are novelists; Nietzsche is a philosopher; and Freud is a psychoanalyst. These authors all write peculiar biographies, histories of events and nations and individuals, autobiographical works, cultural critiques, and novels, thereby performing multiple roles in their writing. If we identify any of these thinkers narrowly, then their work is forced to fit a label and the authors are not recognized for the ways in which they almost compulsively transgress generic boundaries. Freud’s “Dora” should be identified not only as a case history, but also as a modernist short story, a detective narrative, a biography, a confession. Carlyle’s Sartor Resartus is a philosophic treatise, an autobiography, a literary review. Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra is a religious document, a philosophical indictment
of religion, a collection of short stories. The point is that all of the authors use multiple genres simultaneously, so by focusing on certain elements all of them might be identified as doctors, prophets, novelists, biographers and so on.

An objection could be made that despite my arguments concerning the ways in which works often transgress generic boundaries, the authors chose to work in a specific genre; for instance, Freud decided to write a case history and not a detective story or a modernist novel and that decision creates certain expectations for readers. But in reading Conrad, I have become increasingly doubtful about the assumptions we force upon a work. I have come to realize the importance of Whalley's lesson in "Literature: An Instrument of Inquiry" that, when reading literature, "we need to approach with a quiet mind, subduing our prejudices, presuppositions and formulated responses, even our approximate expectations" (209). Conrad has caused me to question the categorical distinctions we apply to works of literature that are, at times, too narrow. More often than not Conrad's characters misapprehend or misidentify each other because they force pre-determined ideas upon one another. For me, Haldin's misidentification of Razumov as a fellow revolutionary is perhaps the most terrible example that Conrad provides. The almost compulsive misidentifications and misapprehensions that occur among the characters in Conrad's novels are lessons about our reading and especially about our acts of identification.

This is a kind of lesson which Goldberg meditates upon repeatedly in Agents and Lives. Goldberg argues that when reading novels we must "think responsively" (74). When reading literature our thinking does not "simply recognize those qualities" which pre-exist in our minds, but instead "our thinking is constructive and particularizing" (75). In coming to an understanding we must avoid "short-hand formulae" and "reducing the life [we are reading] to a mere instance of the type" (104). While Goldberg is primarily thinking about our response to characters or specific events in a novel, his arguments hold good for the works as a whole as well. Rather than maintaining the generic label that the author writing the work or the publisher selling the work expects us to accept, or our own expectations have caused us to prematurely apply to a work, we
should withhold our judgement until we can judge by the style and structure of the work itself. What is the work doing? What is the trajectory of the narrative? What do we know and not know from the language and style of the work? The act of identification is precarious and potentially dangerous. Granted, unlike Razumov, a work of art cannot denounce us to authorities who might choose to end our lives, but, like Haldin, my misidentification can cause me to do violence to a work by demanding of it things which it does not do or cause me to ignore things that it does. Freud might tell me to read his work as a case history, but then I am accepting his identification and not what the work declares itself to be. In short, the work may be disclosing something more complex than the author’s identification allows for. So Conrad’s criticism is very much about the problem of identification, especially when it comes to an individual’s use of a genre. Jane Adamson’s argument is that “literary texts often invite readers to notice how learning involves unlearning” (91). The process of “being jarred out of one’s previous modes of understanding, surprised into new perceptions,” is very much about seeing things that were not apparent before (91). In reading Conrad I have learned that our acts of identification are precarious and to improve them it is necessary to unlearn some old habits to realize new perceptions.

I am also preoccupied with how in writing his novels Conrad synthesizes styles that characterize different genres as well as the ideas that are elemental to the thinking that produces them. When Henry James argues that, as a genre, the novel is the “most comprehensive and the most elastic,” I assume that his appeal to the experimental nature of the novel is at least partly an appeal to how the novel assimilates and recycles disparate forms and genres premised upon different kinds of thinking (“Future” 337). I am invoking the kind of argument that Bakhtin makes in the essay “Discourse in the Novel” in The Dialogic Imagination about the novel as a combination or aggregation or conglomeration of languages and styles. One element of Bakhtin’s discussion important to my thesis is the centrality of “literary parody” in the history of the novel (309). Bakhtin reveals the “parodic attitude towards almost all forms of ideological discourse – philosophical, moral, scholarly, rhetorical, poetic,” that exists in the novel (309). I am unsure
whether in using the word "parody" Bakhtin is also implying that novelists are leveling a serious criticism of other styles and genres, but this is central to my argument. Conrad's critical practice is premised upon Bakhtin's idea that "certain features of language take on the specific flavor of a given genre: they knit together with specific points of view, specific approaches, forms of thinking, nuances and accents characteristic of the given genre" (289). Conrad assimilates those different styles and fuses the sometimes disparate elements in his novels. The different styles, including what Bakhtin identifies as "oratorical, publistic, newspaper and journalistic genres, the genres of low literature... or, finally, the various genres of high literature," manifest a kind of thinking, sometimes specific to a certain group or profession of people and sometimes transgressing boundaries to include a wider range of people (288-9). All of these styles are simultaneously individual and social. As Goldberg observes, "even if a mode of life is shared by a group... it is still knowable in the relevant sense, and capable of being evaluated as a mode of life, only as an individual" (257). That is, the genre is shared, but nevertheless it is always inflected by an individual's use of it. So in writing about Conrad's criticism of Freud the primary problem is not only about how to compare the novel with the case history by working on a generic or formal level, but also how to think about how Conrad anticipates and critiques the kind of intellectual habits, ideas, and methods that enable Freud's thought, by focusing on the individual use of the form. In Conrad's novel, the characteristic elements of Freud's language and style become but one voice among many different voices, perspectives and styles.

One other important element of my discussion of Conrad is his preoccupation with the history of ideas that he inherits when he writes at the turn of the century. In "Jane Austen:

27 To choose just one idea, what I have in mind here are books such as Eric Bentley's A Century of Hero-Worship and B. H. Lehman's Carlyle's Theory of the Hero. In the former, the evolution of the ideal of heroes and hero-worship is traced from Carlyle through Nietzsche to Lawrence and others. A recognition of Conrad's participation in this dialogue is sorely lacking, especially given that Conrad critiques both Carlyle and Nietzsche. In Lehman's book, the chapters are written to account for the many sources of Carlyle's thought. While the search for sources can help us to recognize some of the significant relations between an author and his literary predecessors, it can also become highly mechanical if the meaning and/or the value of the relationships is not always
Poet,” Whalley reflects upon the novelist as one “who lives in an imaginative universe that is rooted in life and the ways of human life; but his universe is also haunted by words, shaped by utterances” (150). I cannot help but recognize that Bakhtin’s observations about the critical aspect of Dostoevsky’s art apply just as well to Conrad’s. With the substitution of Conrad’s name for Dostoevsky’s, the arguments I make in this thesis are an attempt to earn Conrad the same kind of recognition that Bakhtin reveals:

[He] possessed an extraordinary gift for hearing the dialogue of an epoch, or, more precisely, for hearing his epoch as a great dialogue, for detecting in it logic relationship [sic] among voices, their dialogic interaction. He heard both the loud, recognized, reigning voices of the epoch, that is, the reigning dominant ideas (official and unofficial), as well as voices still weak, ideas not yet fully emerged, latent ideas heard as yet by no one but himself, and ideas that were just beginning to ripen, embryos of future worldviews. (PDP 90)

Conrad writes the many voices of his culture into his novels to test the interaction among them. When I originally chose the authors that I would include in this study, I was influenced by what I thought were the loudest among Conrad’s representations of different literary voices. The presence of Carlyle’s or Nietzsche’s ideas is particularly strong and evident to me, so I chose whom to include accordingly. But while I lament not including Matthew Arnold, George Eliot, Soren Kierkegaard, J. S. Mill, and Karl Marx, all authors that I considered in different early forms of this thesis, I must be content with the range of my discussion as it stands and attempt to explore Conrad’s conversations with the other writers at another time.

Nevertheless, my thesis does have a kind of inner coherence rather than simply the appearance of six disjoined chapters unrelated to one another. In writing the first chapter, I learned from Conrad the importance of Carlyle’s thought in the nineteenth century. In all the questioned. So I do not think it is necessary to explore Conrad’s relationship with every literary predecessor who wrote about heroes, but instead to focus more narrowly on the most significant, judging by the questions raised in Conrad’s art.
chapters that follow, parts of the arguments are implicitly connected with and grow out of the first move in my thesis. Although Conrad does not offer any kind of positive statement concerning Carlyle which is not mixed with anger or expressed in a joking manner, the significance of his ideas maintains a near-constant presence in Conrad’s work. George Eliot’s testimony remains the best judgment of Carlyle’s influence on nineteenth-century thought:

It is an idle question to ask whether his books will be read a century hence.... For there is hardly a superior or active mind of this generation that has not been modified by Carlyle’s writings; there has hardly been an English book written for the last ten or twelve years that would not have been different if Carlyle had not lived. The character of his influence is best seen in the fact that many of the men who have the least agreement with his opinions are those to whom the reading of Sartor Resartus was an epoch in the history of their minds. The extent of his influence may be best seen in the fact that his ideas which were startling novelties when he first wrote them are now become common-places. (“Carlyle” 187-8)\(^{28}\)

Conrad’s novels provide ample evidence that Carlyle was still being read late in the century, despite the fall of his reputation after his death, and the novels would be very different had Carlyle not lived. Evidently, reading Sartor Resartus marked an “epoch in the history” of Conrad’s mind, because it is one of the few books or authors which he names in his fiction.\(^{29}\) The problem for Conrad at the end of the century is that Carlyle’s ideas have “become common-places” and that problem continues today. We continue to worship our sports stars and celebrities, usually without ever knowing Carlyle’s important lessons about worshipping only true

\(^{28}\) See also the passages Trela and Tarr excerpt from Oliphant’s The Victorian Age of English Literature, published in 1892, in which she writes some very high praise along with some judicious criticism of Carlyle. Her praise for Sartor Resartus recalls George Eliot’s in arguing that the book “swept afterwards into the adoration of many who without much understanding always find the exaggerated gestures of the orator, the wildest tropes of the poet, most easy to mimic and to adore” (29).

\(^{29}\) See my discussion of the passage from “Youth” in the first chapter.
and not false heroes. Conrad taught me that to understand the course of the nineteenth century, I must read and understand the pivotal ideas that Carlyle planted as seeds in literature and thought early in the century.

Carlyle's influence is everywhere in the nineteenth century, especially among the authors included in this thesis: Dickens revered Carlyle and dedicated *Hard Times* to him; whether or not Dostoevsky read Carlyle's works, his repudiation of Raskolnikov's ideas about the extraordinary man is a decisive criticism of the problems inherent in Carlyle's hero-worship of great men; Nietzsche insulted Carlyle repeatedly and attacked his arguments about belief and hero-worship; and whether or not he realizes it, Freud fashioned himself as the logical consequence of Carlyle's ideal of the man of letters as a hero whose drive towards distinguishing the reality from the illusion produces a form of therapeutics in order to cure the sickness pervading culture. There is an entire thesis to be written on how Freud's psychoanalysis is the realization of Carlyle's groundbreaking arguments in his early works about intellectual health and sickness as it related to consciousness and unconsciousness.

Conrad's conversation with Carlyle is placed first in my thesis not only because Carlyle is the earliest nineteenth-century writer, but also because many of the preoccupations of the other authors included in my discussion have their roots in Carlyle's early prophetic utterances. The authors with whom Conrad engages are all preoccupied by the question that Carlyle raises in "Characteristics" concerning the health and sickness of language, thought, and culture as a whole. All of these authors write works which "test" the "working right or working wrong" of the ideas enabling the culture in which they live (186). The basic analogy informing the inquiries places the critic and writer in the position of the physician in searching for the symptoms that reveal the condition of language and culture.

These writers are all concerned with the degree to which the language and thought informing culture are diseased. Throughout his writings Carlyle makes an assault upon the mechanical self-consciousness which has undermined unconscious instinct and overturned belief
in favour of unbelief and skepticism. The emphasis upon consciousness and unconsciousness in Carlyle’s writings is sufficient to allow us recognize how Carlyle’s preoccupations with health and sickness anticipate Freud. In Bleak House, Dickens places the question of disease and infection at the center of the structure and the action of the story. The sometimes fatal infection originating in and emanating from the decaying buildings known as Tom-All-Alone’s in the middle of London gradually touches most, if not all, of the characters in the novel, either directly or indirectly, through sickness and death. The infection must be read as both a literal and metaphorical disease at the center of English language and culture which points towards questions about individual responsibility. Dostoevsky uses Raskolnikov’s illness throughout Crime and Punishment in a manner similar to Dickens. Raskolnikov’s illness cannot be separated from the ideas that enable the murders he commits and the problem of individual responsibility that informs his transformation at the end of the novel. The dream sequence in the epilogue of the novel is a remarkable passage which should be compared with Carlyle’s arguments in his early critical essays. Nietzsche questions the beliefs and values of Western culture as a whole, and repeatedly returns to the idea that Christian culture is sick and must be made healthy if humanity is to survive. With Freud comes the culmination of the critic or nineteenth-century prophet as physician, and he literally reads the condition of language and culture as medically charged symptoms through which a diagnosis of our physical and mental health can be made. At first glance, Darwin does not seem to fit into this pattern; however, Darwin is preoccupied with the mechanism of habits and instincts, with the unconscious impulses enabling human life. His preoccupation with self-preservation as a primary instinct enabling the survival of a species is interconnected with the larger question of the health and sickness of a culture. Nietzsche makes the problem explicit by contemplating the necessary antipode, self-destruction, in raising questions about whether the instinct towards self-preservation or self-destruction is stronger. Later, Nietzsche’s antithesis is made the center of Freud’s diagnosis of culture in the cultural writings The Future of an Illusion and Civilization and Its Discontents. But this is merely the
briefest of sketches containing just a few possibilities of the lines of thought that can be traced from Carlyle early in the nineteenth century down to Conrad and Freud at the end of it. Whether or not the authors were wholly conscious of engaging with Carlyle, his ideas are pervasive in the nineteenth century.

Before I conclude this introduction, I want to acknowledge a problem in the structure of the argument of my thesis as a whole, which is primarily an issue of the relation among all the parts. Despite my attempts to do justice to the complexities of Conrad's criticism, I have been forced, by my own limitations, to impose an artificial clarity on the problems in order to make my arguments as clear as possible. To some degree I am guilty of making the kinds of "clumsy separations" that allow me to avoid some "occasional queer predicaments" that Henry James deplores in critical writings ("Fiction" 197). Because I am primarily interested in Conrad's criticism, I discuss the conversations that Conrad engages in with the other authors from Conrad's perspective. Since I am attempting to elucidate Conrad's reading of the ideas of the other writers, my thesis is nothing like Conrad's perspectival thinking wherein multiple voices are competing simultaneously. But in fairness, Conrad never gives Dostoevsky's or Nietzsche's ideas a space in his novels wherein those ideas are wholly unaffected by his own critical intelligence. In representing the ideas he assimilates from other writers, Conrad writes a revalued or critical response to those ideas: he does not rewrite Nietzsche or Carlyle verbatim. At every step his writing is a testing of their ideas from his own perspective at the end of the nineteenth century. In the space of the novel the ideas are questioned and challenged through the dramatic structure of the action, but never does Conrad simply present an "idea" in some Platonic sense. There is potentially an objection that Conrad willfully distorts or simply cannot understand the ideas he reads in the works of the other authors. Therefore, I have been careful in demonstrating the origin of the ideas as well as Conrad's critical rewriting of them.

Nevertheless, the structure of my thesis remains a problem because in five of the six chapters I discuss Conrad's response in terms of a narrow conversation between him and one
other author. This is not the actual case in the novels. For instance, I have explored a
cornerstone between Conrad and Carlyle involving the problem of hero-worship in Heart of
Darkness; however, Conrad continues the conversation, with variations on the kind of inquiry
with which he is preoccupied, in other novels. The questions Conrad raises in Lord Jim
concerning Jim’s heroism and Marlow’s judgement of Jim continue the criticism of Carlyle’s
arguments about the relationship between heroes and hero-worshippers, and then the idea appears
again in the representation of the questionable greatness of Peter Ivanovitch, Haldin, and
Razumov in Under Western Eyes. By narrowly focusing in most chapters on one Conrad novel, I
have not investigated how Conrad’s response to Carlyle’s ideal of hero-worship may have
changed over time through the writing of the different novels.

Another problem in the structure of my discussion is that in only one of the six chapters
do I attempt to demonstrate how several of the authors all contribute to a debate over a central
question. In the fourth chapter I show how Conrad is rethinking Darwin and Nietzsche, with the
implication that Conrad never has only one or the other author in mind but always some
combination of both. This holds true throughout my thesis. Carlyle is not the only author to
write about heroes, hero-worship, and the importance of greatness. Dostoevsky’s repudiation of
the distinction between extraordinary and ordinary men is another contribution to the
conversation, and Nietzsche’s arguments about the superman are yet another. When Conrad is
writing about the problem of Kurtz’s greatness in Heart of Darkness, he actually has the ideas of
several authors in mind. Again, Conrad’s interest in the problem of the relationship between the
instincts for self-preservation and self-destruction does not begin and end in Lord Jim: variations
on the problem are included in Under Western Eyes in Razumov’s complex reactions to betray
Haldin and then later betray himself, and in The Secret Agent when Winnie is confronted with
either saving or destroying herself after Stevie is dead and she kills Verloc. And the conflict
between the two instincts is often connected with the problem of greatness or heroism in
Conrad's novels, so really the dialogue quickly grows to include nearly every author in some way or another.

Despite my self-consciousness concerning the limitations of the structure of this thesis, I believe that the chapters that follow offer important arguments concerning Conrad's relationship with several major nineteenth-century writers. Because I cannot develop all of the possible connections among the various authors included in this thesis, I have focused on those connections that at the present time I consider the most significant and have been the most interesting to me. My hope in writing this thesis has been to offer some insights into Conrad's novels as a form of criticism while demonstrating that, despite George Levine's doubts to the contrary, Conrad is indeed "an intellectual of sorts" because his novels are a remarkable commentary upon some of the most important writers and intellectual moments in the nineteenth century (RI 274).
Chapter One: Thomas Carlyle’s Hero-Worship
and Gospel of Work in *Heart of Darkness*

In thinking about the relationship between Joseph Conrad and Thomas Carlyle, it is necessary to begin with the sentence from Novalis which strongly attracted both writers: “It is certain my Conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it.” Conrad quotes the epigraph for *Lord Jim* verbatim from Carlyle’s English translation of the sentence in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (58). The sentence marks an important point of contact between the thought of these two great authors. Writing at opposite ends of the Victorian age, both Carlyle and Conrad are preoccupied by questions concerning the value of their convictions and beliefs, and the ideas enabling their thought. Both writers are self-conscious about writing during a period of intellectual and stylistic revolution in English literature and thought during which the old forms and values are disintegrating. The question of the value and

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1 Joseph Conrad also uses this quotation from Novalis as an introduction to the story in *A Personal Record* about the first reader of his earliest novel entitled *Almayer’s Folly* (15). The story illustrates the importance of the Novalis passage by showing how Conrad’s conviction to become a writer is confirmed and justified by another. Conrad offers the moment as a justification of his career as a writer, as if to suggest that he did not proceed on his own judgement alone, but relied upon the judgement of another. The responsibility for Conrad’s writing career then falls between the two men. See *A Personal Record* (15-19).

2 Carlyle translated the sentence twice more, with variations, in his writings, making it possible to pinpoint exactly where Conrad found the phrase. In “Characteristics,” he translates the sentence as “Already my opinion, my conviction, gains infinitely in strength and sureness, the moment a second mind has adopted it” (194). In *Sartor Resartus*, the translation changes slightly: “It is certain, my Belief gains quite infinitely the moment I can convince another mind thereof” (162). Few critics have recognized that Conrad read and borrowed the phrase from Carlyle. Paul Kintzele registers the importance of the borrowing in “*Lord Jim*: Conrad’s Fable of Judgement” (76). Ian Watt corrects Richard Samuel’s mistake in thinking that Conrad borrowed the phrase from W. Haste’s English translation and explains that Edward Said recognized how Conrad quotes Carlyle’s translation verbatim (CNC 40).

3 The most famous of Carlyle’s letters on this problem in relation to *Sartor Resartus*, addressed to Ralph Waldo Emerson (12 August 1834) and John Sterling (4 June 1835), are included as the third and fourth appendices in the McSweeney and Sabor edition of *Sartor Resartus*. See pages 231-35. In the two letters Carlyle reflects on the problem of writing when “the whole structure of our Johnsonian English [is] breaking up from its foundations” and on the problem of the effort of writing despite knowing that “I have no known public” (234, 232). The letters that Conrad wrote throughout his work on *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* share Carlyle’s preoccupations with

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significance of their beliefs and ideas is the central issue for both writers. From Carlyle’s perspective in the first part of the nineteenth century, the questionable values he inherited from the skeptical doctrines of the eighteenth century must be replaced; hence Carlyle’s insistent argument that his culture must move from a condition of unbelief to belief. From Conrad’s perspective at the end of the nineteenth century, what has become questionable is the value of Carlyle’s ideals, the convictions as prescriptions he advocated as cures for the spiritual disease at the heart of his culture. When Conrad tells Blackwood in a letter dated 31 May 1902 that the interview between Marlow and the Intended at the end of Heart of Darkness offers “one suggestive view of a whole phase of life,” Conrad is pointing towards the emphasis given to the question of belief that pervades the last scene in the story (CLJC 2, 417). If readers have missed the importance given to questions concerning belief throughout the work, Conrad repeats the word again and again at the end so the purpose of his inquiry cannot be lost. In writing an inquiry into English culture as a whole at the end of the nineteenth century, Conrad is preoccupied with the “mature capacity for fidelity, for belief, for suffering” that Marlow identifies in the Intended (73). Conrad is troubled by the potential dangers in having “faith” in a “great and saving illusion” (74). For nineteenth-century English culture, Carlyle’s ideas composed an important constellation of convictions or beliefs. In Heart of Darkness, Conrad makes a sustained inquiry into two of Carlyle’s most significant and enduring ideas: Hero-Worship and Work.

My argument is that Heart of Darkness should be read as a concentrated rewriting of important elements of Carlyle’s thought. The fundamental ideas informing the language and structure of Conrad’s work are taken from Carlyle. Conrad reads Carlyle and rewrites his central

finding a style and an audience. However, the most important letters are those to Edward Garnett on 19 June 1896, 29 March 1898, and 13 August 1898. For Conrad, “to be able to think and unable to express is a fine torture” which he endures repeatedly in composing his novels (CLJC 2, 288). He is “haunted, mercilessly haunted by the necessity of style” (CLJC 2, 50).

4 This argument persists throughout Carlyle’s early writings. See especially the fifth lecture from On Heroes: “The Hero as Man of Letters” (170-77). David Daiches observes that Carlyle “regularly abused” the eighteenth century (374).

5 Also included in Kimbrough’s edition of Heart of Darkness. See pages 209-10.
ideas. Almost without exception, all the major questions raised by Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* have their origins in Carlyle’s arguments: Marlow’s role as a prophetic cultural critic, Marlow’s ambivalent hero-worship and the Russian’s unqualified adoration of Kurtz, Kurtz’s greatness and his infamous sincerity, Marlow’s ambivalent attitude towards work, and the depiction of the dying Africans in the grove of death. In effect, Conrad’s thought in *Heart of Darkness* results from distilling and synthesizing Carlyle’s central ideas. The ideas are tested through Marlow’s experience while working for the Company and also through his thoughts or recollections about that experience. The difficulty for the reader is in recognizing how Carlyle’s ideals of hero-worship and work provide the basic assumptions informing Marlow’s thought both during the actual experience and afterwards in recollecting his experience. In Conrad’s view, both ideas cause significant problems for Marlow’s knowing and judgement; however, the relationship between cause and consequence is not altogether clear. Are Carlyle’s ideas corrupted and distorted by the demands of Marlow’s knowing? Or is Marlow’s knowing corrupted and distorted by the demands made by Carlyle’s ideas? Marlow’s “heavenly mission to civilize” his listeners is analogous to Carlyle’s mission to cure the diseased state of his culture (11). I will demonstrate that the effect of Conrad’s lessons about the monstrous conditions of his culture makes his thought close to sharing the same quality as Carlyle’s and Marlow’s mission, but he remains doubtful about it. Conrad offers no decisive answer about whether to accept or reject Carlyle’s teachings because his own writing is deeply indebted to Carlyle’s thought. He does not repudiate Carlyle, but instead remains suspended between two judgements: that Carlyle is an important thinker who commands respect and whose ideas must be confronted in any serious contemplation of nineteenth-century thought; and that Carlyle’s ideas are contributing to if not altogether causing the monstrous conditions Conrad perceives in late nineteenth-century culture.

In rethinking the value of hero-worship and work, arguably Carlyle’s two most significant beliefs, Conrad is conflicted. Undoubtedly, he is skeptical towards Carlyle’s ideas,

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6 See Michael Timko’s discussion of Carlyle’s mission (56).
which in Carlyle’s view would mean that no truth could come from Conrad’s criticism. In
Carlyle’s judgement, “for these poor Sceptics there [is] no sincerity, no truth” because “they had
lost any notion that sincerity was possible” (H 171). For Carlyle, sincerity, truth, belief, and
conviction are not only interconnected but interdependent; the words almost become synonymous
at times in his thought. To be sincere is to be true and to have belief is to be sincere and so on.
But Conrad’s attitude towards Carlyle is not as extreme as Nietzsche’s. The latter uses Carlyle as
the basis for a type in defining “Carlylism” as “the need for belief, for some unconditional Yes
and No” (A 184).7 In Nietzsche’s view, Carlyle’s belief in the importance of strong convictions
should be repudiated because “convictions are prisons” (A 184). For Nietzsche, convictions are
equivalent to lies, and “convictions might be more dangerous enemies of truth than lies” (A
185).8 The man of conviction is “the antithesis, the antagonist of the truthful man – of truth”;
therefore Nietzsche identifies the skeptic as the one with “the capacity for an unconstrained view”
(A 185, 184). Neither Carlyle’s advocacy of absolute belief nor Nietzsche’s advocacy of radical
skepticism is tenable for Conrad and he does not attempt to work or think at either extreme.
While voicing serious doubts about Carlyle’s ideals, Conrad does not contemptuously dismiss
them. Conrad’s skepticism does not preclude him from recognizing the importance of belief. But
everywhere in Carlyle’s thought Conrad sees problems which are explored in terms of knowing.
The primary question Conrad raises is what relation Carlyle’s hero-worship and work have to
knowing.

Conrad’s ambivalence towards Carlyle informs the structure of Heart of Darkness as a
whole. There is neither acceptance nor rejection, but only a profoundly troubling engagement
with the unavoidable presence of Carlyle’s ideas.9 Having recognized the overwhelming

7 Section 54.
8 Section 55.
9 In a section called “Marlow’s Victorian Ethic” in Conrad in the Nineteenth Century, Ian Watt
discusses Marlow’s ideals, noting that “the most influential prophet of the faith in work was
Thomas Carlyle, particularly in Sartor Resartus” (149). Watt recognizes that “Carlyle’s
preachments about work, duty, and renunciation are essentially an early, comprehensive, and...
presence and influence of Carlyle in Conrad's thought, Allison Hopwood argues that Conrad's rethinking of Carlyle's values "proves his awareness of his critical attitude to Carlyle" (171). Observing that Conrad "does not uniformly reverse Carlyle's propositions," Hopwood is right in thinking that "many of Carlyle's thoughts and attitudes are close to Conrad's own" (164). There is no simple repudiation, but instead Conrad views his relationship with Carlyle with something like the unease and equivocation that Marlow feels towards Kurtz. Carlyle is "no idol" to Conrad, yet Conrad may be Carlyle's "last disciple" after Dickens (HD 58). Conrad "resented bitterly the absurd danger" of the situation in England at the end of the nineteenth century, knowing that the predominance of Carlyle's ideas placed him "at the mercy of that atrocious phantom" (HD 59). The quality of Conrad's response can be measured from two important passages in his writings.

Conrad's troubled judgement of Carlyle is evident in the only letter in which he discusses Carlyle at length.\(^{10}\) The letter includes significant comments that reflect back upon Heart of Darkness almost a decade after it was published. Writing to Edward Garnett on 28 August 1908, Conrad defends himself against charges made in a recent review questioning his seriousness by

\[\begin{align*}
\text{very influential statement of a constellation of values which characterized Victorian life as a whole} & \quad (150). \text{ However, Watt betrays his own best observations by concluding that "most of the ideological content of Heart of Darkness is of a very different nature [from Carlyle's], and amounts either to a rejection of many of the other standard Victorian assumptions, or to a warning against their ultimate implications" (151). Conrad's writing does warn us against the ultimate implications of some of Carlyle's thought, but his criticism is much more complex than merely marking boundaries between himself and Carlyle or the nineteenth century. In effect, Watt has only recognized part of the relationship: he has registered the resistance. He has not recognized how much Conrad learns from Carlyle. Avrom Fleishman notes that Conrad shares a "profound distrust of industrial civilization... with many participants in an intellectual tradition that goes back to Carlyle and Ruskin" (36). He also argues that Conrad "was steeped in the literary culture of his adopted country and formed himself, consciously or unconsciously, in the 'great tradition' of nineteenth-century British fiction" which is "the Burke tradition" and to "list the main figures in this tradition is to name most of the major forces in the nineteenth-century English literary culture," including Carlyle (55-56). Fleishman makes the important judgment that Conrad formed his art and thought in looking back at the nineteenth century. But there is no sustained comparison of Conrad's and Carlyle's thought.}
\end{align*}\]

\(^{10}\) In a letter to J.B. Pinker on 18 January 1901 Conrad includes Carlyle's name in referring to a "collection of autographs" he is disposing of for a friend (CLJC 4, 320).
declaring that he is “terribly earnest” (CLJC 4, 111). He characterizes himself as more in earnest
than the very personification of earnestness in the nineteenth century:

But let me ask is my earnestness of no account? Is that a Slavonic trait? And I
am earnest, terribly earnest. Carlyle bending over the history of Frederick called
the Great was a mere trifle, a volatile butterfly, in comparison. For that good
man had only to translate himself out of bad German into the English we know
whereas I had to work like a coalminer in his pit quarrying all my English
sentences out of a black night. (CLJC 4, 112)

The basis of the comparison is the question of style, the trouble both writers had in writing.
Despite identifying the very problem which decisively connects his work with Carlyle’s, Conrad
attempts to elevate himself above Carlyle in terms of a greater earnestness and stronger work
ethic. But the comparison only succeeds in revealing the tension in Conrad’s thought when he
attempts judging himself against Carlyle’s accomplishments. Invoking Carlyle’s presence
unsettles Conrad’s thought here, because his predecessor’s characteristic preoccupation is much
too close to Conrad’s own problems.

Conrad parodies Carlyle and Teufelsdröckh’s clothes philosophy from Sartor Resartus in
“Youth,” the first of the Marlow tales. I am not the first to recognize the importance of Conrad’s
allusion. Both Ian Watt and Hopwood note the significance of the passage in “Youth” in which
Conrad explicitly refers to Sartor Resartus as a book Marlow reads.11 Hopwood carefully traces
Conrad’s knowledge and use of Carlyle’s book and acknowledges “Conrad’s complex and critical
response to Carlyle” (163). However, she concludes by betraying her own best observations:

“although Conrad proves his awareness of his critical attitude to Carlyle, it can be assumed that

11 See Hopwood (170), and Watt (CNC 168). Had Watt thought more about the importance of
Sartor Resartus in relation to Conrad’s story, his discussion of symbolism (CNC 180-200) would
have been much different. If Heart of Darkness “belongs to a specifically symbolic tradition of
fiction,” then Watt must account for Conrad’s reference to Carlyle’s book because Sartor
Resartus is entirely about symbols and metaphors, and even includes a chapter entitled “Symbols”
(CNC 188). Instead of looking across the channel for the influence of the French Symbolists,
Watt might have chosen Carlyle.
his use of materials is very little, if at all, the result of deliberation or conscious intention” (171).\textsuperscript{12}

Watt merely suggests that “Conrad apparently found Sartor Resartus too hyperbolic for his taste” (150). Both critics misunderstand the passage. In characteristic fashion, Conrad makes Carlyle’s importance evident through a great joke, and it is important to note that the caricature or parody is not merely vicious.\textsuperscript{13} Marlow introduces us to the wife of his captain:

Mrs. Beard was an old woman, with a face all wrinkled and ruddy like a winter apple, and the figure of a young girl. She caught sight of me at once, sewing on a button, and insisted on having my shirts to repair. This was something different from the captain’s wives I had known on board crack clippers. When I brought her the shirt, she said: “And the socks? They want mending, I am sure, and

\textsuperscript{12}Hopwood goes on to argue that Conrad’s “method throughout is that of the imagination; his feelings provide the unifying force that sweeps together materials from many sources and transforms them into a coherent whole” (171). This argument is no better than T. S. Eliot’s notion that Conrad “has no ideas, but he has a point of view, a ‘world’; it can hardly be defined, but it pervades his work and is unmistakable” (quoted from CNC 147). Dismissing the idea that Conrad had any “deliberation or conscious intention,” and denying that he had any “ideas” at all does not get us very far in understanding Conrad’s relation to Carlyle. Imagination does not preclude deliberation, nor does artistic design preclude critical thought. Richard Ambrosini answers charges that Conrad was an “intellectually simple” man in the introduction to Conrad’s Fiction as Critical Discourse (3).

\textsuperscript{13}In an essay entitled “Parody as Style: Carlyle and His Parodists,” G. B. Tennyson, a longtime critic of Carlyle, records many of the important writers who have parodied Carlyle’s style in their works. (Tennyson’s list includes, in chronological order: Jane Carlyle, William Maginn, John Sterling, James Russell Lowell, Punch, Anthony Trollope, Hugh Kingsmill, and James Joyce.) Tennyson argues that parody is not merely a matter of producing a “ridiculous effect,” but that in recreating the “characteristic turns of thought in an author” there must also be “admiration and even love” (298). Despite Tennyson’s careful eye, he missed Conrad as a parodist of Carlyle. Perhaps the problem is analogous to Tennyson’s argument about Joyce, that Conrad “so fully adopts his parody into his own strategy that its parodic dimension is reduced” (313). It is Conrad, and not Joyce, who is “the most like Carlyle himself” (313). The best example may be the sentence “It gave me the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence” (50). This line could have been copied from any number of Carlyle’s works. The use of the upper case letters for “Immensity” and “Benevolence” are characteristic of Carlyle’s style. The whole sentence recalls Carlyle’s often transcendental thought. But this next passage, more relevant to my discussion, is perhaps more transparent: “It appears I was also one of the Workers, with a capital – you know. Something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle” (15). Marlow is repudiating the “rot let loose in print and talk about that time” but Conrad also has Carlyle in mind (15-16). It is difficult not to think of “Workers, with a capital” without recalling Carlyle’s pronouncements about work: “It has been written ‘an endless significance lies in Work’; a man perfects himself by working” (PP 196).
John's — Captain Beard's — things are all in order now. I would be glad of
something to do." Bless the old woman. She overhauled my outfit for me, and
meantime I read for the first time Sartor Resartus and Burnaby's Ride to Khiva. I
didn't understand much of the first then; but I remember I preferred the soldier to
the philosopher at the time; a preference which life has only confirmed. One was
a man, and other was either more — or less. However, they are both dead and
Mrs. Beard is dead, and youth, strength, genius, thoughts, achievements, simple
hearts — all dies.... No matter. (97)

Marlow says this is "no matter," but Conrad certainly means otherwise.14 Before Marlow ever
mentions Carlyle, Conrad shows him to us in the form of Mrs. Beard. Sartor Resartus translates
into English as the "tailor tailored." Carlyle and Teufelsdröckh are concerned with mending
and replacing old clothes: worn-out customs, ideals, traditions and values. In this passage Mrs.
Beard is the tailor retailoring Marlow's clothes, giving Marlow the time to read Carlyle's book.
Like Carlyle, she is busy "overhauling... outfit[s]." But while Carlyle argues for the importance
of order over chaos, Mrs. Beard has already put things "all in order." And taking Carlyle's gospel
of work to heart, Mrs. Beard begs to repair Marlow's socks because she "would be glad of
something to do." So when we read that between Carlyle and Burnaby, "one was a man, and the
other was either more — or less," we would do well to recognize that Carlyle is not a man at all in
this passage. Conrad has turned him and his professor into Mrs. Beard. And in case we missed
the import of the joke, Conrad makes another for us. Alluding to Carlyle's dictum in Sartor

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14 When Marlow recounts his first experience of reading Carlyle, we learn that, at least
potentially, Conrad has long been familiar with the author of Sartor Resartus. My edition of
"Youth" notes that Marlow's story is based upon "Conrad's first voyage to the East, as second
mate of the Palestine in 1881-3" (260). If we can accept Marlow's experience as corresponding
with Conrad's in this detail, then at the time he was writing "Youth" Conrad had been familiar
with Carlyle for some seventeen years. But even if Conrad's familiarity with Carlyle has been
short, he certainly demonstrates his knowledge of Sartor Resartus well in the joke he creates
between Marlow and Mrs. Beard.
Resartus to “Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe” (147), Marlow tells us he bought a “complete set of Byron’s works” (106).\textsuperscript{15}

Conrad was well aware of the dangers of selecting Carlyle as a predecessor that must be confronted and accounted for. Later in his career Carlyle’s criticism of democracy, liberalism, and the rights of men\textsuperscript{16} was incomprehensible to many of his readers and even his close friends and admirers.\textsuperscript{17} Conrad illustrates the kind of critical attitudes that plagued Carlyle’s reputation late in the nineteenth century in an exchange between the Manager and Marlow. To respect and seriously contemplate Carlyle’s thought, especially in the years after his death,\textsuperscript{18} may have been a decision different in degree but similar in kind to Marlow’s “choice of nightmares.” Conrad is able to capture the response of nineteenth-century readers and anticipate the response of twentieth-century readers in the Manager’s complaints to Marlow about Kurtz. The Manager declares that “the time was not ripe for vigorous action,” which is how England responded to much of Carlyle’s late criticism (61). The passage following anticipates the kind of judgment that can be found in many essays on Carlyle’s thought: like the Manager, critics denounce Carlyle “because the method is unsound” (61). Carl Niermeyer unknowingly plays the Manager in his

\textsuperscript{15} Hopwood also recognizes Conrad’s allusion (170). Michael Timko argues that Byron is Carlyle’s “polar opposite” in the question of what the necessary qualities are for a hero (59). Timko argues that Carlyle’s lectures on heroes are “fiercely anti-Byronic” because Carlyle is attempting to replace the ideal of the hero which Byron popularized through his poetry in the early nineteenth century (57). Conrad’s thought about heroes may include both Byron and Carlyle’s ideals.

\textsuperscript{16} Beginning with “Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question” in 1849 (the title was changed to “The Nigger Question” when republished as a pamphlet in 1853) and the \textit{Latter Day Pamphlets} in 1850 and perhaps reaching a high pitch in “Shooting Niagara: And After?” in 1867, Carlyle’s thought increasingly values the importance of obedience, and right leadership at the expense of democracy and other liberal attitudes in criticizing the deficiencies of England. For one account of the changes towards the increasing valuation of authority in Carlyle’s thought see Chris Vanden Bossche’s \textit{Carlyle and the Search for Authority}.

\textsuperscript{17} As Ian Campbell records, Carlyle’s late thought “was an extraordinary message to a free country: the country could not wholeheartedly accept it” and the works “alienated many permanently from Carlyle” (122).

\textsuperscript{18} See the last chapter of Ian Campbell’s \textit{Thomas Carlyle} for a brief summary of the controversy over Carlyle’s reputation and papers. Or read the introduction of Simon Heffer’s \textit{Moral Desperado: A Life of Thomas Carlyle} entitled “Death and Assassination.” He makes a point of noting that “As English literature became a more popular industry in our universities, so Carlyle came up against academics who found his political views repugnant” (22).
introduction to *On Heroes* in explaining that “Carlyle’s own method did not save him from taking positions that seem to us indefensible” (x). Again, when the Manager accuses Kurtz of showing “a complete want of judgment” (61), Niemeyer does the same in declaring that “Carlyle failed to discriminate his heroes” (vii). Conrad anticipates twentieth-century readings of Carlyle with remarkable accuracy.

At the end of the passage Conrad reveals a great deal about how he perceives his relationship with Carlyle and anticipates the critical reputation that he shares with Carlyle today. If critics are ready to dismiss Carlyle for his unsound methods, Conrad is not. In a world ready to dismiss Carlyle and his ideas, Conrad’s response is Marlow’s (allowing for the change of three names):

> It seemed to me I had never breathed an atmosphere so vile, and I turned mentally to [Carlyle] for relief – positively for relief. “Nevertheless, I think Mr. [Carlyle] is a remarkable man,” I said with emphasis. He stared, dropped on me a cold heavy glance, said very quietly, “He was,” and turned his back on me. My hour of favour was over; I found myself lumped along with [Carlyle] as a partisan of methods for which the time was not ripe. I was unsound. Ah, but it was something to have at least a choice of nightmares. (61-62)

Considering the current reputation as a questionable writer that he shares with Carlyle, Conrad could not have stated the truth better. Both authors are considered at best “unsound”: Carlyle is labeled as a fascist\(^\text{19}\) and Conrad as a “racist” (Achebe 257). However, Conrad did have “at least a choice of nightmares,” and he chose, with no small degree of fear and trepidation, Carlyle.

\(^{19}\) Several critical books on Carlyle I have read contain the story about how in April 1945 Goebbels read to Hitler out of Carlyle’s history of Frederick the Great. Without declaring that Carlyle is a fascist, there is an implication of guilt by association. For example, see John Rosenberg’s *Carlyle and the Burden of History* where he argues that the “Carlyle who kindled the enthusiasm of Emerson and Engels and Whitman... is not another creature from the Carlyle who brought tears of hope to the eyes of Hitler” (117). See also Herbert Grierson’s “The Hero and the Fuhrer.” Ian Robinson discounts the accusation by remarking that “it would be interesting to ask whether, even if Carlyle were a proto-fascist, he might still have valuable things to say, but our
Confronted with English civilization at the end of the nineteenth century, Conrad may have felt compelled towards a Kierkegaardian either/or decision: either to accept the “monstrous” conditions he represents in *Heart of Darkness* or to embrace Carlyle’s fierce criticism of culture (HD 9). Choosing to criticize English culture meant accepting, or at least contemplating, many of Carlyle’s critical ideas. Whatever the deficiencies and shortcomings in Carlyle that Conrad finds unacceptable, he does not “betray” Carlyle and remains “loyal to the nightmare of his choice” (HD 64). Yet like so much in Conrad’s art, his relationship with Carlyle is another of his “inconclusive experiences” (HD 11). He cannot adopt or assimilate Carlyle’s forms or ideas without simultaneously revealing some of the shortcomings inherent within them. The problem for Conrad is captured in Carlyle’s idea that “he alone can love, with a right gratitude and genuine loyalty of soul, the Hero-Teacher who has delivered him out of darkness into light” (H 126). Conrad is troubled by the idea of what would be the measure of “right gratitude.” He questions what limitations must be applied to “genuine loyalty of soul.” In effect, he wonders over the problem of whether Carlyle should be recognized as a “Hero-Teacher.” Conrad is not entirely convinced that Carlyle’s ideals will deliver us “out of darkness into light.” His skepticism makes him wary of becoming confused about the distinctions between darkness and light, or how the distinctions are to be made at all. The skeptical questions provoked by Carlyle’s sentence can be applied to both the relationship between Conrad and Carlyle and the relationship between Marlow and Kurtz: the two sets of relations are inextricably linked through a complicated analogy. Neither Conrad nor Carlyle’s thought can be located directly in the representations of Marlow or in Kurtz; nevertheless, the relationship between the two writers plays across and over the two characters in the story.

course is easier because in point of fact he wasn’t” (*Prophets* 57). Unfortunately, Robinson is right in remarking that “succeed in attaching [fascist] to anyone, and your work of denigration is done” (*Prophets* 57).
Recognizing the difficult analogical relation returns my discussion to the connection to Conrad’s and Carlyle’s shared preoccupation with Novalis’s statement that “it is certain my Conviction gains infinitely, the moment another soul will believe in it.” Much like Marlow identifying Kurtz as the one man who pronounces a judgement upon the terrible state of the world, Conrad identifies Carlyle as another soul who shares his convictions about the monstrous conditions of his culture. In a way, Conrad identifies Carlyle not only as someone whom he must read, but also as a potentially sympathetic reader, as someone who will confirm his beliefs and strengthen his convictions. Paul Kintzele makes an important argument in this regard about Carlyle’s preoccupation with heroes. Kintzele observes that the point of the Novalis quotation is that

to be a hero is to require the legitimization or validation of another: the hero needs an audience. Conviction, although seemingly a process by which an individual simply consults his or her reasons, becomes conviction (it gains “infinitely,” that is, it becomes, precisely, a conviction) only through the intervention of “another soul” that seconds its legitimacy. (76)

In making this argument Kintzele is forgetting that one of Carlyle’s most important heroes and perhaps the only one available in the late nineteenth century is the Hero as Man of Letters.\textsuperscript{20} Having read On Heroes, Conrad was well aware of Carlyle’s ideas about the writer as hero, and experienced something of what Kintzele describes as the hero’s “vertigo of being chosen. of being singled out and facing the difficult prospect of having to convince others” (77). Both authors are compelled to write their criticism of culture, yet are well aware that their culture is not one in which readers are likely to worship them as heroes, let alone accept or understand their devastating criticism of society.

\textsuperscript{20} David J. DeLaura argues that the “climax” of Carlyle’s argument is the hero as man of letters lecture (126).
Carlyle’s doubts about claiming the position of a hero causes the characteristic maneuver found in his writings whereby he distances himself from his own ideals by playing the role of an editor. For instance, the editorial frame structure of Sartor Resartus opens up a distance between Carlyle and the ideas at the center of the work attributed to Teufelsdröckh; nevertheless, the ideals of hero-worship and work, among others, are unmistakably Carlyle’s. And there is also the complication of the degree to which Carlyle identifies himself as a hero. With great justification, Michael Timko argues that Carlyle “sees himself as one of the heroes he is describing” and that “Carlyle’s heroes are self-reflexive; they reflect and reveal his own unwavering moral stance” (56, 57). Timko reveals that On Heroes is “Carlyle’s autobiography” in which all the examples are “Carlyle himself, living at different times, speaking different languages” and all epitomizing Carlyle’s ideals (57). In some way, Carlyle “saw himself as the only possible hero in England in 1840” (59).21

But Carlyle cannot bring himself to play the role of the hero as man of letters without a disguise. The problem is apparent throughout his writings: Carlyle can hardly declare that hero-worship is “the supreme practical perfection of all manner of worship” and then represent himself as a hero (PP 39). He can hardly identify the rule and then identify himself as an authority on the matter. In the increasingly democratic and liberal sentiments of the nineteenth century the claim would not be credible. Carlyle’s doubts about his position are manifested in his style whenever he comes close to suggesting that he is the Hero-Teacher:

Certainly, could the present Editor instruct men how to know Wisdom, Heroism, when they see it, that they might do reverence to it only, and loyally make it ruler over them,—yes, he were the living epitome of all Editors, Teachers, Prophets, that now teach and prophesy; he were an Apollo-Morrison, a Trismegistus and effective Cassandra! Let no Able Editor hope such things. It is to be expected the present laws of copyright, rate of reward per sheet, and other considerations,

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21 DeLaura corroborates this argument. See pages 126-9.
will save him from that peril. Let no Editor hope such things: no;—and yet let all
Editors aim towards such things, and even towards such alone! One knows not
what the meaning of editing and writing is, if even this be not it. (PP 42)\textsuperscript{22}

No matter how much he would like to, Carlyle simply cannot appropriate the role. He can motion
towards the hope of fulfilling the role; however, his grammar reveals his anxiety about declaring
anything openly; hence the collision between “certainly” and “could” at the beginning of the
paragraph and the “no, and yet” construction towards the end. Of course, Conrad’s skepticism
will not allow him to play the role of a prophet or the hero as man of letters; nevertheless, he
explores the possibilities of such roles through Marlow and reworks Carlyle’s characteristic forms
in the structure of \textit{Heart of Darkness}.

Consider the influence of \textit{Sartor Resartus} alone on the frame structure of the Marlow
tales. Conrad adapts the frame structure that Carlyle experiments with in \textit{Sartor Resartus}:
Carlyle’s book is structured with an English editor’s commentary framing the autobiographical
notes and philosophical ideas of Teufelsdröckh; Conrad’s works have an English frame narrator
retelling Marlow’s stories. The two authors transform periods of their lives into fictional form,
critically rethinking their own experiences. Both books are a strange mixture of commentary,
autobiography, and biography: Carlyle’s editor quotes Teufelsdröckh’s autobiographical notes
and Conrad’s narrator repeats Marlow’s autobiographical confession/justification which contains
a very brief biography of Kurtz. Carlyle and Conrad both create elaborate and complex structures
distancing readers from the thoughts of Teufelsdröckh and Marlow and the authors themselves.
Teufelsdröckh and Marlow are both called “wanderers” (SR 130, HD 9), and after periods of
unrest both complete journeys that are referred to as “pilgrimages” (SR 120, HD 17). During
those journeys Teufelsdröckh and Marlow both meet “great men”; the former meets Napoleon
and the latter meets Kurtz. Both characters suffer through periods of sickness, declare their belief

\textsuperscript{22} For a lengthy discussion of the analogies between \textit{Past and Present} and \textit{Heart of Darkness} see Hopwood’s essay.
in the value of work, and have a relationship with a man who advocates the extinction of a particular population (Hofrath Heuschrecke and Kurtz: see Book 3, Chapter 4 of Sartor Resartus entitled “Helotage,” 172-175). Both the English editor of Sartor Resartus and Marlow reflect at length upon the memory of the “last words” they heard from Teufelsdröckh and Kurtz respectively (see Book 1, Chapter 3 of Sartor Resartus entitled “Reminiscences,” 12-21).

Despite the importance of Carlyle’s thought in Conrad’s art, Conrad is troubled by his predecessor’s ideas. James Treadwell makes the crucial observation that “resistance is the crucial gesture of Teufelsdröckh’s apprenticeship” (239). It is no surprise that Conrad also “had to resist and attack sometimes” and one important point for this resistance is Carlyle’s belief in heroes (HD 19). In the next section I will explore Conrad’s ambivalent response to Carlyle’s ideas of the hero and hero-worship, first by examining how the question of Marlow’s health is vitally important and then by demonstrating how Carlyle’s ideas inform both the construction of Marlow’s character and the representation of Kurtz.

Carlyle’s ideal of hero-worship informs every aspect of Conrad’s thought in Heart of Darkness. In discussing the relationship between Conrad’s and Carlyle’s works, V. J. Emmett argues that “by confronting Marlow in Heart of Darkness with the charismatic villain Kurtz, Conrad offers a critique of the widespread nineteenth-century phenomenon of hero-worship” (145). Emmett reads “Marlow’s yarn as a rebuttal to the views expressed by Carlyle” (145). In analyzing the style and language of the story, Emmett presents convincing proof that the “internal evidence suggests that Conrad was thinking specifically on” Carlyle’s On Heroes (145). While I agree with Emmett’s view that “Conrad was sceptical of the general idea of the heroic,” I cannot agree with the idea that “the basic resemblance between the two works involves ironic inversion” and that the “influence was largely negative” (145). Conrad’s ambivalence makes his reading of

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23 V. J. Emmett makes the question of style the basis of his argument that Conrad draws heavily upon Carlyle’s On Heroes. He traces Conrad’s borrowings from Carlyle in terms of the vocabulary of the story. Most of his essay examines Kurtz as Conrad’s “rebuttal to the views expressed by Carlyle” on the subject of heroes (145). He sees “Kurtz’s diabolism” as “Conrad’s derisive comment on the enthusiasm of Carlyle’s hero-worship” (148).
Carlyle much more complex and produces a more troubling response than simply an “ironic inversion” of Carlyle’s values.

Conrad’s criticism of Carlyle’s ideal of hero-worship is connected with a preoccupation with health and sickness, ideas central to Carlyle’s critical thinking as a whole. The question operates at two interrelated levels: the individual and the cultural. Questions regarding the health and sickness of the individual and the culture are interconnected in Carlyle’s thought. If the culture as a whole is sick, then the likelihood of the individual being healthy is minimal. Throughout *Heart of Darkness* Conrad raises questions about the condition of Marlow’s health. During the journey towards the central station, Marlow wonders whether he “was becoming scientifically interesting” (24). The pilgrims doubt whether Marlow is “disturbed” because he is sleeping on the steamer (31). And later while traveling up the river towards Kurtz, Marlow confesses that “perhaps I had a little fever too. One can’t live with one’s finger everlastingingly on one’s pulse. I had often ‘a little fever,’ or a little touch of other things – the playful paw-strokes of the wilderness, the preliminary trifling before the more serious onslaught which came in due course” (43). Conrad makes Carlyle’s analogy or metaphor about health and sickness quite literal in questioning Marlow’s physical health and sickness, signalling to readers that both Marlow’s and Carlyle’s judgement may be compromised. The question is the degree to which Marlow’s perspective is distorted and whether his judgement should be trusted or doubted. If Marlow is a version of Carlyle’s Hero or even a Hero-Teacher, insofar as he attempts to instruct his listeners about the corruption at the heart of his culture, then his message may be compromised by the quality of the knowing he offers. The repeated concern with Marlow’s health recalls Carlyle’s concern with health and sickness in “Characteristics.”

The opening paragraph of Carlyle’s “Characteristics” points towards how the physician’s aphorism can be applied to all of our living:

The healthy know not of their health, but only the sick: this is the Physician’s Aphorism; and applicable in a far wider sense than he gives it. We may say, it
holds no less in moral, intellectual, political, poetical, than in merely corporeal therapeutics; that wherever, or in what shape soever, powers of the sort which can be named vital are at work, herein lies the test of their working right or working wrong. (C 186)

For Carlyle, the questioning inherent in skepticism is a symptom of disease: "the beginning of inquiry is disease" (C 187). He constructs a series of words in two antipodal categories: health, wholeness, harmony, order, and unconsciousness are placed against sickness, disintegration, derangement, disorder and consciousness. The greatness which defines the hero is aligned with the healthy and unconscious:

the Perfect, the Great is a mystery to itself, knows not itself; whatsoever does know itself is already little, and more or less imperfect. Or otherwise, we may say, Unconsciousness belongs to pure unmixed life; Consciousness to a diseased mixture and conflict of life and death: Unconsciousness is the sign of creation; Consciousness, at best, that of manufacture. (C 199)

There are several consequences of Carlyle's arguments. To use his own word, Carlyle's form of criticism is a kind of "therapeutics," and in making the health and sickness of culture his major concern, Carlyle unknowingly anticipates the birth of Freud's psychoanalytic "therapeutics" by about seventy years. While both Carlyle and Freud seek to provide prescriptions to cure the intellectual and physical illnesses undermining their respective cultures, it is important to recognize the significant differences in the fundamental assumptions informing the ideals of the two writers. Although Carlyle and Freud think in terms of moving from darkness to light, from ignorance to truth, it is only Freud who believes that revealing, uncovering, and making conscious as much as possible is unquestionably good. For Carlyle, the opposite is true: the great and healthy do not know. Or in other words, in Carlyle's view the ideal hero remains unconscious, a condition which precludes questioning and doubt. The healthy, unconscious hero

24 These words are used throughout both "Characteristics" and "Signs of the Times."
is not a skeptical questioner: not knowing is interconnected with heroism, and in Carlyle's argument all but synonymous. For Conrad, this kind of conclusion is problematic. He raises the question of whether the fundamental ideas underlying Carlyle's therapeutics are not in themselves a symptom of sickness. Is hero-worship a desire towards not knowing? For Conrad, Carlyle's prescription is as much of a problem as the disease it is supposed to cure. The question is whether Carlyle's ideal of greatness and heroism is a sign of Carlyle himself being sick without him knowing it. This concern is written into aspects of Marlow's experience as well as the accounts of Kurtz.

The problem is readily apparent in the description of Marlow's recollection of his return to Europe. In reading the passage, it is important to recognize how Conrad makes the health and sickness of knowing the central issue. Is Marlow's criticism the result of some sickness and is that sickness located in the individual or pervading the entire culture? The passage is meant to produce a "shuddering wonder" over Marlow's condition:

I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams. They trespassed upon my thoughts. They were intruders whose knowledge of life was to me an irritating pretence because I felt so sure they could not possibly know the things I knew. Their bearing, which was simply the bearing of commonplace individuals going about their business in the assurance of perfect safety, was offensive to me like the outrageous flaunting of folly in the face of a danger it is unable to comprehend. I had no particular desire to enlighten them, but I had some difficulty in restraining myself from laughing in their faces so full of stupid importance. I daresay I was not well at that time.

(76)
This passage is unsettling. It is difficult to know with any assurance whether Marlow is simply recollecting his thoughts from a previous experience, or if the thoughts are still operative in the present telling. Marlow acknowledges that he was sick upon his return, but it is difficult to know how well he has recovered, if at all, as he remembers the experience. To some degree, the sickness could still be distorting his telling. The kind of contempt manifested in the style is related to the passages describing the Professor’s thought in the fifth and thirteenth chapters of The Secret Agent; however, where the Professor also fears the commonplace masses surrounding him, Marlow counts himself superior, elevated above the common life. While readers might applaud Marlow’s scathing contempt for the pilgrims and the colonial enterprise as relatively true, his criticism of life in Europe is extreme and unbalanced. Part of the difficulty in reading the passage is determining the source of Marlow’s knowledge. One of his claims to knowing is his appeal to experience; he knows so much more because of his experience in the wilderness; hence his earlier digressions concerning his listener’s inability to understand because they still live “with solid pavement under [their] feet” and “neighbours” and “policemen” surrounding them (49). But Conrad raises doubts about the relation between Marlow’s knowing and his physical condition at the time, making it difficult to determine whether it is any better now. Marlow imagines himself superior to “the commonplace individuals” around him: but is he suffering from a delusion of greatness? The question is whether Marlow makes himself into something that “resembled an idol” (HD 7). A second question, if we have Carlyle and Nietzsche’s attack on idols in mind, whether he is a true or false idol. With Carlyle’s antithesis in mind, one conclusion is that Marlow’s knowing and sickness are interrelated so Conrad is simply confirming Carlyle’s judgement: self-conscious knowing is a disease. When we read Heart of Darkness as a whole, it is not clear that Marlow’s knowing is healthy elsewhere in the book. In fact, Marlow often practices the not knowing that Carlyle advocates. This has major implications for reading his judgements concerning Kurtz; however, first it is necessary to understand how Conrad represents Kurtz as a potential modern example of Carlyle’s hero.
The counterpart to Marlow as a sick knower is Kurtz as a degenerate hero. Kurtz is represented as a great man, but compromised in his greatness. The difficulty in reading Conrad’s version of the hero in *Heart of Darkness* is largely attributable to the structure of the story. We rarely hear Kurtz’s own words and only have a kind of highly compressed biography of his existence. Marlow is the Boswell to Kurtz’s Dr. Johnson.25 It is important to keep in mind that everything we know about Kurtz comes to us through Marlow’s thought and is refracted once again through the knowing of the frame narrator. I am not altogether sure that Conrad succeeds in making Kurtz’s greatness completely real because of the distance between the reader and Kurtz. Kurtz’s mind and history are largely closed to our knowing, unlike in *Lord Jim* where Conrad allows us more direct access to Jim’s thoughts before interposing the increasing layers of interpretive distance. Too much depends upon the judgement of others and not enough on actual evidence through Kurtz’s actions or thoughts and ideas. Nevertheless, Conrad attempts to represent Kurtz as a plausible representation of greatness, seriously qualified by Carlyle’s own arguments about the qualities of a hero.

There is no mistaking the insistence upon Kurtz’s greatness: the Manager describes him as the “best agent he had, an exceptional man, of the greatest importance to the Company” (25); with some resentment, the brick maker calls him a “prodigy” and “special being” (28); and Kurtz’s cousin calls him a “universal genius” (71). His greatness is explained as the consequence of his remarkable talents as an orator, poet, musician, writer, businessman, etc. In making Kurtz’s range of talents so all-encompassing that it becomes nearly impossible “to say... which was the greatest of his talents,” Conrad rewrites Carlyle’s ideal of a hero (71).26 As Carlyle explains, “I have no notion of a truly great man that could not be all sorts of men” (H 78). There is no strict category for the proper actions worthy of a hero: “I fancy there is in him the Politician,

25 Carlyle’s admiration for Boswell’s capacity for hero-worship is evident in the essay “Boswell’s Life of Johnson.”
26 Emmett discusses how Conrad reproduces all six of Carlyle’s categories of heroes in Kurtz (149-51).
the Thinker, Legislator, Philosopher;— in one or the other degree, he could have been, he is all these” (H 79). Conrad translates Carlyle’s idea into Kurtz’s seemingly limitless talents and potential. But Conrad is careful not to exclude two very serious problems in Carlyle’s vision.

The first problem is in Carlyle’s idea that “the Great is a mystery to itself, knows not itself” (C 199). The health of a hero depends upon a wholeness and harmony of being that potentially excludes the capacity for self-consciousness and self-examination. The second problem is in Carlyle’s idea that “there is something of the savage in all great men” (H 193). The two ideas are from different works, but this does not prevent Conrad from recognizing the consequences should the two ideas come together. The problem that Conrad points towards is whether Carlyle realizes the implications of these two ideals being shared in one being. There are consequences for the great men and the idea of greatness.

The test for Carlyle’s hero in the character of Kurtz is the solitude of the wilderness and the removal of the restraints inherent in the structure of civilization. The passage describing Kurtz’s disintegration and gradual self-destruction in the wilderness is Conrad’s response to Carlyle’s two ideas. In describing Kurtz’s actions Marlow explains that

They only showed that Mr. Kurtz lacked restraint in the gratification of his various lusts, that there was something wanting in him — some small matter which when the pressing need arose could not be found under his magnificent eloquence. Whether he knew of this deficiency himself I can’t say. I think the knowledge came to him at last — only at the very last. But the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance for the fantastic invasion. I think it had whispered to him things about himself which he did not know, things of which he had no conception until he took counsel with this great solitude — and the whisper had proved irresistably fascinating. (57)

The question of what Kurtz knew of himself is insistent here. The most likely deficiency in Kurtz’s knowing is precisely self-knowledge. The matter wanting in Kurtz is any kind of
knowledge about the quality or kind of his greatness and his being. And the knowledge that comes to Kurtz in the wilderness is the savagery that Carlyle argues is inherent in every great man. Kurtz had “no conception” of his own savagery until he found himself in conditions in which the external restraints provided by civilization were removed and he was left alone in the solitude. What Kurtz comes to know is “the awakening of forgotten and brutal instincts, by the memory of gratified and monstrous passions” (65). By placing Kurtz in the wilderness, Conrad removes the boundaries limiting Kurtz’s development, and “this alone had beguiled his unlawful soul beyond the bounds of permitted aspirations” (65). To emphasize one part of the passage, Conrad asks us to witness the development of the great man with Carlyle’s two ideas in mind. In another way, Conrad shows us the consequences of synthesizing Carlyle’s two ideas about the constitution of a great man. Granted, Kurtz’s physiology has been compromised by the multiple illnesses which he has endured. This might be produced as evidence that he is simply a sick version of Carlyle’s hero. But sustaining this argument would mean discounting Conrad’s synthesis of Carlyle’s two ideas. The cause of the sickness is internal and external.

As a great man, Kurtz is predisposed to some form of savagery, if only the conditions are right. And Conrad places Kurtz in the one location wherein Carlyle’s earliest heroic form, the hero as divinity, remains possible.27 Marlow’s description of the journey is important because it reveals the conditions surrounding the test of Kurtz’s heroism. Kurtz lives in a “prehistoric earth” located in “the night of first ages” among “prehistoric man” (37). The capacity for worship manifested by some of the Africans is directly related to the lack of history and scientific progress. It is important to note that Carlyle’s heroes “are intrinsically of the same material” but “the outward shape of [the hero] will depend on the time and the environment he finds himself in” (H 115). In nineteenth-century England, as Carlyle pointed out, the hero as divinity was

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27 Emmett also recognizes this part of Conrad’s thought concerning the importance of the African setting for testing Carlyle’s ideals (148-9).
impossible. But in the heart of Africa, far from the unbelief of European civilization, the child-like naïvety and belief which makes the earliest kind of hero-worship possible is still a reality.  

To be fair to Carlyle, it is necessary to recognize that he might read Kurtz as a false hero. Kurtz’s ambitions, which included a desire “to have kings meet him at railway stations on his return from some ghastly Nowhere” (HD 67), would place him, in Carlyle’s view, “among the wretchedest sights seen under this sun” (H 222). Kurtz simply would not qualify for a seat among heroes:

A great man? A poor morbid prurient empty man; fitter for the ward of a hospital, than for a throne among men. I advise you to keep out of his way. He cannot walk on quiet paths; unless you will look at him, wonder at him, write paragraphs about him, he cannot live. It is the emptiness of the man, not his greatness. Because there is nothing in himself, he hungers and thirsts that you would find something in him. In good truth, I believe no great man, not so much as a genuine man who had health and real substance in him of whatever magnitude, was ever much tormented in this way. (H 223)

The trouble is that Kurtz is the logical consequence of Carlyle’s ideas about the hero’s unconsciousness and inherent savagery. If Kurtz belongs in a hospital, then Carlyle must take some responsibility for defining the hero in such a way that his character could be predisposed towards the corruption that Kurtz displays. Having created the very idea of the heroic cultural prophet as man of letters, therapist, or doctor, Carlyle is responsible for his own prescriptions. If the treatment for the salvation of culture has failed, Carlyle’s therapeutic practice is at issue.  

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28 Carlyle discusses the child-like cultural conditions which make the hero as divinity possible in the first lecture in On Heroes. Conrad reworks this type of situation with a much different effect in creating the conditions for Jim’s heroism in Patusan. See my discussion in Chapter 4.

29 This entire problem is taken up again in the final chapter of my thesis in relation to Freud.
Conrad has Carlyle’s objection in mind in making Marlow’s judgement that there is an “original Kurtz” and “the hollow sham” (67). The latter is “avid of lying fame, of sham distinction, of all the appearances of success and power” (67). In effect, this makes Kurtz a sham because by Carlyle’s definition a hero “looks through the shows of things into things” and recognizes the difference between “Idolatries” and reality or truth (H 55). But the hollow sham is not the Kurtz that Marlow values. It is the original Kurtz, the one who “had something to say” and made a “pronouncement” “piercing enough to penetrate all the hearts that beat in the universe” (69). Of course, the claim implicit in Marlow’s judgement that he can distinguish the true from the false Kurtz is problematic. The judgement is partly the result of Marlow’s extreme reaction against everything he recognizes as false in his culture and in the Company in which he works; for instance, the “faithless pilgrims” and the greed to “make no end of coin by trade” (26, 13). The judgement is also the result of Marlow’s desire for an alternative to the monstrous conditions that he witnesses; hence, Kurtz becomes the only real choice among the nightmares. But the question that Conrad raises points towards the fundamental basis of Carlyle’s capacity to know the heroic.

The distinction that Marlow wants to draw between the original and the sham Kurtz is too simple by half. It points to a major problem in Carlyle’s thought. From Conrad’s perspective, the implication is that the hero cannot be judged in part, but must be confronted as a whole. One part of the hero’s existence cannot be held to be independent of the others. In Heart of Darkness all of Kurtz’s actions as a whole speak to the quality of his greatness. The problem that Conrad proposes is how to read the potential greatness of men while attending to both the good and evil of their actions. This is analogous to Conrad’s relationship with Carlyle insofar as Conrad is having to judge Carlyle’s thought as a whole. And this problem will return again and again with Dickens, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche: there is no separating the good from the bad or the strong from the weak in the thought of those writers. The simultaneous existence of both makes both

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30 See Emmett’s discussion of this problem (149).
possible. The problem of what elements should be praised and what elements should be blamed is insistent. For Conrad, the dangers in hero-worship are too great if the choice is made to obey the wrong authority.

The difficulties inherent in Carlyle’s position, which advocates obedience and loyalty to the hero, is captured in Conrad’s representation of the Russian “harlequin” (53). Conrad is careful to connect the harlequin with Carlyle through deliberate allusions to Teufelsdröckh’s clothes philosophy in Sartor Resartus. The harlequin is repeatedly described in terms of his clothing, which “was covered with patches all over, with bright patches, blue, red, and yellow – patches on the back, patches on the front, patches on the elbows, on knees... and the sunshine made him look extremely gay and wonderfully neat withal because you could see how beautifully all this patching had been done” (53). Marlow observes that “the glamour of youth so enveloped his parti-coloured rags” (55). In questioning whether Carlyle’s ideal of worship is terrible because it is too innocent, Conrad makes the harlequin young and boyish, as a way of emphasizing the youthful devotion of his feelings towards Kurtz. Marlow’s ambivalence towards the harlequin is informed by Conrad’s ambivalence towards Carlyle. There is genuine admiration in Marlow’s reflection that the harlequin’s

need was to exist and to move onwards at the greatest possible risk and with a maximum of privation. If the absolutely pure, Uncalculating, unpractical spirit of adventure had ever ruled a human being, it ruled this be-patched youth. I almost envied him the possession of this modest and clear flame. It seemed to have consumed all thought of self so completely that even while he was talking to you, you forgot that it was he – the man before your eyes – who had gone through these things. (55)

Marlow admires the harlequin as an epitome of the complete lack of self-consciousness. But the lack of self-consciousness cannot be separated from the harlequin’s hero-worship towards Kurtz. Marlow “did not envy him his devotion to Kurtz, though. He had not meditated over it. It came
to him and he accepted it with a sort of eager fatalism. I must say that to me it appeared about the most dangerous thing in every way he had come upon so far” (55). Thinking himself a skeptical man, Marlow is critical of the harlequin’s lack of thought about the dangers of his hero-worship. But Conrad is careful to double Marlow with the harlequin and thereby complicate the judgement accordingly. A fascination with adventure is exactly what causes Marlow to come to Africa; hence his admiration for the harlequin’s “unpractical spirit of adventure.” So Marlow’s criticism of the harlequin’s hero-worship does not necessarily imply that he is sufficiently critical of his own loyalty towards Kurtz. The problem is whether Marlow realizes sufficiently the danger of choosing the nightmare that is Kurtz. Conrad has some doubts about whether there is much of a choice at all in either the monstrous conditions or the monstrous hero. The harlequin is emphatically not Kurtz’s “last disciple” (58). That questionable distinction belongs to Marlow.

When we think of Conrad and Carlyle, several ideas can be inferred from these passages. In Conrad’s view, hero-worship is Carlyle’s most dangerous idea; and yet, we cannot wholly do without it, nor can we wholly escape the idea even if we tried. This problem enters into all of Conrad’s thought about the great writers with whom he engages in critical dialogues.

Despite the repudiation of the Russian harlequin’s pure form of hero-worship with all the qualities of admiration, obedience and devotion that it implies, Marlow is also guilty of some more modern form of worship. I am not altogether sure how to characterize Marlow’s worship in relation to Carlyle’s thought, but the source of the worship is intimately related to a sense of meeting a kindred spirit or someone similar in kind. Marlow marks Kurtz as someone who shares an antipathy to the sham culture he despises. He marks Kurtz as an ally in his opposition to the evils of the Company as a symbol of Europe as a whole. The choice is informed by Marlow’s belief in the virtue of sincerity being shared between himself and Kurtz. Marlow sides with greatness against the hollowness of culture, but for Conrad the judgement is questionable. Again, the problem is related to health and sickness and also Carlyle’s use of the word “sincerity.”
Throughout the lectures that make up On Heroes, one of the most important word-ideas in Carlyle’s vocabulary is “sincerity.”

The entire work is a sustained meditation of the importance of sincerity in thought and life. Carlyle’s primary definition of the heroic man, the only test of whether or not he is “true,” concerns sincerity: “I should say sincerity, a deep, great, genuine sincerity, is the first characteristic of all men in any way heroic” (45). And the measure of sincerity depends upon Carlyle’s ideal of unconsciousness insofar as it is “not the sincerity that calls itself sincere” because “the Great Man’s sincerity is of the kind he cannot speak of, is not conscious of” (45). The hero does not know whether he is sincere or not because he does not ask himself whether he is so or not: “his sincerity does not depend upon himself; he cannot help being sincere” (45). In Conrad’s work, the idea of sincerity is made a serious problem growing out of Carlyle’s argument that identifying the heroic with the sincere, and the proposition that “the sincere alone can recognize sincerity” (216). The desire to create a “whole world of Heroes” causes Carlyle to raise the question: “If Hero mean sincere man, why may not every one of us be a hero?” (H 127). Carlyle’s ideal is admirable, but is it likely to be realized?

Conrad illustrates this aspect of Carlyle’s thought in Marlow in several ways. Marlow’s repudiation of lying, “which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world – what I want to forget” owes its origins to Carlyle’s criticism of the sham and false (29). But the problem is complicated when Marlow allows himself to go “near enough” towards making a lie of omission in “letting the young fool believe anything he liked” (29). He realizes that “I became in an instant as much of a pretense as the rest of the bewitched pilgrims” (29). Of course, this is not Marlow’s only lapse away from telling the truth since he commits a more serious breach at the end of the story. But the importance of the passages lies in Conrad raising questions about Marlow’s capacity for sincerity and truthfulness and his self-consciousness about lapsing from sincerity. Whether or not

31 See Daiches’s discussion of sincerity as “a great Victorian virtue” in relation to Carlyle’s thought (369-70).

32 In his book Sincerity and Authenticity, Lionel Trilling seems to have not recognized the importance of sincerity in Carlyle’s thought. He alludes to Carlyle several times in his book, but does not examine Carlyle’s thought about the centrality of sincerity in any way.
Marlow has the capacity to be heroic through his worship is intimately related to his capacity for sincerity. If Marlow is to be "an exceptional and gifted creature" either in his ability to recognize and reverence the hero or in the potential to be a hero himself, then the measure of whether or not he is "exceptional" depends largely on his sincerity (15). The measure of Marlow's own greatness cannot be separated from his judgement of Kurtz's greatness.

The element of identification implicit in Carlyle's argument that "the sincere alone can recognize sincerity" informs Marlow's profound ambivalence towards Kurtz. As a skeptical critic of his culture, Marlow is unlikely to engage in the pure form of hero-worship which Carlyle idealizes. He is not about to identify Kurtz as an absolute authority and pledge his obedience accordingly. Nevertheless, the need for a choice different from the sham reality surrounding Marlow causes him to turn towards Kurtz with a terrible fascination. Part of the difficulty is in knowing whether Marlow is projecting the qualities of the heroic onto Kurtz because he must fulfill Marlow's desire for an alternative to the cultural nightmare in which he lives. It is a question of cause and consequence. Does Marlow identify Kurtz as a hero and a great man by attributing to him the characteristics that Carlyle idealizes? Or are the elements really present in Kurtz? The degree to which Marlow forces his knowing of Kurtz as the proper judgement is troubling.

Consider Marlow's assessment of Kurtz's final words. Conrad places Marlow's judgement and description of Kurtz's words before the recounting of the utterance. Therefore, through the order of the telling, Marlow's idea reinforces the convention of the deathbed scene in which the final utterance is a real insight towards the truth. Marlow explains that "no eloquence could have been so withering to one's belief in mankind as his final burst of sincerity" (66). Judging by Kurtz's famous final words alone, it is difficult to know what Kurtz means, never mind whether his words can be judged to be sincere or insincere. But the reading that Marlow offers forces the idea of sincerity upon Kurtz's language. The words become in Marlow's view the expression of a judgement that Marlow shares. Through the language of Marlow's summary
of Kurtz's final burst of sincerity, Conrad shows the element of identification in Marlow's desire: “He was a remarkable man. After all, this was the expression of some sort of belief; it had candor, it had conviction, it had a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth – the strange commingling of desire and hate” (69). Conrad records the process through which Marlow makes Kurtz's final moments into something characteristic of a hero. Marlow alone was present to hear Kurtz's sincere final words. The entire scene is perplexing when we question whether or not Marlow is a hero if only sincerity can recognize sincerity.

As before, the problem brings us back to the Novalis quotation. The question is the degree to which Marlow is making Kurtz into someone with whom he can share a belief and thereby strengthen his convictions. Is Marlow's faith in Kurtz's sincerity an expression of his own "want" of a "deliberate belief" (HD 38)? Because of that want he identifies someone to share his convictions and recreates some aspects of Kurtz as a projection of himself. Marlow's interpretation of Kurtz's final words reflects more upon Marlow's judgement of his civilization than anything we can know about Kurtz: the self-condemnation that Marlow reads in Kurtz's final words is spoken by the original Kurtz against the hollow Kurtz. The latter is a betrayal of the former because the false Kurtz assimilates the sham reality of the false civilization that Marlow despises and therefore must be repudiated. Against the corrupted values of his civilization, Marlow prefers the pure savagery of Kurtz. In the region of "subtle horrors," Kurtz's "pure, uncomplicated savagery was a positive relief" (HD 58). The pure savagery is preferable to the rationalized and institutionalized forms in the Company, which is to say Kurtz is real while the Company is false. But the degree to which Marlow knows Kurtz is questionable, and will

33 In "The Value of Facts in the Heart of Darkness" Michael Levenson characterizes the story as a "drama of officialdom" (395) and calls Conrad a "searching critic of bureaucracy" (397). Levenson looks to Max Weber to "clarify Conrad's arrangement of values" (396), but he should have looked towards Carlyle. Conrad demonstrates the truth of Carlyle's prophecy that culture would turn into a bureaucracy and that the bureaucrat would be "the representative figure of the modern age" (396). Carlyle's idea of the "Age of Machinery" is a culture that "with its whole
be explored again below in relation to Carlyle's ideal of work. The quality of Marlow's knowing is at issue again, and cannot be separated from the presence of the other idea which Conrad assimilates from Carlyle's thought.

Marlow's ideas about work affect his knowing of and his reaction towards Kurtz. Conrad makes this explicit when, before he ever meets Kurtz, Marlow wonders whether the man "was just simply a fine fellow who stuck to his work for its own sake" (34). The element of doubling enters into Marlow's projection onto Kurtz of his own notions about work. Marlow's curiosity about "whether this man who had come out equipped with moral ideas of some sort would climb to the top after all and how he would set about his work when there" points towards the central issue even more insistently (33). Marlow wonders about Kurtz as a worker, and how his ideas relate to his work. This is a central question that Conrad raises for Marlow as well: how and why his ideas about work affect his knowing or not knowing throughout his experience in Africa. With Carlyle's concerns about the importance of work in mind, Conrad makes the idea of work a central problem in Heart of Darkness. Once again, it is a question of shared convictions since Conrad also thinks that work is a vital part of our living. To make sense of Marlow's ideas concerning work, it is necessary to have Carlyle's teachings in mind.

Throughout Heart of Darkness Conrad has in mind the most famous dictum from Carlyle's gospel of work in Sartor Resartus:

A certain inarticulate Self-consciousness dwells dimly in us; which only our Works can render articulate and decisively discernible. Our Works are the mirror

undivided might, forwards, teaches and practices the great art of adapting means to ends. Nothing is now done directly, or by hand; all is by rule and calculated contrivance" (226). Conrad represents this cultural condition in the form of the Company: work is becoming synonymous with the mechanism of bureaucracy. At the end of the nineteenth century, civilization has been transformed into the Company.

34 Ted Boyle's essay entitled "Marlow Gains Insight through Work" is a recent example of the discussion. Daniel Brundley also comments on Marlow's valuation of work in "Marlow's Morality" (327-332).

35 See Paul Gaston's argument about the importance of work throughout Conrad's writings, especially page 204.
wherein the spirit first sees its natural lineaments. Hence, too, the folly of that impossible Precept, *Know thyself*, till it be translated into this partially possible one, *Know what thou canst work at.* (126)

The imperative to work is both prior to knowledge and the route to knowledge. In working we render ourselves visible so others can discern our being and we can know ourselves. We realize our self-consciousness through our actions; however, there is a question concerning whether our work can obstruct the movement towards self-knowledge. And Carlyle does not allow for thinking and questioning as a kind of work. The problem is apparent when Carlyle argues that "man is sent hither not to question, but to work" (C 206). If thinking is opposed to working, then the relationship between work and knowledge is strained.

Carlyle sometimes comes close to denying the possibility of knowledge coming from any part of life but work. In the chapter entitled "Labour" in *Past and Present*, Carlyle makes this claim explicit:

Knowledge? The knowledge that will hold good in working, cleave to that; for Nature herself accredits that, says Yea to that. Properly thou hast no other knowledge but what thou hast got by working; the rest is yet all a hypothesis of knowledge; a thing to be argued of in schools, a thing floating in the clouds, in endless logic-vortices, till we try it and fix it. "Doubt, of whatever kind, can be ended by Action alone." (197-98)

Carlyle does not doubt whether work is the true and only source of all knowledge. He cannot if he wants work to silence all doubts and questions. But what can Carlyle do with the knowledge that comes from thought? Doubt and thought are opposed to work and knowledge. The imperative to work, to always be working, Carlyle offered as a form of salvation, because "in Idleness alone is there perpetual despair" (PP 196). For his sick culture, Carlyle prescribed work
as the best cure. Those periods of idleness and solitude are dangerous because the mind is free to think, conjecture, speculate, and doubt. Idleness becomes equated with thought.

If work leads to knowledge it can also be seen as an avoidance of thought. For Carlyle, work makes for "harmony" in living by eliminating the leisure to reflect upon subtle arguments: "Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair... all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves" (PP 196). The ideal of work is a contradiction: simultaneously the means to know and to not know; the most important expression of being and the most important avoidance of being.

Conrad recognizes the contradiction within Carlyle's idea. In Marlow's reflections on work Conrad represents the tension Carlyle creates between work and thought:

[The steamboat] had given me a chance to come out a bit – to find out what I could do. 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 tell what it really means. (31)

This is indebted to Carlyle, but Conrad challenges us to consider whether we "only see the mere show" of Carlyle's praise of work, or whether we can "tell what it really means." Where Carlyle uses the word "idleness," Conrad uses the phrase "laze about." Marlow accepts Carlyle's doctrine, probably without much thought. He simply equates thinking with lazing about and

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36 As Daiches argues, Carlyle "believes in Action, it seems, generally unspecified, for its own sake" (380).
37 Houghton quotes a passage from Charlotte Mary Yonge's novel The Daisy Chain that makes the contradictory ideal contained in work painfully and humorously explicit:
   "I must be away from it all, and go to the simplest hardest work, beginning from the rudiments, and forgetting subtle arguments."
   "Forgetting yourself," said Ethel.
   "Right. I want to have no leisure to think about myself," said Norman.
   "I am never so happy as at such times." (259)

Carlyle's ideals lead directly to this conversation between Norman and Ethel.
working with self-knowledge. But Conrad has serious doubts about whether work really does 
give an individual the chance for self-knowledge. Steve Ressler argues that Marlow 
strains to idealize work, to raise a private creed to a transcendental value. But 
Marlow’s Congo experience and Conrad’s vision prove the activity of work to be 
only a temporary and unreliable safeguard and the values of work to be moral 
formulas unsustainable before the most terrible truths. (12) 
Ressler’s idea that Marlow’s idealization of work is a “private creed” is an error. The gospel of 
work was adopted by many Englishmen in the nineteenth century.38 And Conrad does not set out 
only to prove that work is unreliable as a safeguard, but to question whether it may be a necessary 
safeguard. Conrad asks us to reconsider Carlyle’s construction of the relation between working 
and knowing. 

Conrad questions the knowledge about himself that Marlow’s work makes available to 
him. And because the narrative is retrospective, Conrad forces us to think how Marlow’s work 
then affects his telling now. Conrad repeatedly shows us how work keeps knowledge curiously 
separate from being, as if registered by but not assimilated into self-consciousness. Marlow does 
not realize it, but Conrad emphasizes the idea that work is a way of not knowing. It shields 
Marlow from the temptations in the wilderness which could potentially undo him as Kurtz has 
been undone. One way of examining the idea is to recognize the importance Conrad places on 
the relationship between the individual and his occupation in the story. 

The world of Heart of Darkness is practically without names.39 We are left without any 
way of discriminating individuals from one another except by their job titles. Michael Levenson 
recognizes the distinctions drawn between those characters with names and those without (398). 

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38 For a general account of the importance of work in the nineteenth century, see Walter 
Houghton’s The Victorian Frame of Mind, especially the section entitled “Work” (242-62). 
39 Hunt Hawkins also makes this observation in “Conrad’s Heart of Darkness: Politics and 
History” (208). Conrad may have in mind Carlyle’s ideas about the importance of names from 
Sartor Resartus in not giving proper names to the majority of characters (67-68). The 
namelessness of the Company is at odds with Carlyle’s ideas about individuality.
The nameless are largely “impersonal functionaries” filling positions in an “institutional context” or “social organization” (398). Those in the audience listening to Marlow’s tale are known only by their occupations: the Director of Companies, the Lawyer, and the Accountant. All of the words are capitalized, as if taken from one of Carlyle’s books, and we remember Marlow’s comment about being “one of the Workers – with a capital – you know” (15). Except for Captain Fresleven, who as a fellow seaman is undoubtedly important to Marlow, and Kurtz, Conrad only represents workers: the Doctor, the Company’s chief accountant, the Manager, the brick-maker, the mechanic and boiler-maker, etc. The names themselves become a “mere show” of an individual, although Conrad does reveal some details about these figures at times. For instance, we learn that the mechanic “was a widower with six young children… and the passion of his life was pigeon-flying” (31). With that realization, the mechanic is not merely his occupation anymore. But we should note that it was only “after work hours he used sometimes to come over from his hut for a talk about his children and his pigeons” (31). The mechanic’s family life only finds expression when he is lazing about, away from work. His being is not realized solely through his work: his individuality is expressed only after the work stops.

The best example Conrad gives us of an individual abstracted into his occupation is the Company’s chief accountant. He serves as a double for Marlow, showing work as a defence against the wilderness. But Conrad also reveals the brutal callousness that is possible when an individual becomes absolutely identified with the narrow duties of his work. The chief accountant lives in the Company station as if he were living in London. He is untouched by the wilderness, a “sort of vision” in his “high, starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca jacket, snowy trousers, a clean necktie, and varnished boots” (21). Conrad represents Marlow’s wonder as understandable but unsettling; he admires and respects the chief accountant too much. Marlow betrays a lack of judgment when he sympathizes with the man who has “been teaching one of the native women” to tend to his clothes, but not with the woman who “had a distaste for the work” (21). Despite his own distaste for work, Marlow does not sympathize with the native woman.
Instead, he is enchanted by the chief accountant’s devotion to his books, which are in “apple-pie order” (21). The chief accountant’s devotion to work, which has allowed him to separate himself from his surroundings, has also eliminated his capacity to be moved by human suffering. So much so, that when a “sick man” is placed in a room with him, the chief accountant can only display a “gentle annoyance” and remark that “the groans of this sick person... distract my attention. And without that it is extremely difficult to guard against clerical errors in this climate” (22).

Daniel Brundley would have us read the treatment of work in *Heart of Darkness* as an example of “a way work can be a form of attentiveness” (331). Judging from the example of the chief accountant, Conrad disagrees. Brundley does not recognize how work can be “proof against the wilderness” and a kind of “moral dodge” without reading it as Conrad’s “rejection” of the “commitment to work” (329, 331). Conrad is not simply rejecting Carlyle’s commitment to work, but rather explaining some of the difficulties attached to it.

Conrad makes it difficult to simply condemn the chief accountant. The problem is complicated considerably in the last view Conrad gives of him:

He turned to his work. The noise outside had ceased, and presently in going out I stopped at the door. In the steady buzz of flies the homeward-bound agent was lying flushed and insensible; the other bent over his books was making correct entries of perfectly correct transactions; and fifty feet below the doorstep I could see the still tree-tops of the grove of death. (22)

The chief accountant’s devotion to work and keeping up appearances is a defensive measure and partly related to the instinct for self-preservation. We are back to Carlyle’s idea that work saves a man from doubts and despair. The work preserves the accountant from becoming physically ill like the agent on his floor or mentally ill like Kurtz. The work saves the man from knowing the horror of the grove of death just a short distance from his door. While the avoidance of knowing is deplorable, he could not live in the station without the distraction of his work. His devotion is
necessary to live but his life is reduced to an exemplification of his occupation and almost nothing more.

In opposition to this, Conrad creates the brick maker, the “papier-mâché Mephistopheles” (29). While the chief account has no existence apart from his occupation, the brick maker does not work at his occupation at all. His thoughts are directed towards himself and self-advancement. Although “the business entrusted to this fellow was the making of bricks... there wasn’t a fragment of a brick anywhere in the station” (27). Again, he is another double for Marlow, but an extreme of the idea of idleness that Marlow enjoys. Like Marlow, he would rather laze about and think about what might be done than actually do his work. By doing nothing, the brick maker is aligned with the pilgrims of the station. In their “waiting,” they all fall prey to “disease” (27). Their idleness undermines their health, mentally and physically. The idleness leads the brick maker and the pilgrims to be tempted by the doubt and speculation that Carlyle abhors:

They beguiled the time by backbiting and intriguing against each other in a foolish kind of way. There was an air of plotting about that station, but nothing came of it, of course. It was as unreal as everything else – as the philanthropic pretense of the whole concern, as their talk, as their government, as their show of work. The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a trading-post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages. They intrigued and slandered and hated each other only on that account – but as to effectually lifting a little finger – oh no. (27)

Though unmistakably of Conrad’s world, this is the kind of chaos that Carlyle fears from idleness. As if to spite Carlyle, or perhaps to fulfill all his warnings about the dangers of idleness, these men think their rewards must be found in this life rather than found “in Heaven or else Nowhere” (PP 203). Conrad represents men lazing about and thinking: all these men can do is
scheme about their potential rewards. And without the defence that activity and work gives the chief accountant, these men will fall sick and die long before they get their percentages.

Conrad asks us to realize that Marlow’s idealization of work after the fact is at least partially caused by his reaction to the plotting and conspiratorial atmosphere created by the idleness he witnesses. At that moment, Marlow is very much like Carlyle, whose ideas about work are partially a reaction against what he perceived as his culture’s illness, the self-conscious sickness that is the symptom of “working wrong” (C 186). Hence Carlyle’s reaction against Byron in favour of Goethe, who suggested that “an endless significance lies in Work” (PP 196).

So Conrad is preoccupied with two problems: that the idealization of work as a means to forget the self is a good insofar as it eliminates the dangers of the speculative, conspiratorial world of the brick maker and also that the idealization of work as a means to realize the self or find the self is potentially an error, and more of a problem than either Marlow or Carlyle realizes. For instance, we should read Marlow’s comments about the “savage” trained as a fireman against Marlow, against all the workers in **Heart of Darkness**. In Carlyle’s view there would be little or no irony in Marlow’s idea that the black men working on the ship are an “improved specimen” of humanity (38). While Marlow sees something comic in his fireman, like a “dog in a parody of breeches” (38), Conrad tells us that “a few months of training” has “done for” Marlow as well (38). Unlike his fireman, Marlow might be out of place “clapping his hands and stamping his feet on the bank,” but he too could be doing something else, “instead of which he was hard at work” (39). Marlow’s response to what is happening on the shore has been conditioned by his training to work and live in civilization. Like the fireman, Marlow “was useful” to the Company “because he had been instructed” (39). This may help explain the aunt’s biblical allusion in explaining to Marlow that “the labourer is worthy of his hire” (16). Conrad shows us how Marlow too is “full of improving knowledge” in and of his work, just as Carlyle would have it (39). But this makes Marlow as much “a thrall to strange witchcraft” as his fireman (39). Neither of them has “any time to peer into [their] creepy thoughts” (39).
If Marlow was tempted to leave his ship at the time, work keeps him from acting upon his desire, whether conscious or not. The reflections on his suspicions are more a part of the retelling of the experience than of the actual earlier experience which was limited because he was busy working. We must remember that during his telling he is back in England, where men have “solid pavement under [their] feet, surrounded by kind neighbors ready to cheer [them]” (49). He is far from the experience and now among friends. In the past of the events or the present of the retelling, he could not seriously consider abandoning his ship to go ashore. He could not, then or now, think through what he witnessed.

Immediately afterwards Marlow relates his story of finding the Russian’s book: An Inquiry into Some Points of Seamanship. Marlow’s reaction to the book is a kind of identification, because he recognizes “a singleness of intention, an honest concern for the right way of going to work which made these humble pages thought out so many years ago luminous with another than a professional light” (39). The “singleness of intention” recalls Marlow’s respect for the chief accountant, and the “right way of going to work” recalls Marlow’s objections to the brick maker’s idleness. But what is most important is that the “simple old sailor” makes Marlow “forget the jungle and pilgrims in a delicious sensation of having come upon something unmistakably real” (39). While reading this book, Marlow is kept from thinking about his situation. His reading is a way of distracting himself from the horrors of the moment. The “unmistakably real” excludes everything surrounding him for a few moments because it is preoccupied with work.

During his trip on the French steamer around the coast, Conrad gives us a passage in which Marlow is free to think because he is not working:

The idleness of a passenger, my isolation amongst all these men with whom I had no point of contact, the oily and languid sea, the uniform somberness of the

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40 This is what Ole Martin Skilleås has in mind in arguing that “work is a saving force for Marlow on the boat” (57).
coast, seemed to keep me away from the truth of things within the toil of a mournful and senseless delusion. The voice of the surf heard now and again was a positive pleasure, like the speech of a brother. Now and then a boat from the shore gave one a momentary contact with reality. (17)

The real takes a different form here. Rather than from a book, the real comes to Marlow from the boat that he sees, which recalls his own occupation. The "great comfort" of feeling that he "belonged still to a world of straightforward facts" connects this with the previous scene (17). In both cases, Marlow is apparently open to an experience of contact, but he is, at least partially, thinking about his own preoccupations with ships and his work. Again, it is the problem of Marlow recognizing only a value in things connected with himself or his own preoccupations. The entire style of the two passages is different and distinct within the story. There is a calm observing and registering of experience that is akin to Marlow’s walk through the grove of death, where again he is not at work. Conrad reveals an immediacy and clarity in experience when those experiences are not distorted through the distraction of working; but nevertheless Marlow’s mind is never far from the subject of work. Work potentially dulls the senses and the ability to know yet also informs in some subtle, unconscious manner all of Marlow’s knowing. Conrad emphasizes the necessity for what Carlyle calls idleness, for the periods of inactivity that allow for real human contact and real human knowing, but reveals that Marlow’s preoccupation with work is never wholly absent from his thinking.

Conrad undermines the significance Marlow attributes to Kurtz in the passage leading to Kurtz’s death scene. There are three paragraphs about how “Kurtz discoursed” (67), which are immediately followed by a strong qualification concerning how much time Marlow could attend carefully to Kurtz:

But I had not much time to give him because I was helping the engine-driver to take to pieces the leaky cylinders, to straighten a bent connecting rod, and in other such matters. I lived in an infernal mess of rust, filings, nuts, bolts,
spanners, hammers, ratchet-drills — things I abominate because I don’t get on with them. I tended the little forge we fortunately had aboard; I toiled wearily in a wretched scrap-heap — unless I had the shakes too bad to stand. (68)

This scene is a kind of reversal of the meeting Marlow had with Mrs. Beard in “Youth.” While she worked, Marlow had time to read. Now, while Kurtz discoursed it was Marlow who worked. Conrad gives us very good reason to doubt Marlow’s knowledge of Kurtz and how well Marlow might have attended to the meaning of Kurtz’s words. This passage reminds us of the chief accountant’s devotion to work that compels him to ignore the dying man placed in his room. Marlow’s claim to know the significance of Kurtz’s last words is questionable at best.

In the grove of death Conrad represents an experience of human communion which may be the most important in terms of Conrad’s critical thought about Carlyle’s ideal of work. First, it is important to note that Marlow was “loitering in the shade,” which recalls Marlow’s idea of lazing about and thinking (21). The horrors of what he sees there cause him to “make haste towards the station” (21). That is, he wants to move from “loitering” to take up his position working. It is a movement towards an avoidance of knowing. Marlow is not working, and his experience in the grove of death comes before his meeting with the chief accountant, the brick maker, and his idealized thoughts about work. Marlow’s experience in the grove of death is the cause or the beginning out of which all the later experiences grow and take their character. The idealization of work grows out of the need to be saved from knowing such horrors.

Conrad’s representation of the grove of death is a contentious passage. Chinua Achebe dismisses the scene as “bleeding-heart sentiments” (256). Frances Singh argues that Marlow’s “sympathy for the oppressed blacks is only superficial” (272). C. B. Cox argues that the scene expresses “profound compassion for the sick negroes” (52). I believe that Cox is right in recognizing that Conrad is trying to earn the reader’s compassion, but the debate among these critics proceeds without sufficiently understanding Conrad’s design and how Carlyle is present at the scene. They are not aware that Conrad is criticizing Carlyle in this passage.
Before entering the grove of death Conrad shows us an "inhabited devastation" (18). Conrad uses the word "machinery," recalling one of Carlyle's characteristic ideas from "Signs of the Times" that the nineteenth century is "the Age of Machinery" (19, 226). Conrad shows us that at the end of the nineteenth century the idea of work has decayed, and Carlyle's cure for diseased self-consciousness may have become a mechanical habit.

The grove of death is one potential result of Carlyle mistaking his gospel of work for a real religion, as the means by which "a man perfects himself" (PP 196). Carlyle's prescription to make men heroic through work may do more harm than good. The call for the "Force for Work" to be enforced upon others is troubling (PP 196). If work is a call to make order, then the worker, and especially the hero, must combat disorder everywhere he sees it:

> What is immethodic, waste, thou shalt make methodic, regulated, arable; obedient and productive to thee. Wheresoever thou findest Disorder, there is thy eternal enemy; attack him swiftly, subdue him; make Order of him, the subject not of chaos, but of Intelligence, Divinity and Thee!....

> But above all, where thou findest Ignorance, Stupidity, Brutemindedness,—yes, there... attack it, I say; smite it wisely, unweariedly, and rest not while thou livest and it lives; but smite, smite, in the name of God!

(PP 201)

The language suggests a religious crusade, much like the campaign Carlyle describes Mahomet and Cromwell undertaking in On Heroes. Carlyle's demands that people who do not recognize the gospel of work should be forced to embrace it become explicit. Chris R. Vanden Bossche describes the problem in the language that characterizes Carlyle's later works:

> So long as Carlyle employs the metaphor of battle only to depict the struggle of the nation as a whole to create social order, it does not imply coercion or compulsion, but when he treats it more literally as the conquest of new lands, he begins to legitimate imperialist suppression and the very commercial motivations
he intended to exclude. Captains of industry... may force others to join them in
the task. (115)

Carlyle’s language helped create the conditions that Conrad is criticizing. Carol Collins disagrees
with Vanden Bosche by arguing that “Carlyle constantly undercuts any serious intent leaving us
with no clear view of his opinions” (32). But the equivocation or ambiguity is not an excuse or a
release from responsibility. Readers at the end of the twentieth century might find ambiguous
word games in Carlyle’s works that negate meanings, but we cannot assume that nineteenth-
century readers were responding in the same way. Carlyle’s language must have been convincing
to some because it inspired the explorer H. M. Stanley to declare:

Carlyle says that “to subdue mutiny, discord, widespread despair by manfulness,
justice, mercy, and wisdom, to let light on chaos, and make it instead a green
flowery world, is beyond all other greatness, work for a God!” Who can doubt
that God chose the King for His instrument to redeem this vast slave park....
King Leopold found the Congo... cursed by cannibalism, savagery, and despair;
and he has been trying... to relieve it of its horrors.... (79).

Carlyle was appropriated as an authority on bringing ideals such as work into Africa. His is the
“idea at the back of it” that Marlow alludes to early in Heart of Darkness (10).

In “The Nigger Question” work is no longer a duty that should be accepted but a moral
absolute that must be forced upon all men.41 The combination of Carlyle’s gospel of work with
his racist language makes the passage difficult to read. Carlyle asserts

That no Black man who will not work according to what ability the gods have
given him for working, has the smallest right to eat pumpkin, or to any fraction
of land that will grow pumpkin, however plentiful such land may be; but has an
indisputable and perpetual right to be compelled by the real proprietors of said
land, to do competent work for his living. This is the everlasting duty of all men.

41 Past and Present was published in 1843 and “The Nigger Question” was published in 1849.
black or white, who are born into this world. To do competent work, to labour honestly according to the ability given them; for that and for no other purpose was each one of us sent into this world.... Whatever prohibits or prevents a man from this his sacred appointment to labour... is the man's deadliest enemy; and all men are called upon to do what is in their power or opportunity towards delivering him from that. If it be his own indolence that prevents and prohibits him, then his own indolence is the enemy he must be delivered from: and the first "right" he has,—poor indolent block-head, black or white,—is, That every unprohibited man... shall endeavour to "emancipate" him from his indolence, and... compel him, since inducing will not serve, to do the work he is fit for.

(309)

Carlyle's earnest desire to save individuals from despair and morbid self-consciousness through work becomes a morbid desire to force everyone to work whether they will or not. Every individual's mission is to deliver others from their indolence, from themselves as their own enemy. As Collins observes, Carlyle "finds work necessary for the soul" because those who do not "have had their souls killed in them because they no longer work" (35). So it is no longer sufficient that by working we preserve ourselves but we must also work to preserve others from themselves. Here Carlyle's idealism concerning the importance of work has degenerated into an absolute system, into another piece of machinery, like that of the Benthamites and other system-mongers that he railed against in "Signs of the Times." In his criticism of Carlyle's essay, J. S. Mill uses one of Carlyle's most famous words to describe his ideas on work. In "The Negro Question" Mill mocks Carlyle by saying his "gospel of work... justly deserves the name of cant" (466). But Mill gets distracted by trying to give Carlyle's idea "a rational meaning" (466), and then digresses into considerations of the "worth of work" and into contradicting Carlyle by asserting a "gospel of leisure" (467). Unlike Mill, Conrad does not get distracted and shows us how Carlyle's argument potentially leads to the grove of death.
The language Conrad uses in the moments leading towards Marlow's entrance into the grove of death is a criticism of Carlyle's late, extreme position on work. It is a criticism of Carlyle at his worst. In the "six black men," each having "an iron collar on his neck," Conrad makes it questionable whether the men are criminals or prisoners of war. In Carlyle's thought either name might apply and Conrad uses both words in close proximity. Marlow comments that "these men could by no stretch of the imagination be called enemies," so we are left with the word "criminals" (19). The "outraged law" that "like the bursting shells had come to them" is Carlyle's gospel of work. Just as the sounds of drums are mysterious and incomprehensible to Marlow, the "outraged law" is "an insoluble mystery from the sea" which they cannot comprehend (19). Conrad's criticism of Carlyle is especially troubling in showing us "one of the reclaimed, the product of the new forces at work" (19). The new forces at work are Carlyle's, and his call for every man to work and produce is now producing the awful scene Conrad shows us. "The great cause of these high and just proceedings" is Conrad's summary of the arguments and ideas that Carlyle employs in his gospel of work (19). Carlyle's language makes the ideal of work appear "high and just" but Conrad shows us that the reality is very different.

Conrad exposes the worst parts of Carlyle's thought in "The Nigger Question." Carlyle imagines that the world outside of England is deficient in its faith in work. He imagines that there are places "where a Black man, by working about half-an-hour a-day (such is the calculation), can supply himself, by aid of sun and soil, with as much pumpkin as will suffice, he is likely to be a little stiff to raise into hard work!" (306). He imagines there are places in the West Indies where "if the Africans that are already there could be made to lay-down their pumpkins, and labour for their living, there are already Africans enough" for the necessary work to be completed (307). Carlyle's idealized and racist version of a black man does nothing unless for his own "lazy benefit" (326). While Collins's belief that Carlyle's ideas are being "presented humourously" is accurate, Conrad recognizes this humour remains problematic (32).
The grove of death illustrates what occurs when Carlyle’s arguments about work are put into practice. But as always with Conrad, there is a complication. Conrad writes one of the most remarkable passages of criticism in all his fiction; it is all the more so because no one has noticed it. Here Conrad moves far beyond Mill’s criticism of Carlyle’s essay. Mill tells Carlyle that Africans have been “carried off” only “to be worked to death, literally to death” (466). But Mill can only tell and his telling is unconvincing. Conrad does what Mill cannot: through the imaginative creation of the scene, he makes Carlyle experience the horror. In writing the grove of death Conrad has another passage from “The Nigger Question” in mind:

A poor Negro overworked… is sad to look upon; yet he inspires me with a sacred pity, and a kind of human respect is not denied him; him, the hapless brother mortal, performing something useful in his day, and only suffering inhumanity, not doing it or being it. (317)

Conrad transforms the Carlyle of this passage into Marlow. The possibility of pity and compassion at the sight of suffering inhumanity that Carlyle confesses to feeling here informs Marlow’s perspective. Carlyle’s thought is transfigured into Conrad’s fiction. Through Marlow’s eyes, Conrad forces Carlyle to look upon the grove of death “with a sacred pity and a kind of human respect.” In his art, Conrad makes Carlyle know the end of his own arguments about work; through Marlow, the compassionate side of Carlyle’s thought in “The Nigger Question” is confronted with what occurs when the Gospel of work is taken to an extreme:

They were dying slowly – it was very clear. They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing now, nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation lying confusedly in the greenish gloom. Brought from all the recesses of the coast in all the legality of time contracts, lost in uncongenial surroundings, fed on unfamiliar food, they sickened, became inefficient, and were then allowed to crawl away and rest. These moribund shapes were free as air – and nearly as thin. (20)
Marlow's response is one that we might expect from Carlyle, had he not been preoccupied with making the men work. Conrad is asking Carlyle to recognize the errors in his arguments. These men were once full of "wild vitality" and "intense energy" (17), but have been transformed into mere "shadows" of what they once were. They can rest now, but it is too late for them. According to Carlyle work is supposed to free a man from disease and despair and perfect his soul, but Conrad shows that when compelled work actually condemns a man to suffering and death. These men are "free as air," but free to do nothing but die (20). As Duke Maskell asks, "whose humanity could be more emphatically insisted on, made real and convincing, than that of these men, shown in the process of losing it and becoming mere shapes, things, shadows, bones, bundles of angles, phantoms, elements of composition in a horrifying picture" ("Conrad" 20). Conrad shows these men losing their humanity because of the work forced upon them. He is showing Carlyle the horrors of what his ideas can cause. And to silence any doubt that he has Carlyle in mind throughout this passage, Conrad includes a telling detail: Marlow notes that one of the dying workers "had tied a bit of white worsted around his neck" (20). This "bit of white thread from beyond the seas" is yet another allusion to the clothes philosophy of Sartor Resartus (20).

Discerning the extent of Conrad's criticism of Carlyle in Heart of Darkness depends upon recognizing the presence of Carlyle's ideals in the text and how they are being perceived. I believe that Conrad does not articulate a more complete criticism of Carlyle until Lord Jim, where he examines the problems of belief, conviction, and heroes. But if we are to measure the degree of Conrad's resistance to Carlyle in Heart of Darkness then it is necessary to trace examples analogous to what I have shown. The grove of death is not the only section of the novel in which Conrad is able to produce this startling kind of criticism. A reassessment of Heart of Darkness (and the other Marlow tales) could begin with the consideration of the degree to which Marlow is not a semi-autobiographical representation of Conrad, but Conrad's illustration of Carlyle's ideals transported to the end of the century. Ian Watt's observation that Marlow shares many of
Carlyle’s ideals should be taken further. We should consider whether Marlow is merely bringing the “meagre moral armament” that Carlyle’s values offer or if Marlow is a testing of Carlyle’s ideals that Conrad brings into Africa (151). And once there how does Conrad make Carlyle witness the way his ideas inform the horrors that civilization is practicing? If Carlyle thought that the end of man was not a thought but an action, then he is made to see his thoughts in action. Conrad makes one of the major authors of the century review his own work.

It is important to recognize that Conrad’s preoccupation with Carlyle’s ideas of work and hero-worship in *Heart of Darkness* is also written into the major novels that follow. In *Lord Jim*, the relationship between Jim’s questionable heroism and the work that he does or does not accomplish both before and during his time in Patusan are further reflections on Carlyle’s ideas. Conrad revisits Carlyle yet again in *Under Western Eves*, but is also responding to Dostoevsky’s valuation, which repudiates the great, heroic, extraordinary man in favour of the ordinary man. Conrad raises questions about the relationship between greatness and heroism and work in exploring the actions of many of the characters in the novel: Haldin, Razumov, Peter Ivanovitch, and Tekla, just to name a few. If the problem of heroes and hero-worship is considered more narrowly, then one way of framing the arguments throughout the rest of my thesis would be to explore whether Conrad identifies writers such as Dickens, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche as real or sham heroes. How does Conrad judge the greatness of these major literary predecessors? In the final chapter, the question would be: how does Conrad expose the problems inherent in Freud’s aspirations towards greatness, towards becoming the most successful of detectives?

The critical preoccupations with the relationship between work and thought that Conrad writes into *Heart of Darkness* informs my thesis as a whole. In every chapter, I am exploring how Conrad critically responds to the thought of other authors as it is manifested in their work of writing. In one way, Conrad’s criticisms of the other authors raise questions about the relationship between knowing and not knowing in their works: for instance, what is Nietzsche willing to know and not know in his writing? Reading Conrad’s novels against a Dostoevsky or a
Freud reveals the implications of the ideas that enable their writing. Another way of considering the problem would be to explore the degree to which Conrad agrees or disagrees with how the other authors’ work, not simply in terms of genre, as if Conrad rejects anyone who does not write novels, but in terms of the kinds of thinking manifested in the writing. As I demonstrate repeatedly, Conrad objects to antipodal structures wherein categorical distinctions are not sufficiently questioned, so the implication is that Conrad’s thought works to complicate these structures rather than reproduce them. If the kinds of critical concerns about work and heroism that I have raised in exploring Conrad’s critique of Carlyle are kept in mind, then this chapter works as an introduction to the chapters that follow.
Chapter Two: Knowing and Not-Knowing in
Dickens’s *Bleak House* and Conrad’s *The Secret Agent*

The importance of Charles Dickens’s influence on Joseph Conrad is a critical commonplace; however, the relationship between the two writers does not excite the same measure of critical discussion as Conrad’s relationship with Dostoevsky.¹ A large part of the difference is attributable to Conrad’s attitude towards Dickens in his letters, essays, and autobiographical works, which is completely antithetical to his writings about Dostoevsky. Indeed, in the passage from *A Personal Record* which is often quoted, Conrad is full of admiration towards, and gratitude for, Dickens.² Conrad describes Dickens’s *Bleak House* as a work of the master for which I have such an admiration, or rather such an intense and unreasoning affection, dating from the very days of my childhood, that its very weaknesses are more precious to me than the strength of other men’s work. I have read it innumerable times, both in Polish and in English; I have read it only the other day.... (124)

However surprising the remarks are considering Conrad’s criticism of the idea of hero-worship in *Heart of Darkness*, the passage is a great example of Carlyle’s ideal: Conrad admires Dickens as the hero as man of letters. Conrad’s profound reverence for Dickens is interconnected with his

¹ I suspect that Conrad’s relationship with Dostoevsky arouses more discussion for the reasons that Martin Seymour-Smith articulates in his introduction to *The Secret Agent*: “Dostoevsky was a Russian, and Conrad did not like Russians, or Dostoevsky for that matter, whom he frequently insulted in the most foolish and disingenuous terms” (12). The memorable passages in Conrad’s letters make it easy for critics to construct a simple antipodal argument: Seymour-Smith’s reductive formulation is that Conrad “pretended to hate, but really admired” Dostoevsky (35). Considering the difference between the mass of criticism about Conrad’s relationship with Dostoevsky and the comparative poverty of writings about Conrad’s relationship with Dickens, it appears that Conrad’s declaration of admiration is much less attractive to critics.
² *A Personal Record* was serialized in the *English Review* from December 1908 to June 1909. Conrad first begins discussing the “intimate personal autobiographical things” which were later published as *A Personal Record* in a letter to his agent J. B. Pinker dated 18 September 1908 (CLJC 4, 125). So Conrad’s remarks about Dickens and *Bleak House* were written within a couple of years of the serialization (1906) and publication (1907) of *The Secret Agent*. 
earliest childhood experiences reading English literature, and certainly informed his decision to choose English as the language in which to write his novels. In another passage in *A Personal Record*, Conrad meditates upon the conditions under which he began writing his first novel and he recalls that

My first introduction to English imaginative literature was “Nicholas Nickleby.” It is extraordinary how well Mrs. Nickleby could chatter disconnectedly in Polish and the sinister Ralph rage in that language. As to the Crummines family and the family of the learned Squeers, it seemed as natural to them as their native speech. It was, I have no doubt, an excellent translation. This must have been in the year ’70. But I really believe that I am wrong. That book was not my first introduction to English literature. My first acquaintance was (or were) the “Two Gentlemen of Verona,” [sic] and that in the very MS. of my father’s translation.

(71)

For Conrad, Shakespeare and Dickens are the two heroes who mark the beginning of his long and troubled journey into English literature. By Conrad’s own admission he returned to these two authors repeatedly throughout his life. But the very early timing of Conrad's encounter with “the master” causes some difficulty when we try to measure the degree to which Dickens’s thought enables Conrad’s writing. More often than not, critics allude to or comment upon the importance of the connection in passing, and only very rarely question it in detail.

In discussing the importance of Dickens’s influence upon Conrad in *The Great Tradition*, F. R. Leavis argues that “Conrad is in certain respects so like Dickens that it is difficult to say for

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3 Conrad’s continued re-reading of Dickens is made clear in the passages I have just quoted. He provides some brief comments about returning to Shakespeare later in *A Personal Record*: Books are an integral part of one’s life and my Shakespearean associations are with that first year of our bereavement, the last I spent with my father in exile (he sent me away to Poland to my mother’s brother directly he could brace himself up for the separation), and with the year of hard gales, the year in which I came nearest to death at sea, first by water and then by fire. (73)

Like Jim, Conrad carried a “five shilling one-volume edition of the dramatic works of William Shakespeare” which he “read in Falmouth at odd moments of the day” (72).
just how much influence Dickens counts” (29). He does not refer to Conrad’s remarks about Dickens in *A Personal Record*, so I cannot know whether or not Leavis read the book. But the passages quoted above corroborate Leavis’s judgement that “the essential relation to Dickens, it should be plain, is not a matter of being influenced for good or ill, but lies in the very energy of vision and characterization which, we have seen, is sometimes as apt to make us say ‘Shakespearean’ as ‘Dickensian’” (241). For Leavis, and for many other critics, Dickens is “undoubtedly there in the London of *The Secret Agent*” wherein

he has been transmuted into Conrad. This co-presence of obvious influence with assimilation suggests that Dickens may have counted for more in Conrad’s mature art than seems at first probable: it suggests that Dickens may have encouraged the development in Conrad’s art of that energy of vision and registration in which they are akin. (29-30)

The comments are compelling. Unfortunately, Leavis does not explore the relationship in any significant detail. A comparison such as the lengthy study he included on George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* and Henry James’s *The Portrait of a Lady* would have substantiated his claims and marked some of the significant connections. In this chapter I want to rectify Leavis’s omission by showing some significant elements shared between the two authors to reveal how Conrad works from and out of Dickens.

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4 In *Conrad: Almayer’s Folly to Under Western Eyes*, Daniel Schwarz corroborates Leavis’s assessment. Specifically in reference to *The Secret Agent*, Schwarz demonstrates how Conrad “uses language borrowed from Shakespeare’s great tragedies to emphasize the distance between, on the one hand, Shakespeare’s tragic universe and the men who inhabited it. and on the other, the quality of contemporary life” (172). See pages 172-73.

Dickens emphasizes the Shakespearean qualities of his art and thought in *Bleak House* through the repeated invocations of Shakespeare’s name and plays. For instance, besides the “apt quotation from one of *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*” (41) which Dickens includes in the Preface, there is the young Smallweed’s sudden exclamation “Hem! Shakespeare!” and the “debilitated cousin’s” explanation of Lady Dedlock “that she’s beauty nough – testup Shopofwomen – but rather larning kind – reminding-manfact – inconvenient woman – who will getoutofbedandbawthstablishment – Shakespeare” (335, 706). And finally there is Bucket’s advice to Mr Snagsby to “go and see Othello acted. That’s the tragedy for you” (863).

5 In the last chapter of *Laughter and Despair*, U. C. Knoepflmacher describes Conrad’s setting as “a grimy Dickensian London of the 1880s” (241).
In “Bleak House” and Conrad: The Presence of Dickens in Conrad’s Writing,” Hugh Epstein corroborates Leavis’s observations by recognizing that Conrad’s “creative encounter with Dickens is less amenable to detection and generally more diffuse” because Dickens “seems to be… a verbal medium through whose agency Conrad re-imagined aspects of his own experience or conceived artistic forms for his own visions” (119). Epstein’s conclusion contains an important and highly suggestive judgement:

Dickens is the great inventor for Conrad – to the point even, in inventing for literature so much of the genius and idiom of the English language that adopted Conrad, that he plays a major role in inventing Conrad as an author. Dickens licenses and authorizes Conrad’s negotiation of the limits of literary English.

(140)

Upon first reading, Epstein’s claims might sound extravagant, but if carefully considered his argument is quite reasonable. Epstein recognizes that the similarities in the two authors point

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6 Fortunately, Epstein has already prepared much of the groundwork necessary for my discussion. He carefully collects the wide-ranging allusions to Dickens’s works and characters in Conrad’s letters (122). For instance, see Conrad’s allusion to Mr. Snagsby from Bleak House in a letter to Stephen Reynolds from September 1909 (CLJC 4, 274). Or there is my favourite Dickensian allusion in a letter to Norman Douglas dated 14 January 1913:

Mr dear Douglas,
Thanks for the four noble pencils; you are a good fellow to take all this trouble. Last evening a bottle of Sauce Robert appeared on the board and I understand that we owe it to your munificence. “Sir! You are a nobleman; you are a baron of the land” as Mr Crook said to Mr Guppy when Mr Guppy presented him with a bottle of eighteen-penny gin out of Sol’s Arms at the corner of Chancery Lane.

I bet you don’t know who and what I am talking about. (CLJC 5, 162-3)

Epstein also records the places in which Conrad invokes Dickens’s name in A Personal Record and in “Poland Revisited,” an essay included in Notes on Life and Letters (128). He also notes some important analogies to Dickens in works such as Lord Jim, Nostromo, The Secret Agent, Under Western Eyes, and Victory.

Following Leavis’s observations concerning the Dickensian elements of Victory, Norman Page and Jean Kennard have also discussed the influence of Dickens upon these books. Also, it is important to note that in “Joseph Conrad, Dickensian Novelist of the Nineteenth Century: A Dissent from Ian Watt,” Robert Caserio confirms Epstein’s judgement concerning Dickens’s importance in Conrad’s thinking. In faulting Watt for evading “Conrad’s relation to Victorian literature, to the Victorian novel and Dickens above all,” Caserio argues that “the connection that
towards “a deeper yet more troubled affinity” (140). The connection is troubled because of the degree to which Dickens and Conrad are preoccupied with similar questions in conducting their inquiries into the state of English culture. Therefore, this chapter will be significantly different than the others included in my study because I will focus on how Conrad assimilates and reworks the questions that Dickens raises in his work instead of making an argument about how Conrad is critical of Dickens’s thought. If only in this one chapter in my study I want to emphasize how Conrad’s thought is positively indebted to a nineteenth-century author in order to balance Conrad’s criticism of the other authors. Because Conrad admired Dickens as one of his great heroes, it is only appropriate to make the argument here. Judging from the apparent hero-worship in his writing, Conrad values Dickens as one of the most important of the great nineteenth-century thinkers. In no small measure, Dickens taught Conrad how to think and exercise his critical judgement. And it is also significant that Dickens’s admiration for Carlyle and assimilation of Carlyle’s ideas quite possibly influenced Conrad’s decision to read the Victorian sage.  

matters most is Dickens” (337-38). Caserio notes that that “there has been persistent critical neglect of [Dickens’s] influence” (338).

7 The importance of Carlyle’s thought for Dickens has been discussed at length by Dickens’s critics. In Carlyle and Dickens, Michael Goldberg argues that “Dickens turned to Carlyle’s criticism of Victorian society, and the consequences of his doing so had a profound effect on the form and content of all his later works” (6). So Carlyle is a teacher to both Dickens and Conrad, two important novelists born of two different generations. As Goldberg notes, the relationship between Dickens and Carlyle has often been defined as “that of disciple and master” (1). For Conrad, this relationship is recreated twice over: he is a disciple to both Carlyle and Dickens (although the nature and the measure of the importance of each relationship differ). This is important because Conrad is highly self-conscious about hero-worship. In The Secret Agent, the relationship between Verloc and Stevie is characterized in terms that are analogous to the complicated sets of relations that I am invoking:

Like a peripatetic philosopher, Mr. Verloc, strolling along the streets of London, had modified Stevie’s view of the police by conversations full of subtle reasoning. Never had a sage a more attentive and admiring disciple. The submission and worship were so apparent that Mr. Verloc had come to feel something like liking for the boy. (211)

As the prototypical “Victorian Sage” or “Victorian Prophet,” Carlyle is implicitly invoked in Conrad’s description of Verloc’s relationship with Stevie. Although neither Stevie nor Verloc can be identified with Carlyle or Dickens, the relationship does bear some analogies nevertheless. It is difficult to know the degree of Conrad’s insight into Dickens’s and Carlyle’s relationship, a
My inquiry into the relationship between Conrad’s and Dickens’s thought will focus on two novels: The Secret Agent and Bleak House. I wholly agree with Seymour-Smith’s remark that The Secret Agent “could hardly exist without Dickens” (12). While Conrad’s novel distills and concentrates Dickens’s wide-ranging study of English society, the purposes of the novels are analogous: an investigation into and a critique of a perceived sickness undermining English culture. Because both novels are complex inquiries into the problems undermining English language and culture it is not possible to explore all of the significant points of contact. Therefore, I will limit my discussion to the problems surrounding the relationship between knowing and not knowing. To choose another subject would be to ignore Conrad’s rewriting of Dickens’s inquiry into the dangers in the antithesis which includes elements of the detective narratives for which both novels are famous. There is an idea shared between the two authors that not knowing is the dominant impulse or instinct, with the suggestion that knowing can act also as a cover for not knowing. In a few characters, such as Jo, Snagsby and Esther in Bleak House and Winnie and Verloc in The Secret Agent, not knowing dominates their thought. Even the characters with a will to know, such as Bucket and Tulkinghorn in Bleak House and Inspector Heat and the Assistant Commissioner in The Secret Agent, actually embody both impulses, in some unequal degree. And of course, the detective narratives around which the novels are constructed are important for the inquiries because Conrad and Dickens raise questions about the detectives’ will to know in conducting their investigations. The two authors are careful to reveal the limitations of the investigative talents of the investigators.

friendship in which Carlyle explicitly hoped that Dickens would also become a prophet (Goldberg 17).

8 Sylvère Monod calls the novel Conrad’s “most Dickensian work of fiction” and possibly “his only Dickensian narrative” (153). Wendy Lesser characterizes the novel as a “nearly explicit tribute to the London novels of Charles Dickens” (185). James Walton describes the novel as “Conrad’s attempt... to treat broad social themes in the Dickensian manner” (447). However, with the exception of limited discussions by Hugh Epstein, Aaron Fogel, Wendy Lesser, and James Walton, there has been very little concentrated attention upon the relationship between The Secret Agent and Bleak House. Nevertheless, Aaron Fogel’s comparison of the two novels in Chapter 4 of Coercion to Speak is well worth reading. See especially pages 163-5 and 174-7.
The most important lesson that Conrad learns from Dickens is the significance of the inter-relatedness of the novel form. For Dickens and Conrad, art is analogous to life: there are no ideas or values that are not qualified by competing demands or changing circumstances in our living. The authors inquire into the interplay of the various ideas and values which inform our living. The individual is no different than the culture as a whole in that no one idea, emotion, or impulse dominates absolutely: various conflicting concerns comprise our living. So what Conrad learns from his lifetime of reading Dickens is that in every aspect of the novel the relation among many ideas is always at issue. It is not sufficient to ask whether knowing or not knowing are goods and ends in themselves, but rather it is necessary to explore the causes and consequences of them both. Conrad learns how the very form that Dickens uses works against valuing or embracing either extreme as a solution in itself. In *Bleak House*, if Bucket’s knowing were valued absolutely, then Esther would have no real voice in the novel, and vice versa. The same is true in *The Secret Agent*: if Winnie’s not knowing were the only value, then Stevie’s place in the novel would have little meaning. In their novels Conrad and Dickens provide a space for both kinds of living and explore, without ever actually making them mutually exclusive, the causes and the consequences of living in either of these ways. The further complication is that Conrad and Dickens do not narrowly focus on knowing and not knowing as if these states could be

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9 Although I do not entirely agree with some of his conclusions, Richard Rorty’s arguments about the importance of contingency in literature in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* cannot be overlooked. Rorty places a great deal of emphasis upon the contingent and conditional aspects of life realized in literature, especially in novels.

10 Implicit in this part of my argument is Samuel Goldberg’s idea in *Agents and Lives* about how writers represent or dramatize different yet interrelated modes of life. I cannot summarize his argument here, but I will invoke two important elements of it. Goldberg argues that “we are not presented by the novel with modes of life we recognize objectively from the outset as modes of life, and which we can think about and evaluate as recognizable wholes by reference to some pre-existing model that the novel invites us to apply” (70). Instead, Goldberg sees that “in practice, our evaluations are actually made, and consist, in a great many little responses to the representing and manifesting text. They are composed of countless inter-related, overlapping, mutually supporting or qualifying or even contradicting, acts of understanding and judgement” (70). Implicit in Goldberg’s argument is the relation between reading and knowing. We should respond in this way to the many lives Conrad and Dickens present in their novels as they relate to the question of the relationship between knowing and not knowing.
explored without being connected with other ideas and problems, but are always thinking of the relation between these two word-ideas and work, suspicion, power, and resentment. These compounded problems are explored in terms of specific human relations that introduce other demands upon our judgement, such as human sexuality, family relations, occupations, and the like, in thinking about the issue.\textsuperscript{11}

As Nussbaum and Goldberg often assert about novels in general, these two novels acknowledge the many complications involved in our living as a whole and do not attempt to conduct a narrow inquiry into knowing as if it might be separated from that whole. In short, Conrad learns from Dickens that the novel can be used to enact inquiries into the problems and questions of our living, inquiries which emphasize the many complexities involved in that critical endeavour. By focusing on how ideas are radically interconnected and how any change in the valuation of one idea or the relation of an idea among all the others can affect our thinking, the criticism of life performed by these two writers is meant to unsettle our complacent thinking which mistakenly forces pre-determined solutions rather than carefully responsive answers upon our living and our culture.\textsuperscript{12} In my view, Conrad and Dickens both share to some degree the kind of doubts about knowing that George Whalley articulates in “Literature: An Instrument of Inquiry”: “These days I find it assumed that there is only one way to knowing and that we all have easy access to it as an act of will. If you want to know anything you ‘study’ it, you bring your mind to bear on it, master it, control it. It is assumed that there is only one way of getting ‘knowledge’ and that we all know how this is done” (207). My argument is that Conrad learns from Dickens how to write his novels in the spirit that Whalley identifies as a fundamental element in the thought that goes into producing literature. Although Whalley is preoccupied with

\textsuperscript{11} Of course, this is an important element in the arguments that Nussbaum, Diamond, and Goldberg make about the specificity and concreteness of the inquiries made in the novel form.\textsuperscript{12} My arguments are implicitly indebted to critical arguments made by Goldberg and D. H. Lawrence. See Goldberg’s discussions about the significant differences between thinking about “how to live” and “how to live” in Chapter 2 of Agents and Lives (36-62) which explores modes of thought available in literature and art.
poetry, his observation is true for novels as well: "My proposal is that, if we hold sensitive and forthright commerce with [novels], the [novels] themselves become instruments of inquiry, they tell us how to get to know, and we can direct the instrument both towards the [novel] and towards ourselves" (207). In effect, the novels are at least partly lessons about the dangers inherent in our presuppositions about how we get to know a thing and propose themselves as a form of knowing which simultaneously explores the many problems in the relationship between knowing and not knowing. While demonstrating how "much depends upon one's habitual eyes" and knowing "how hard it can be to look with different eyes at different sorts of things," Conrad and Dickens challenge readers "to read instead with the eyes and ears of [a] novelist" to realize the many complications involved in our reading (Adamson 90, 94).

Through the plots of the novels, both authors explore how positively knowing one idea or answer can be an attempt, conscious or unconscious, to not know something other. Or, not knowing can be an attempt to escape knowing something unendurable. And it may also be possible that knowing one idea can cause a person to be blind to alternative or interrelated possibilities. This can be dangerous and potentially fatal. Although the effect is partly humourous, there is also a serious criticism in Dickens's depictions of Mrs. Jellyby, whose idea of "the momentous importance of Africa, and the utter insignificance of all other places and things" causes her to neglect her family (87), and Mrs. Pardiggle, whose very clear notions of her work to improve the conditions of impoverished families causes her to be negligent of the

13 This argument is reinforced in different ways by Nussbaum, Goldberg, Diamond, Adamson, and others.
14 To anticipate my chapter on Freud, Conrad's and Dickens's inquiries raise the kind of question that Whalley is preoccupied with in "Literature: An Instrument of Inquiry" where he states his objection that "if we approach in the technical manner we always find exactly what the technique was designed to find and usually not much more, and the heuristic impulse, the sheer desire and longing to 'know,' the 'intellucturition,' is frustrated by a nauseating tautology" (207). There seems to me to be some truth in this observation in relation to all the assumptions which inform our reading and knowing and the degree to which those assumptions disable us from recognizing things which we do not already know or assume to be true.
15 See "Two Models of Moral Attention," the third section of Adamson's essay in which she meditates upon "how moral insight can result in not paying sensitive attention to things, but rather in simply imposing upon them one's preconceived ideas" (97).
humanity and the other very real needs of the families she visits. Miss Flite’s and Richard’s obsession with the idea of the Jarndyce lawsuit in Chancery, like Winnie’s vigilance towards Stevie, is directly connected with their deaths: the mania for an idea is a serious problem and potentially becomes self-destructive. Similarly, categorical distinctions such as Stein’s butterflies and beetles or Nietzsche’s antipodal relationship to Christ are simply not tenable in these two novels. Conrad learns from Dickens that the categorical judgements that establish types or models for knowing are too simple. Embracing models and solutions can become an avoidance of knowing the potentially disturbing if not fatal relationships between ideas separated into different categories. Conrad and Dickens are not working to advocate either knowing or not knowing as a good in itself, but instead are exploring the dangers inherent in embracing either instinct or impulse as a satisfactory solution. They work to show that a compulsion to know can be analogous to living as Tulkinghorn or Stevie and a compulsion to not know can be analogous to living like Esther or Winnie: taken to an extreme, an idea or value can be fatal. Both writers explore the multiple possibilities through the layered actions in the novels. By showing variations on ideas, the authors explore many possibilities simultaneously.

Conrad’s and Dickens’s thought about the disturbing relation between knowing and not-knowing is at least as troubling as the inquiries in Nietzsche’s philosophy or Freud’s psychoanalytic theory. One part of my argument is to demonstrate that the two novels can be a starting point for an inquiry into a problem which is more often connected with Nietzsche in the last quarter of the nineteenth century or Freud at the beginning of the twentieth century.  

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16 In Chapter 6 I examine elements of Freud’s ideas about knowing at length so I will not include them here. Nietzsche’s thought about the will to knowledge and the connections between knowledge and power is well known and I need not rehearse it. But it is important to recognize that Nietzsche also realizes the value and necessity of not-knowing. For instance, in Ecce Homo, Nietzsche observes that “not to see many things, not to hear many things, not to permit many things to come close – the first imperative of prudence” (33). And in The Gay Science Nietzsche notes that “to find all things deep – that is an uncomfortable trait: it makes one constantly strain one’s eyes and in the end always find more than one had wished” (133). Or, in The Twilight of the Idols Nietzsche argues that “even the bravest of us rarely has the courage for what he really knows” and that “once and for all, there is a great deal I do not want to know. – Wisdom sets
lessons Conrad learns from Dickens at least partly enable his criticism of Nietzsche and Freud.

As Martha Nussbaum, Cora Diamond, Samuel Goldberg, and others have argued in different ways, Dickens and Conrad use the form of their novels to engage in a profound exploration of the complexities inherent in our living. Through the comparison of the novels, this chapter is a practical exercise in recognizing the complexities involved in the language, the grammar, and the narratives employed by the authors. My basic premise is that Bleak House and The Secret Agent are thought about thought, critical inquiries into the ways in which we think and read that cannot be separated from our living. To think profoundly about these problems, Conrad did not need to read Nietzsche and certainly did not suffer from never having read Freud. All of the necessary questions are already present in the art and thought of Bleak House. While neither Conrad nor Dickens maintain a perfectly equal balance in their inquiries into knowing and not-knowing, their novels offer powerful insights into the problem and deserve to be recognized for the strength of their thought. I am not suggesting that their thought is equal in kind or degree. Each author certainly has his own preoccupations in exploring questions about knowing; nevertheless, the time Conrad spent reading Dickens is manifested in the writing of The Secret Agent.

Before making a practical demonstration of how Dickens and Conrad conduct inquiries into the relationship between knowing and not knowing, I will explore the importance of Conrad’s and Dickens’s use of negative grammatical structures to show the centrality of the bounds even to knowledge” (33). Unfortunately, these moments are rare and carry less weight if we measure the quantity of Nietzsche’s thinking about the will to know, but that does not make them any less valuable.

17 See Nussbaum’s introduction “Form and Content: Philosophy and Literature” in Love’s Knowledge. Diamond’s “Martha Nussbaum and the Need for Novels” and the fourth and fifth chapters of Goldberg’s Agents and Lives. Each of these critics offers arguments about the novel as a form that encompasses the complexities in living and explores the possibilities and problems inherent in our living in a way that other forms of writing cannot, largely because of the simultaneous presence of elements of concreteness and generality as well as an appeal to our whole emotional and intellectual life rather than just a narrow part of our thinking. For instance, Goldberg argues that in dramatic art moral issues “can be thought about not only in general terms, but also concretely, in the given particulars. As well as conceiving, analyzing, and judging human beings in terms of ‘the universal,’ literature can also take their uniqueness as part of their essential nature as human beings” (173).
problem in the two novels. Following this, I will provide some indication of why Dickens and Conrad would identify knowing and not knowing as a central issue in language and culture by appealing to their shared interest in the works of Thomas Carlyle. In early essays such as “Signs of the Times” and “Characteristics,” Carlyle attempts to diagnose the symptoms of the illness affecting English culture. I would argue that this at least partly determined the interest that Conrad and Dickens share in the problem.

The first problem is recognizing the importance of the negative grammar that pervades both *Bleak House* and *The Secret Agent*, an important inheritance from Shakespeare that Dickens and Conrad share between them. Brian Crick recognizes that “perhaps only Dickens and Shakespeare are Conrad’s equal when it comes to sympathetically imagining the absurd and poignant drama of the human consciousness caught in the act of not knowing” (242). For Crick, these three authors are “no – know” thinkers.¹⁸ The negative grammar of knowing not only informs, but fundamentally is the basic grammar of their works and the primary focus of their inquiries into human thinking and being.

Two of the most basic grammatical constructions in Shakespeare are “not know” or “know not.” *The Merchant of Venice* opens with Antonio’s declaration that “In sooth I know not why I am so sad” and the play goes on to explore the degree to which any of the characters have a capacity to know themselves or to know others and the degree to which any knowing is simultaneously a cover story for a desire to not know. In my judgement, *Othello* is the most profound exploration of the “no – know” problem, especially through Shakespeare’s writing of the love triangle between Desdemona, Othello, and Iago.¹⁹ Iago’s speeches are nearly always constructed in a negative grammar. He repeatedly says “I know not” (for instance, see 3.3.36 and 4.1.32) and is the only character in Shakespeare, if not in English literature, to utter the phrase “I

¹⁸ This usage does not appear in Crick’s book but I have heard him discuss it in his lectures on Shakespeare and the history of the novel.
¹⁹ See my discussion of the relation between knowing and not knowing and faith and doubt in “Nothing If Not Critical: Stanley Cavell’s Skepticism and Shakespeare’s *Othello*.” Of course, see Cavell’s important work *Disowning Knowledge in Six Plays of Shakespeare*. 
think no” (1.2.33). However, reading the entire line is important, because Iago actually says “By Janus, I think no.” Shakespeare is pointing towards how thinking and negating are two sides of the same Janus-faced coin. In Othello, Shakespeare also plays with the relationship between the two words in phrases such as “No, let me know” (4.1.72). Balancing “no” and “know” on opposite sides of the phrase, Shakespeare creates a considerable tension in the grammatical construction. The phrase simultaneously says “I want to not know” and “I want to know” but neither idea exists independently of the other. The argument is that knowing moves in opposite directions simultaneously. One way of thinking about the connection between “no” and “know” is to raise the question of the degree to which all attempts to know are attempts to think no; that is, all knowing in and of itself is a kind of negation of knowing, a wanting to not know. Dickens and Conrad both assimilate Shakespeare’s grammar and explore Shakespeare’s lesson throughout their novels by revealing how “knowing not” or “thinking no” are basic elements of the illness afflicting English culture and thought.

In Bleak House, Dickens employs Shakespeare’s negative grammar almost compulsively. Dickens identifies the negative grammar of knowing as one important symptom at the very heart of the sickness he is revealing in England. In relation to the problem of not knowing in Bleak House, the importance of Tom-All-Alone’s and its most famous, if only periodic tenant, Jo, cannot be underestimated.20 I agree with Monroe Engel that “Jo is a central character in Bleak House. He might, in fact, be called the central character” (198).21 Jo is one pivot upon which

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20 As Monroe Engel notes, Tom-All-Alone’s is the property in question in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce lawsuit, and ruined property therefore becomes an analogy for a gradually disintegrating England. Dickens places the property beside Chancery and the law offices at the center of the novel. John Jarndyce makes the point explicit when describing the changes that he has brought to Bleak House after inheriting the property from his “great uncle, Tom Jarndyce” (146).

21 What I have in mind is the part Jo plays in many significant moments in the novel. He shows Lady Dedlock to the grave of Nemo/Captain Hawdon, an important moment in the plot replayed later when she returns to die beside the grave of her forsaken lover (Chapters 16 and 59 respectively). He unknowingly leads Tulkinghorn and Bucket to confirm a connection between Lady Dedlock and Nemo/Captain Hawdon (Chapter 22). The infection which Jo spreads is central to the plot because it causes Esther’s illness (Chapter 31) and also the change in her
nearly all the characters in the book become interrelated by being contaminated and infected with Tom’s revenge, which is at least partly a metaphor connected with Jo’s negative grammar. Conrad also writes the negative grammar of knowing into nearly every aspect of the action of The Secret Agent. It is difficult to read for more than a page in the novel without finding a sentence written in a negative grammar, but the problem is especially concentrated in Winnie Verloc. As Conrad explains in the “Author’s Note,” the novel is “at last the story of Winnie Verloc” and all the other characters are “grouped about Mrs. Verloc and related directly or indirectly to her tragic suspicion that ‘life doesn’t stand much looking into’” (41). Winnie is analogous to Jo in that the primary characteristic defining her character involves the negation of knowing, but in Conrad’s novel almost all the characters share this tendency to some degree.

In representing Jo and Winnie, Dickens and Conrad make their characters the embodiment of a specific problem. I am unsure whether to describe the idea as an intellectual position or movement of mind because the concept is difficult to articulate. Dickens emphasizes the problem of language and grammar that Jo represents through periodic variations upon his characteristic utterance: “I don’t know nothink” (274, 276, 324, and 412). With Iago’s grammar in mind, the Shakespearean heritage is apparent. Dickens designs the phrase in order to collapse several utterances and grammatical structures together into one complicated yet strangely simple whole: I do not know; I do not think; I do not know nothing; I do not think nothing/anything. The phrase is a negation of thought, of the capacity for thought, of the desire to think. Jo’s characteristic utterance is simultaneously a denial of thought and identity, if we still count

appearance which destroys the resemblance which declares, at least physically, the connection her mother, Lady Dedlock (Chapter 36, 565).

James English’s discussion of Conrad’s style calls attention to the use of repetition in descriptions to connect key ideas with characters. English argues that while Conrad’s descriptions often have “an air of understated mockery, the accuracy of the statements are never in doubt” (146). In English’s view, Conrad asks us “to keep certain indisputable truths concerning the intellectual and emotional limitations firmly in view. And because he so often repeats the same descriptive phrases, or slight variations of them, they begin to sound like definitions, rapid rehearsals of the most relevant ‘concrete facts’ concerning each character” (146). Conrad adopted this stylistic trait from Dickens. Examples abound in Bleak House of precisely the kind of writing that English is describing here.
Descartes's famous proposition, "I think, therefore I am" as one of the basic tests of being. Part of the problem Dickens raises is the degree to which Jo's life can be understood if his being is a concentrated and continuing expression of "I know no thought" or "I have no thought" or perhaps even "I am no thought." Conrad encapsulates the problem in Winnie's characteristic thought: "She felt profoundly that things do not stand much looking into" (172). Although perhaps not as clever as Dickens's confounded fusion of words, Conrad's sentence is no less troubling. Conrad makes Winnie's "principle to ignore" "the inwardness of things" unquestionable (155); however, the ambiguity of the word "things" in both passages makes it difficult to determine the limits of Winnie's "philosophical, almost disdainful incuriosity" (216). The "force" and "wisdom" of Winnie's "instinct" to not know is strangely undetermined yet powerfully absolute. Her entire being is an expression of the negation of knowing. But the phrasing of the sentence suggests that there is a measure of "necessity" in the idea, and I use the word deliberately because Conrad repeatedly uses it in reference to Winnie in the "Author's Note" (41). Again, the ambiguity of "things" makes it difficult to read, but the problem is whether the "things" cannot endure being "looked into" or investigated, or if Winnie cannot endure the investigation of the "things." Those "things" potentially include her marriage, her husband, her brother, her life, and her identity. If she questions any of those "things" and causes her idea of them to change or to disintegrate, then the questions are dangerous for how she knows herself. Her very identity is at stake in her unwillingness to know, which is also to say that her identity is founded upon her philosophical incuriosity. So in Winnie and Jo, Dickens and Conrad raise the very Shakespearean question of the degree to which knowing is not knowing. The questions of what we can and cannot know or what we are willing and unwilling to know about ourselves and others are vitally important in both novels.

In persistently describing Bleak House and The Secret Agent as inquiries, I want to emphasize three important ideas. The first is that at the center of the inquiries is a "no - know" question, which Dickens emphasizes by having Tulkinghorn explain "Nemo is Latin for no one"
(185). How and why Captain Hawdon and Stevie might be no one or some one depending upon who is the knower becomes a central issue in the books. Dickens and Conrad construct two versions of what is at least potentially “an inquest to be held presently upon a person likely to remain forever unknown” (TSA 108). The fact that the remains of both persons are later identified as Captain Hawdon and Stevie does not dissipate all the problems of knowing because there are persistent questions about how they were known in life and in death, whether either of them can be known in death, and whether either of them is known for what he was. The second idea is that both Dickens and Conrad are self-consciously and self-critically playing the part of the hero as man of letters in performing an essentially Carlylean task in identifying the signs of the times. The third idea is that Dickens and Conrad both recognize the troubling analogy between their own work and the work of the detectives in their novels. Both the authors and the detectives play relatively analogous roles as investigators and storytellers. These two ideas are also interrelated in our thinking about the Carlylean task of the hero as man of letters, which is in some ways analogous to the work that the detectives pursue: to know and tell the truth. Dickens and Conrad both recognize the significance of the analogy in thinking about the dangers inherent in the actions of the detectives.

Like Dickens, Conrad is engaged in an inquiry which Edgar Johnson characterized as “The Anatomy of Society.”23 In this, both authors are preoccupied with a typically Carlylean project.24 Conrad and Dickens reconfigure or translate Carlyle’s characteristic preoccupations in “Signs of the Times” and “Characteristics” with the health and sickness of society into the form

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23 See Johnson’s chapter on Bleak House in Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph which has also been included in A.E. Dyson’s casebook entitled Charles Dickens: Bleak House. Jan Gorak argues that, in The Secret Agent, “the genre will become an anatomy of English civilization” (78). Gorak also argues that in the novel we “witness Conrad’s bid to utilize a popular instrument (the spy novel) to prosecute a serious public inquiry” and complete a “diagnosis of the national condition” (82, 86). Gorak recognizes that Conrad “insists that England must confront what England made” (91). All of these descriptions apply equally well to Bleak House. Unfortunately, Gorak seems unaware of Conrad’s debt to Dickens. Conrad follows Dickens’s example in continuing to develop the novel in the same tradition.

24 See Michael Goldberg’s significant and detailed discussion of Dickens’s use of Carlyle’s writings in Bleak House in the fifth chapter of Carlyle and Dickens (59-77).
of a novel. In the opening paragraph of the essay Carlyle invokes the “Physician’s Aphorism” that “The healthy know not of their health, but only the sick” and begins a meditation upon how this wisdom is “applicable in a far wider sense” which includes not only “moral, intellectual, political, poetical” considerations but also any components of society wherein “powers of the sort which can be named vital are at work” (186). For Carlyle, the aphorism is “the test” for whether these elements informing a culture are “working right or working wrong” (186). And again, for Carlyle it is fundamentally the health and sickness of our thoughts and impulses which are at issue (C 189). This partly explains why then for Conrad and Dickens the question is whether the language and thought of a culture are working right or working wrong. Many characters in Dickens’s novel are sick in their thinking and knowing but remain unconscious of the illness. The same is true of Conrad’s characters but they are completely unaware of their sickness. Both writers are making a diagnosis of their respective cultures. But it is important to recognize that their knowing is not a truth-telling or seeing into the truth of things such as Freud practices in his case histories or cultural critiques such as Civilization and Its Discontents. Both authors expose the dangers in taking that kind of position through the representations of their detectives.

The inquiries in Bleak House and The Secret Agent are enabled by Carlyle’s thought about the connectedness of human lives in communities. Both Conrad and Dickens explore the problems in English culture in terms of a shared or community-wide illness and construct analogies that connect physical illnesses to moral corruption and the problems inherent in knowing or not knowing. As John Lucas notes in The Melancholy Man, the design of Bleak House “is about England as a society which is failing of mutuality... or, to give it the word Carlyle chose, it is about the collapse of brotherhood” (207).25 Lucas demonstrates that, by

25 U. C. Knoepflmacher is right to argue that Conrad’s “return to an earlier setting is deliberate” (241). Conrad brings readers close to Dickens’s London, but it is not wholly Dickens’s world. In “Bleak House and the Moral Life,” J. Hillis Miller observes that “the world of the novel is already, when the story begins, a kind of junk heap of broken things,” a world of “spiritual disintegration” wherein the normal condition for individuals is “dereliction” (160, 162). Conrad takes Dickens’s idea of a broken society further, and to borrow Miller’s description of Bleak
developing the complicated set of interconnected relations in *Bleak House*. Dickens expands upon Carlyle’s famous argument about the poor Irish widow who asserts her sisterhood with a negligent society by infecting her entire lane with typhus fever before dying²⁶ (207).²⁷ The moral lesson in Carlyle’s example is that a willed ignorance cannot negate the essential truth that all human lives are interconnected spiritually and physically. If anything, not attending simply propagates the problem. In the two famous passages from *Bleak House* which raise questions about “what connection can there be” among so many disparate elements of society and how the corruption or degradation of Tom’s revenge forces a connection among the disparate elements, Dickens is invoking Carlyle’s arguments and writing his own lesson about the consequences of willfully ignoring that we are fundamentally interconnected with everyone (272).²⁸ In *The Secret Agent*, Conrad adopts Carlyle’s and Dickens’s ideas about the interconnectedness of society. As John Hagan observes, Conrad renders “the moral atmosphere surrounding not one or two individuals, but an entire community of which the Verlocs, though symptomatic of the whole, form but a part” (148). And there is also a persistent emphasis on questions about health and sickness in Conrad’s language of “hygienic idleness” and “unhygienic labour” (52). In one sense, Conrad and Dickens are reflecting upon Carlyle’s analogy in which criticism is like a medical analysis in performing an anatomy of culture. But neither author is entirely comfortable with the role of the investigator, and their discomfort is evident in their representations of the detectives such as Bucket and Inspector Heat. Both authors are self-conscious about playing the role of the

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²⁶ Carlyle’s parable is in “The Gospel of Mammonism” in *Past and Present* (150-151). There is another allusion later in the book in “Democracy” (210-11).
²⁷ In *Dickens the Novelist*, Q. D. Leavis corroborates Lucas’s argument that Dickens has Carlyle in mind in writing *Bleak House* and specifically points towards Carlyle’s argument about the typhus fever carried by the poor Irish widow. See pages 125 and 166.
²⁸ The two passages are in Chapters 16 and 46.
hero of man of letters and the relation that it bears to the detectives through the knowing and truth-telling that both kinds of work share.

In writing their inquiries, Dickens and Conrad are performing what Carlyle calls the “grand business,” which is to “discern truly the signs of our own times; and by knowledge of its wants and advantages, wisely adjust our own position to it” (ST 225). The ideal is to “look calmly around us... on the perplexed scene where we stand” in order that “something of its perplexity will disappear” and “some of its distinctive characters and deeper tendencies more clearly reveal themselves” (ST 225). In this passage, the person making the inquiry is partly passive because the problems “reveal themselves.” But Carlyle is not advocating passivity for the hero if there is a “case” or “crisis” that must be inquired into (ST 223, 224). For Carlyle’s hero, “the Alpha and Omega of his whole Heroism [is] That he looks through the shows of things into things” (H 55). In no uncertain terms, the hero first discovers or uncovers the truth, and then he tells the truth in whatever ready speech he has to everyone who will listen. The work involved in Carlyle’s heroic “therapeutics” of diagnosing the ills of culture is very much analogous to the work performed by a detective who identifies a transgression or a fault and then proceeds to look through the appearances to reconstruct the truth and finally tell the story (C 186). In calling attention to this analogy, I want to argue that Dickens and Conrad are both critical of the kind of knowing that Carlyle attributes to the hero as man of letters. The impulse to know the truth can be destructive; for instance, an invasive investigation can be fatal to the thing because an anatomy requires the subject to be dead before the procedure can begin. A will to knowledge can result in fatal consequences both for the knower or the person being known. As Fogel argues, for Conrad the “inquiry [is] conducted with the awareness that the act of inquiry is itself dissective and murderous” (150). Another idea is that Dickens and Conrad are both critical of the position that characterizes Freud’s archaeology of Dora’s history, the epitome of Carlyle’s therapeutics, which is analogous to both Carlyle’s hero as man of letters and the detectives in Bleak House and The Secret Agent.
At the beginning of the twentieth century, Freud is the thinker who “looks through the shows of things into things.” In examining Conrad’s and Dickens’s thought about their detectives, my discussion here anticipates my later chapter involving Freud’s case histories. Conrad and Dickens write detective narratives in order to write their inquiries into the signs of the times, while simultaneously thinking about the trajectory of these narratives and the knowing of the detectives. Both authors are concerned with the dangers of a willful movement towards knowing and the dangers connected with revealing secrets. And both writers have doubts about the dangers of looking through the shows of things into things because some knowing may be unendurable or fatal. In Conrad and Dickens there is a recognition that not knowing is sometimes a necessity. In the two novels there is a realization of the truth in Marlow’s reflection that “there was surface-truth enough in those things to save a wiser man” (HD 38). There are times when the “surface-truth” is all that any knower can endure.

The fundamental element in the analogy between Dickens and Conrad as writers and the detectives in their fiction is the work of knowing. So my question is: how do Dickens and Conrad think about their detectives at work? A major preoccupation for the two authors in thinking about the relation between the work of writers and the detectives concerns causes and origins. Both the authors and the detectives are interested in explanations. In the “Author’s Note” to The Secret Agent, Conrad writes about the problem of his readers having little or no interest in knowing the cause or motivation of an action. In thinking about his tendency to explain himself, Conrad reflects upon how

That kind of weakness is dangerous only so far that it exposes one to the risk of becoming a bore; for the world generally is not interested in the motives of any overt act but in its consequences. Man may smile and smile but he is not an investigating animal. He loves the obvious. He shrinks from explanations. Yet I will go on with mine. (38)
In the immediate context of the passage, Conrad continues with his explanation for writing the novel, but my assumption is that the action of *The Secret Agent* is itself an explanation or at least an examination of the importance of knowing causes and not simply consequences. Conrad claims the role of the investigator, so where does that leave his readers? Conrad’s argument has implications for how we read his novel because it suggests a dual analogy involving the reader, the author, and the characters he writes. The author is most like Stevie, who “wished to go to the bottom of the matter” to understand the cause, and the reader is most like Winnie, who “felt profoundly that things do not stand much looking into” (169, 172). But Conrad is not suggesting that Stevie’s is the better position. Conrad shows his readers that there are consequences whether we are determined to know like Stevie or determined to not know like Winnie. And then the further problem is that Conrad makes neither role especially comforting because Stevie’s death is potentially a suicide and all indications point to Winnie’s death as a suicide. If death results in either case, Conrad is certainly giving us ample warning of the dangers of valuing one or the other antipode too highly.

This part of Conrad’s inquiry is interconnected with the trajectory of the detective plot as in Dickens’s *Bleak House*.29 In both novels the movement of the action is predominantly from

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29 The detective narratives in both novels have been subjected to a great deal of critical discussion. Such discussions typically invoke Foucault’s theories from *Discipline and Punish* (which use Nietzsche’s questions about knowledge and power and Jeremy Bentham’s idea of the Panopticon). Critics attempt to demonstrate how Conrad and Dickens expose and/or participate in societies wherein knowledge and information are equivalent to power and every member of a society is trained to act as a mechanism of surveillance with one eye on others and the other eye on his or her self. D. A. Miller reads *Bleak House* as a conflicted expression of the “difference between” the “institutional space in which power is violently exercised on collectivized subjects” and the “space of ‘liberal society,’” generally determined as a free, private, and individual domain and practically specified as the family” (58-59). He discusses Chancery as an “all-encompassing” “system of control” (61) and the “detective figures” who “undo” the “work of concealment” (69). According to Mark Conroy, “the entire plot of *The Secret Agent* concerns the modes of surveillance and the uncovering of secrets” (206). And in William Moseley’s view, “the world Conrad creates in *The Secret Agent* is one of suspicion and vigilance” (75). There is no denying that these problems are present in both novels, but it is necessary to recognize that these kinds of arguments concentrate too much upon the problems of suspicion and the will to knowledge and power. Reading with a perspective limited by Foucault’s theories, these critics forget the other necessary half of the problem which is the instinct towards not knowing. In other words, while
not knowing to knowing as the various secrets and crimes are forcefully uncovered by the different detectives or inadvertently discovered by less deliberate characters. In some ways the movement in the novels is analogous to Freud’s case histories wherein he plays the detective uncovering his patient’s secrets. But the trajectory of the novel should not be mistakenly equated with the author’s thought as if Conrad and Dickens conclude that it is better to know than to not know. In considering the structures of the novels versus Freud’s case histories, it is important to recognize the significant difference in how Freud plays the role of the detective making his case while Conrad and Dickens are writing about detectives making their cases. And where Freud values knowing unequivocally, Conrad and Dickens are highly ambivalent about either antipode. Articulating the problem is difficult, but both writers challenge readers to think about the causality of knowing. They repeatedly raise questions about the causes informing or provoking a character’s will to know or to not know. At times, the present knowing manifested by the characters is a consequence of a prior history which is slowly revealed through the action of the novels. In this, Conrad and Dickens are like Freud in revealing the history of knowing by focusing directly on the individual lives of the characters, but do not write the kind of Freudian case history that is premised upon a kind of knowing that is constantly suspicious of the other. Unlike Freud, Conrad and Dickens are ambivalent towards detectives and detective narratives because of the drive towards knowing manifested there. Although connected with their detectives through a shared drive to investigate and know the causes, Conrad and Dickens carefully reveal

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these critics are interested primarily in but one half of the antipodal structure, Dickens and Conrad are interested in both.
30 However, a strong argument can be made that the conclusion of Bleak House marks a return to not knowing because Jarndyce constructs a kind of paradise in which to escape from the horrors of Chancery and London.
31 George Eliot also develops this kind of inquiry into the causality informing the knowing of a character in Middlemarch, especially with Bulstrode. See Eliot’s version of a case history in Chapter 61 of Middlemarch, which is emphatically not the quasi-detective narrative which Freud employs. If I were to expand this part of my argument, I would try to suggest how Eliot’s inquiry into the causality of knowing stands between Dickens and Conrad so that the latter actually thinks about the two versions in writing Winnie’s life.
the dangerous consequences of knowing in terms of the motives of the knowing and not knowing. To use Fogel's phrase, the novels both make an "inquiry into coercive inquiry" (150).

Part of the problem preoccupying Dickens and Conrad concerns the work of knowing as a profession. They raise questions about the consequences for our knowing when inquiries becomes institutionalized in the form of an occupation, whether it be as a detective, psychoanalytic therapist, or literary critic. It is difficult to discern the degree to which the knowing of the specialist is the cause or the consequence in relation to his or her work. In one sense, the problem is about identity. As if in contradiction to Iago, who makes his identity equivocal in declaring "I am not what I am" (1.1.64), Inspector Bucket is absolutely unequivocal when "in a confidential voice" he declares "I am Inspector Bucket of the Detective I am" (785).

In the sentence Dickens shows how Bucket identifies himself primarily by his occupation. Even when thinking of his wife, Bucket thinks in terms which characterize himself, because he is the "natural detective genius" who has been "improved by professional exercise" and evidently has "done great things" (769). Inspector Heat is not as forceful in declaring his identity, but Conrad shows that the detective defines himself through his "consciousness of being the great expert of his department" (104-5). Then Conrad repeats the idea again and again to reinforce how Inspector Heat defines himself: "principal expert," "eminent specialist" (105). And like Bucket, Inspector Heat enjoys the "trained faculties of an excellent investigator" (107). But then the problem is the degree to which the consciousness of their identity as detectives and experts informs their knowing. If we read the whole of Bucket's declaration, what he actually says is "I am Inspector Bucket of the Detective I am, and this... is my authority" (785). Bucket may make a motion with his staff, but Dickens uses the word "this" to obscure whether it is the physical object in Bucket's hand or his name and occupation from which he derives his authority. What is at issue is the quality of Bucket's and Inspector Heat's knowing in having achieved the reputations and the positions they now enjoy in their work. Conrad makes the difficulty explicit in writing that "Chief Inspector Heat was not very wise – at least not truly so. True wisdom,
which is not certain of anything in this world of contradictions, would have prevented him from attaining his present position” (105). Certainty is the one quality which both detectives are not lacking, but Dickens and Conrad are doubtful about the quality of the detectives’ thinking.

While neither Bucket nor Inspector Heat entertain any serious doubts about his knowing, Dickens and Conrad are, in varying degrees, critical of the detectives’ language and thought. Admittedly, Dickens’s representation of Bucket is difficult to read. I agree with H. M. Daleski that Dickens creates an “equivocal position” for his famous detective, so I am unsure how to judge Dickens’s relation to Bucket (166). There is an ambivalence in Dickens’s valuation of Bucket which is split between a fascination with the detective’s remarkable talents and a realization that the detective is altogether too powerful in his knowing. In no way can I suggest that Dickens is wholly critical of Bucket, but he does give us some indications why we should question Bucket’s abilities.

Although Bucket dislikes writing letters for fear that they might be produced as evidence later, Dickens implies something more in writing that Bucket “discourages correspondence with himself in others, as being too artless and direct a way of doing delicate business” (771). While Bucket is thinking about letters, Dickens is also raising questions about identity and sympathy. What is troubling about the passage is the way in which Bucket’s dislike of “correspondence” actually points towards Bucket’s characteristic tendency of explaining or interpreting others. Despite disliking “correspondence,” Bucket imposes his explanations upon others, which is to say he imposes his own knowing upon others. The basic grammar of Bucket’s speech is an imposed reading or an assertion that his knowing corresponds to the existence of the other. Recalling Iago again for a moment, his knowing is formulated in the idea that “knowing what I am, I know what she shall be” (4.1.72). He knows others as he knows himself, which raises the question of how well Iago knows himself at all. In this Bucket is like Iago: Bucket is a thinker who tells others “that’s what you are, you know” (362). While Bucket may be correct in his judgement at times, there remains the question of whether he is capable of explaining others to themselves. There is
no doubt in Bucket’s assessments, and the “you know” added at the end of the statement raises
the question of whether the other characters know or Bucket is merely telling them that it is so.
Bucket has a “confidential manner impossible to be evaded or declined” with which he is able to
“persuade [another] that he is a party to some dangerous secret without knowing what it is” (409).
Again, the trouble is whether Bucket’s confidential manner is or is not a kind of confidence trick.
Bucket’s knowing is imposed upon and potentially displaces the knowing of the other, but this
does not mean that it is correct. “The velocity and certainty of Mr. Bucket’s interpretation on all
these heads is little short of miraculous,” but that does not necessarily mean that he is wholly
right in his judgement nor wholly warranted in imposing his readings upon others (820). But
what Dickens does suggest is that there is an uneasy relationship between the speed of Bucket’s
thought and judgement and the degree to which he assumes himself to be correct.32

So Bucket’s dislike of correspondence is a dislike of conversation or argument. He only
wants answers from another person when he asks questions; otherwise he prefers to do all the
talking. His reading is quickly made the prescribed reading, and in some way he exerts a measure
of control in imposing his own judgement upon others. By defining others before they can define
themselves Bucket precludes dialogues from occurring. His knowing comes dangerously close to
becoming the only knowing and perhaps the only truth. So when Bucket either “dips down to the
bottom of his mind” or “mounts a high tower in his mind” there is a question about the degree to
which his knowing reaches a level of near omniscience or at least reaches up to the level of
Dickens as the author (362, 824). When Bucket “looks out far and wide” he surveys the novel as
if he were writing it, as if he were in control. In having Bucket fail to find Lady Dedlock at the
end of the novel, Dickens exposes the limitation of Bucket’s power, but Bucket still continues in

32 I am unsure whether I must make the analogy explicit, but Bucket’s thought is related to the
literary critic’s. Dickens is questioning how readers know and judge. Do critics impose values
and ideas through the questions used to interrogate works of literature, or do we engage in a
meaningful conversation in which listening to the questions that the art raises is balanced against
our own.
his occupation. From what we know failing in one case does not ruin Bucket’s career, so Dickens’s ambivalence remains.

If James Walton is correct in observing that “Conrad’s delineation of Heat is like a gloss on Bucket’s character,” then the problem is to discern which elements Conrad amplifies or attenuates in rewriting Dickens’s detective (459). One observation about Inspector Heat which bears analogies to Bucket is the question of the degree to which he has been “forced by his calling into an attitude of doubt and suspicion towards his fellow citizens” (TSA 194). Is the work conditioning the detectives’ suspicion or is the detectives’ suspicion conditioning the work? This universal suspicion informs Inspector Heat’s certainty when confidently declaring to a “high official” that his expansive knowledge allows him to “know what each of [the terrorists] is doing hour by hour” (105). The problem is that Inspector Heat is so consumed with playing the part of an “eminent specialist” that he relies on “wisdom of an official kind” instead of realizing that it is “a matter not of theory but of experience that in the close-woven stuff of relations between the conspirator and police there occur unexpected solutions of continuity, sudden holes in space and time” (105). In a strange way, Inspector Heat’s self-consciousness makes him play at being a detective, as if he were dreaming of himself back in an earlier world wherein he could work with “an authorized mission on this earth and the moral support of his kind” (TSA 113). But Inspector Heat’s “consciousness of universal support” is largely an over-inflated self-confidence in his own expertise (113). So Conrad undermines Inspector Heat’s seemingly impressive remarks to the Professor that “when I want you I will know where to find you” by commenting that “those were perfectly proper words, within the tradition and suitable to his character of a police officer addressing one of his special flock” (111). And Conrad undermines Inspector Heat’s position in the novel further because, as Crick observes, “Conrad gives him no opportunity for exercising his professional skill in detection, and thus, no chance for the reader to wonder at the officer’s astonishing capacities for solving obscure crimes” (135). Nevertheless, Conrad reveals that
Inspector Heat’s knowing is very troubling in manifesting some of the qualities related to his predecessor Bucket.

The compulsive correspondence through which Bucket imposes his knowing on others reappears in Inspector Heat. When Conrad creates the scene in which Inspector Heat examines Stevie’s remains, he illustrates how the detective’s knowing acts by imposition, or if we use Freud’s language, it is a kind of free association or free interpretation. Before Inspector Heat begins his inquiry, he decides that “the first term of the problem was unreadable – lacked all suggestion but that of atrocious cruelty” (108). But there are at least two problems here: Inspector Heat is already offering a reading of the “first term” by arguing that it is an “atrocious cruelty” and he is imposing his own knowing when making that judgement. Reading the passage in which Inspector Heat views Stevie’s remains for the first time, it is important to recognize that “his reason told him the effect must have been swift” and the man “died instantaneously” (107). Nevertheless, Inspector Heat finds this answer “impossible to believe” without imagining “that a human body could have reached that state of disintegration without passing through the pangs of inconceivable agony” (107). What follows is Conrad’s lesson about imposing our knowing or reading on something other than ourselves. Despite in all good reason knowing better, “Chief Inspector Heat rose by the force of sympathy, which is a form of fear, above the vulgar conception of time” (107). In connecting sympathy and fear, Conrad shows how Inspector Heat’s knowing is seriously complicated at this moment. Sympathy can be equated with identification if the knower projects his or her own idea onto the other, thereby violating the distinction between self and other. But if sympathy is a form of fear, then what Conrad suggests is that sympathy can manifest itself as a desire to not know. Projecting ideas upon another person precludes the possibility of having to know that other person, or, in this case, the horror of the complete disintegration of a human being. Therefore, in the passage Inspector Heat distances himself from the remains by allowing his thought to revert to “all he had ever read in popular publications” (107). Inspector Heat’s mind is not at all upon the remains but instead focused on memories of
reading. It is impossible for him to know the remains if his mind is diverted towards evolving "a horrible notion that ages of atrocious pain and mental torture could be contained between two successive winks of an eye" (107). Inspector Heat's idea may amount to a remarkable theory or leap of imagination concerning the workings of time, but Conrad exposes Inspector Heat's lack of attentiveness in describing how he "went on peering at the table with a calm face" and was like a "customer bending over what may be called the by-products of a butcher's shop" (107). The unfamiliar makes Inspector Heat fearful and causes him to project what is already familiar and known upon what is unfamiliar and strange.

Conrad reinforces this problem when Inspector Heat confronts the Professor. Inspector Heat's response to the Professor is also sympathy as a form of fear insofar as he wants to not know him and avoid him altogether. Inspector Heat already knows and is familiar with thieves; hence the long passage in which he imagines that "he could understand the mind of a burglar" because "the mind and the instincts of a burglar are of the same kind" (110). Here is the more familiar connotation of sympathy as a form of identification, but it is important to remember that these memories are the result of Inspector Heat's disinclination to think about the anarchists. So when he confronts the Professor, Inspector Heat is troubled by "the absurdity of things human, which in the abstract is sufficiently annoying to an unphilosophical temperament, and in concrete instances becomes exasperating beyond endurance" (110). The Professor is that concrete instance or example of an idea that Inspector Heat wants to avoid. As during his confrontation with Stevie's remains, Inspector Heat immediately begins thinking of something familiar and known. While "thieving appeared to his instinct as normal," Inspector Heat's "mind... was inaccessible to ideas of revolt" (111). Everything that the Professor represents is strange and unknown so Inspector Heat's knowing diverts towards other ideas. In effect, what Inspector Heat knows conceals what he wants to not know. Or to emphasize the problem in yet another way, Conrad suggests that sympathy can be a form of knowing which relates the value of anything back to the identity of the knower. In repeatedly observing "we can never cease to be ourselves,"
Conrad makes readers consider the degree to which the self eliminates the possibility of knowing because it turns away from the strange back to the familiar, which is to say it turns from what is other back to the self (129). So when Inspector Heat finds the evidence in Stevie’s coat, he immediately realizes that “he no longer considered it eminently desirable all round to establish publicly the identity of the man who had blown himself up that morning.” despite being of the opposite mind just moments before (109). Inspector Heat’s sympathy recognizes the significance or the value of any thing in relation to himself. Conrad suggests that sympathy, instead of asking “what does this mean?” asks “what does this mean to me?” or, to be more forceful, declares “to me, this thing is.”33 One distinct problem that Conrad raises is the degree to which Inspector Heat is in control of his thinking and knowing. This bears upon Inspector Heat’s thoughts about the workings of his department.

In between the passages describing the processes through which Inspector Heat mentally turns away from Stevie’s remains and the Professor, Conrad places the reflection that “a department does not know so much as some of its servants. Being a dispassionate organism, it can never be perfectly informed. It would not be good for its efficiency to know much” (109). For Inspector Heat the problem is apparently about “the disclosure of many things” which would result in “the laying waste of fields of knowledge” (196-97). But in Conrad’s view, the dangers of knowing too much apply just as well to Inspector Heat as they do to the department. Indeed, “it would not be good” for Inspector Heat’s “efficiency” if he knew too much, which is why the detective does not work from “true wisdom” (105). Inspector Heat is a passionate organism, but he cannot be “perfectly informed” either. One way of reading the argument is that Inspector Heat’s limitations make him perfectly suited for the occupation. Are the faults in the detective’s knowing caused by his occupation or does the detective’s knowing cause the faults in the occupation? Conrad makes it difficult to know with any degree of certainty. Conrad asks

33 See Fogel’s argument that “sympathy is disguised self-interest” (158).
whether we would substitute a man of “true wisdom” for a man whose knowing is suited for the occupation. If the man of “true wisdom” cannot perform the work, then what would happen?

The other major lesson about the will to know that Conrad learns from Dickens concerns Tulkinghorn’s work, which is “the acquisition of secrets, and the holding possession of such power as they give him, with no sharer or opponent in it” (567). All three elements are interrelated: secrets and power and authority. In thinking about Tulkinghorn it is difficult not to think ahead to Freud because Dickens’s lawyer is the godfather of Freud’s psychoanalytic methods. Like Freud’s representation of himself in “Dora,” much of Tulkinghorn’s character is revealed through a struggle with a woman who makes a worthy opponent and yet also an enemy that must be defeated. Despite or perhaps because he conquers Lady Dedlock, Tulkinghorn cannot help admiring her composure: “The power and force of this woman is astonishing” (632). But the words of Tulkinghorn’s praise reveal the degree of identification in his praise since power and force are his strongest qualities. Again anticipating Freud, Dickens shows how Tulkinghorn thinks of Lady Dedlock as “a study” and when thinking about her or speaking to her “he methodically discusses his matter of business, as if she were any insensible instrument used in business” (715). Tulkinghorn’s language and thought reduces Lady Dedlock to merely an object to be used as part of the plot he is writing. The drive to be the author of the Dedlock fortunes and Lady Dedlock’s future causes Tulkinghorn to dismiss her own claims for any degree of self-determination.

In his apparently machine-like drive to uncover Lady Dedlock’s history, Tulkinghorn very rarely betrays any emotional reaction to his work, as if he were the objective analyst reconstructing a case. But Dickens does indicate that there is a note of pleasure in Tulkinghorn’s thought about the power he gains through knowledge. His knowing compels him to correct Lady Dedlock over the question of who rightly possesses the secret of her history:

Now, Lady Dedlock, this is matter of business, and in a matter of business the ground cannot be kept too clear. It is no longer your secret. Excuse me. That is
just a mistake. It is my secret, in trust for Sir Leicester and the family. If it were your secret, Lady Dedlock, we should not be here, holding this conversation.

(715)

From Tulkinghorn’s perspective, knowing and power are nearly inseparable. In possessing her secret, he claims to possess Lady Dedlock and the power to determine her life accordingly. The only pleasure greater than possessing the secret for Tulkinghorn is the opportunity to reveal the secret. Acting as if he were the author of the novel, or at least of Lady Dedlock’s life, Tulkinghorn finds pleasure in exercising the power of exposing her. Dickens levels a telling critique of Tulkinghorn’s character after the lawyer reveals a thinly-veiled version of Lady Dedlock’s history:

Mr. Tulkinghorn arrives in his turret-room, a little breathed by the journey up, though leisurely performed. There is an expression on his face as if he had discharged his mind of some grave matter, and were, in his close way, satisfied. To say of a man so severely and strictly self-repressed that he is triumphant, would be to do him as great an injustice as to suppose him troubled with love or sentiment, or any romantic weakness. He is sedately satisfied. Perhaps there is a rather increased sense of power upon him as he loosely grasps one of his venomous wrists with his other hand, and holding it behind his back walks noiselessly up and down. (631)

Dickens suggests that the power of possession and knowing can be increased through an exercise of that power in telling. Tulkinghorn is by far the most discomforting version of professional duty and responsibility in Bleak House. Like Vholes, who is a “very respectable man,” Tulkinghorn’s determination to perform a frightening ideal of professional duty makes him a
“dangerous man” (603, 874). As John Lucas argues, “much of the horror of the social situation that Dickens presents in *Bleak House* is caused by people doing their duty” (214).34

In opposing Lady Dedlock and working primarily to gain power over her, Tulkinghorn becomes her double. Dickens is careful to note how Lady Dedlock “supposes herself an inscrutable being” (59). The lawyer has a “personal secret,” but “he is his own client in that matter, and will never betray himself” (213). Tulkinghorn’s “usual expressionless mask” reveals almost nothing (213). At least we can know that Tulkinghorn works to possess knowledge as power. I would conjecture that Tulkinghorn’s acquisition of secrets and his will to know others is interconnected with a will to not know himself, that this fills his mind with the knowledge of others to avoid having certain knowledge of himself. I cannot be certain, but Dickens at least hints at the emptiness of Tulkinghorn’s being in revealing the story of the lawyer “of the same mould” as Tulkinghorn who “hanged himself” (359). It may be that Tulkinghorn works to possess Lady Dedlock’s secret not only out of professional duty towards his employer and the family estate, but also to avoid exploring his own mind.

While there is no indication that Tulkinghorn is at odds with his work, Conrad’s Assistant Commissioner “did not like the work he had to do now” (116). Dickens represents the lawyer so

34 Conrad’s doubts concerning Carlyle’s arguments advocating the absolute nature of duty and work are informed by Dickens’s revelations concerning the terrible consequences that can occur when duties are carried out unquestioningly and when an occupation supplants or annihilates individual personality and judgement. As John Lucas argues, Bucket “emerges as a man whose unpleasantness and human inadequacies are intimately bound to his social role” (215). Although “Bucket is not a villain,” “in doing the state some service he becomes vicious and corrupt” (215). Tulkinghorn’s and Bucket’s actions should be compared with those of the Company Accountant and the Manager in *Heart of Darkness* and the more informal duties such as the English professor’s declared obligations towards Natalia. Bruce Robbins’s claim that in *Bleak House* “work is salvation... because of its evasion of ultimate questions about the system” and that the novel “would seem to advocate not responsibility but irresponsibility” mistakes Dickens’s troubled questions about the problem of work becoming a form of not wanting to know for an outright declaration (146, 147). This is precisely the problem that Conrad takes up in *Heart of Darkness*. James Walton notes “Conrad’s use of [the] Dickensian device” of naming characters by their profession and that “The Secret Agent is mainly concerned with the class of people who must identify themselves with their careers” (439, 450). Ruth Kolani corroborates this observation in her discussion of *The Secret Agent* as a world of “bureaucratic irresponsibility” “marked by the deferral of agency and ‘the rule of Nobody’” (91, 97).
that Tulkinghorn’s existence is inextricably linked to his occupation, while Conrad reveals how the Assistant Commissioner is “appalled” by the “futility of office work” (116). However, the two men are analogous in being born detectives displaced into other occupations whose knowing is enabled by suspicion and some pleasure in the exercise of their power of revealing and then telling their discoveries. The Assistant Commissioner’s confrontation with Vladimir at the end of Chapter 10 in The Secret Agent can be compared with Tulkinghorn’s confrontation with Lady Dedlock at the end of Chapter 40 and the beginning of Chapter 41 of Bleak House. Dickens and Conrad both explore the degree to which revealing and telling the secrets of another becomes a satisfaction of a drive for power that is linked to a drive to know. Again, there is a strong link to the problems that characterize Freud’s thought wherein a desire to be a detective is displaced into his psychoanalytic work.

In some ways, Conrad’s representation of the Assistant Commissioner is more difficult to read than Dickens’s representation of Tulkinghorn because Conrad includes more insights into the motivations driving his character’s actions. Dickens’s basic grammar when writing about Tulkinghorn is equivocal, and he often repeats some variation on the phrase “may be so, or may be not” when questioning the lawyer’s thoughts (59). Granted, Dickens’s point is that it is impossible to know Tulkinghorn because he reveals so little about himself, but Conrad is not equivocal in this way. When inquiring into the causes enabling the Assistant Commissioner’s actions, Conrad questions the sources for the motivations even if the Assistant Commissioner is not completely conscious of them himself. Like Tulkinghorn or Bucket, the Assistant Commissioner is a man “in quest of secrets locked up in guilty breasts” who has “considerable gifts for the detection of incriminating truth” (129). However, when Conrad remarks “that particular instinct could hardly be called a weakness” it is important to notice that his instincts are not called a strength (129). The primary problem that Conrad raises concerns how the Assistant Commissioner’s instincts have “unconsciously governed” his judgement (129). In playing the investigator as a novelist, Conrad is inquiring into the causes that drive the Assistant
Commissioner's actions. What he discovers is that the Assistant Commissioner's drive to suspect and know others is simultaneously a drive to avoid thinking about his own situation. As Brian Crick argues, "Conrad's supposed identification with the intellectually adventurous detective does not preclude a clear-eyed awareness of his limitations" (241).

When Conrad writes that "suddenly [the Assistant Commissioner's] suspicion was awakened," he has already prepared the reader with an exploration into the reasons or impulses that make the character's suspicion "not difficult to arouse" (125). Conrad makes his investigator's motivations the focus of his own investigation which largely involves revealing the complications of the Assistant Commissioner's marriage. The Assistant Commissioner explains to Sir Ethelred that "from a certain point of view we are here in the presence of a domestic drama" (204). Conrad works to show that the observation is true not simply of the Verloc family but for the Assistant Commissioner's life as well. Hence, the seemingly incidental remarks about the Assistant Commissioner's marriage at the end of Chapter 5 are expanded upon at length in the first few pages of Chapter 6 which describe the parlor talk at the Lady Patroness's parties (116. 119-25). The Assistant Commissioner's thoughts about his marriage are part of the reason that "the instinct of self-preservation was strong within him" (126). That instinct for self-preservation complicates the Assistant Commissioner's will to know considerably. Conrad makes the problem explicit in reflecting upon how "it is only when our appointed activities seem by a lucky accident to obey the particular earnestness of our temperament that we can taste the comfort of complete self-deception" (125). The argument is that in following his instincts to suspect others the Assistant Commissioner avoids confronting the degree to which he wants to not know. When Conrad writes that "the Assistant Commissioner did not like his work at home," the point is not simply that the Assistant Commissioner enjoyed more adventures when working abroad but also that he does not like his role as a husband (125). He prefers to know himself as a detective rather than a husband and by exercising his talents the Assistant Commissioner indulges in his desire to avoid domestic concerns. This in turn Crick's argument that the Assistant Commissioner
transforms himself from an investigator into a person more like Winnie, who is disinclined to question anything. Crick recognizes that after discovering the implosion in process at the Verloc home, "he abruptly veers away from the Verlocs to chase down Vladimir" and "the veiled impulse behind his switch from evasion to pursuit" is "the common marital situation he shares with Verloc" (240). The Assistant Commissioner's quest for secrets is halted suddenly when he encounters Verloc, whose domestic situation reminds him of his own troubles.35

I agree with Jocelyn Baines, who argues that the "wrangle" between Inspector Heat and the Assistant Commissioner is "extremely well done" (340). In one way, the dialogue between Inspector Heat and the Assistant Commissioner is a central moment in Conrad's novel because it is analogous to Conrad's own purposes in writing. If Conrad is inquiring into the relationship between causes and knowing and is also self-conscious about his own work as an investigator, then he offers the perfect scene for readers to explore the problems by having one detective question another. And it is important to recognize the degree to which Conrad is rethinking important chapters from Bleak House. In Dickens's novel, Tulkinghorn and Lady Dedlock meet repeatedly in a battle of wills over the possession of her secret. Tulkinghorn makes Lady Dedlock into a "study" upon which he can exercise his instinct for suspicion and his desire for power.36 Conrad transforms Dickens's very early version of a Freudian psychoanalytic case…

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35 Knoepflmacher puts forward a similar argument that anticipates Crick's discussion. See page 63.
36 Conrad's representation of the relationship between the Assistant Commissioner and Inspector Heat also includes something of the dynamic that Dickens writes into the relationship between Mr Guppy and Richard. In the Assistant Commissioner's suspicion of his subordinate, Conrad includes an element of the professional jealousy and mistrust that Guppy exhibits when Richard enters on his apprenticeship at Kenge and Carboy's:

Mr Guppy suspects everybody who enters on the occupation of a stool in Kenge and Carboy's, of entertaining, as a matter of course, sinister designs upon him. He is very clear that every such person wants to depose him. If he be ever asked him why, when, or wherefore, he shuts up one eye and shakes his head. On the strength of these profound views, he in the most ingenious manner takes infinite pains to counter-plot, when there is no plot; and plays the deepest games of chess without any adversary. (327)
study by making both the antagonists detectives with secrets they are anxious to conceal:
Inspector Heat wants to conceal his informant, Verloc, while the Assistant Commissioner wants
to conceal that he has private motivations in the form of his marriage to remove any suspicion
from Michaelis. In each of the detectives’ positions, knowing and not knowing are confounded.
The knowledge revealed is a cover for what each cannot know or will not allow to be revealed.
The entire scene is a compelling illustration of the problem of how a “satisfactory sense of
superiority” is enjoyed when “the vanity of power is soothed, and the vulgar love of domination
over our fellow creature is flattered as worthily as it deserves” (132-3). Unfortunately for
Inspector Heat, who was unable to satisfy his sense of power over the Professor, he loses again to
the Assistant Commissioner, who takes over his work. The conversation between the two
detectives is about the problem of secrecy and Conrad shows how secrets and power are
interconnected with knowing. For both men, working and knowing exist in a complicated
relation. For either Inspector Heat or the Assistant Commissioner to work, knowing must often

In a similar manner, the Assistant Commissioner suspects Inspector Heat because the latter
identifies Michaelis as a suspect in the explosion. As the Assistant Commissioner studies
Inspector Heat’s physical features,
in that purposeful contemplation of the valuable and trusted officer he drew a
conviction so sudden that it moved him like an inspiration.

“I have reason to think that when you came into this room,” he said in
measured tones, “it was not Michaelis who was in your mind: not principally –
perhaps not at all.”

“You have reason to think, sir?” muttered Chief Inspector Heat with
every appearance of astonishment, which up to a certain point was genuine
enough. (128)

Had the Assistant Commissioner been “asked how, why, when, or wherefore” like Mr. Guppy,
the best he could do to explain his “inspiration” is “shake his head.” Although the Assistant
Commissioner’s suspicion turns out to be correct, he only imagines a plot where he cannot know
that one really exists. His “inspiration” is actually informed by Inspector Heat’s suggestion to
arrest Michaelis, which causes “something resembling a physical shock” and the sudden “special
kind of interest in his work of social protection – an improper sort of interest, which may be
defined best as a sudden and alert mistrust of the weapon in his hand” (118). His “alert mistrust”
of Inspector Heat is interconnected with his fear that the Lady Patroness “will never forgive me”
(125). And his sudden “unreasonable resentment” towards his occupation and his department is
only partly caused by the desk job that he detests (127). With a Mr. Guppy-like concern for his
own interests, the Assistant Commissioner creates a situation wherein he can replace Inspector
Heat and ensure that the investigation of the explosion protects his own best interests, which
prevents upsetting either the Lady Patroness or his wife.
be a cover for not knowing. As Inspector Heath says “I must do my work in my own way” which means that “there are things not fit for everybody to know” (140). But for both men, there are also things which are not fit for them to know or which they cannot endure to think about or know either.

The kinds of questions I have been raising are all interconnected with the despair of knowing that Conrad and Dickens explore. For the detectives in both novels, knowing does not become a self-conscious problem. The detectives are not troubled by questions about how a will to know can operate as a counterpart to or in harmony with a will to not know. Nor are the detectives ever troubled by the thought that knowing can be a curse and that knowing can become unendurable. So the analogy between the work of the detectives and the work Conrad and Dickens do as investigators breaks down. Or, Conrad and Dickens distance themselves from their detectives when a valuation of knowing is made. The limitations of the detectives are most apparent when compared with Conrad’s and Dickens’s terrible insights into the fears that can result from self-conscious knowing.

In *Bleak House*, the most concentrated representation of the fear that results from knowing is found in Mr. Snagsby. Late in the novel Mr. Snagsby declares “I don’t know. I have not the least idea. If I was to be informed, I should despair of understanding, and I’d rather not be told” (862). The negative grammar Dickens writes into Jo’s character is doubled in the representation of Snagsby with one important difference. Like Jo, Snagsby is deficient in his knowing insofar as he is unsure of the problem or idea at issue, but unlike Jo, Snagsby is self-conscious of his knowing and desperate to escape from the burden on his consciousness. The first two sentences in Snagsby’s plaint are both an acknowledgement of ignorance and a

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37 The doubling is especially pronounced in relation to Mr. Snagsby, whose acts of charity are simultaneously an acknowledgement of and a desire to eliminate Jo’s existence, at least in his own mind. Dickens makes this evident in Snagsby’s initial act of charity which is also a lesson for Jo in Chapter 11. While giving Jo a half-crown, Snagsby instructs him to not know and not acknowledge his benefactor: “If you ever see me coming past your crossing with my little woman – I mean a lady – don’t allude to it!” (200).
reinforcement of the desire to not know. He cannot endure knowing and turns away from the potential to know anything. Part of Snagsby’s despair is attributable to his sense that he “is a party to some dangerous secret without knowing what” that produces something in the nature of a “crisis of nightmare” (409). Because his thoughts are anything but certain, Snagsby cannot bear to know, though Dickens makes no suggestion that if Snagsby did possess some kind of sure and certain knowledge his condition would improve. While the detectives in both novels expend all their energy suspecting others, Snagsby’s suspicion is directly upon himself in a terribly concentrated way. It is the thought of being a suspect, or in other words, being a suspect to himself, which causes Snagsby to suffer.38

In one of Conrad’s versions of the fear of knowing, the problem is different because Ossipon’s thought is centered upon Winnie’s suicide after his betrayal of her, which is not to say that he bears all the guilt for her action. What is compelling in this version is that the negative grammar does not enter into Ossipon’s knowing to the degree it does with Snagsby. Snagsby’s fear of knowing is manifested as a compulsion or instinct (of self-preservation?) to not know. He explains how his mind is working against knowing. However, despite beginning by dismissing the newspaper containing the story of Winnie’s suicide as “nothing,” Ossipon’s knowing is not marked by a negative grammar afterwards (266). Conrad repeats two phrases: “Comrade Ossipon was well informed” and “He knew” (266). For anyone else reading the newspaper, the story is “an impenetrable mystery,” but to Ossipon he “could never get rid of the cursed knowledge” (266). Unlike Snagsby, whose fear is centered upon his own being and his own consciousness, Ossipon’s fear is centered upon Winnie’s consciousness. As far as I can judge, Ossipon achieves a kind of knowing of someone other that eludes the other characters in the novel. Conrad writes that “Comrade Ossipon knew that behind that white mask of despair there was struggling against terror and despair a vigour of vitality, a love of life that could resist the

38 Conrad takes up this problem in Under Western Eves in having Razumov identify himself as a “suspect” (48).
furious anguish which drives to murder and to fear, the blind, mad fear of the gallows. He knew” (267). If Ossipon’s reading of Winnie is not the whole truth, it may be the best reading any character in the novel makes of another character. But the clarity of Ossipon’s reading and knowing is a curse that taints his own life. His knowing makes his life a “ruin” (269).

The questions I have been exploring are especially concentrated in Conrad’s and Dickens’s representations of Winnie and Esther. The two authors make profound inquiries into the problematic thinking manifested in the conflicted minds of the two women. Part of my argument concerns how Conrad’s writing revisits Dickens’s inquiry, but because it anticipates my later chapter on Freud I also want to demonstrate that Dickens provides Conrad with an important lesson about conducting inquiries. Thus far I have shown how Dickens and Conrad reveal the limitations in the detectives’ thoughts and actions, a demonstration bearing on Conrad’s criticism of the characteristic elements of Freud’s psychoanalytic theory and methods that I discuss later. But now I want to investigate Dickens’s relationship with Esther and Conrad’s relationship with Winnie because of the potential parallels to Freud’s relationship with Dora. All three works involve concealing and revealing secrets and the authors focus their investigations on a woman whose knowing and not knowing is at issue. Freud, like Tulkinghorn, treats Dora as a “study” and as an “instrument” to be used in his business of practicing and propagating psychoanalytic theory, but Conrad and Dickens do not use Winnie or Esther in the same fashion. Conrad and Dickens recognize the dangers of such an approach so they do not work in the same manner as the detectives. Their inquiries into the women are not driven by suspicion or to satisfy the vanity of power. They do not make the same errors in representing Winnie or Esther that would be made had Bucket or the Assistant Commissioner written the novels.

Dickens writes Esther’s autobiography as a sustained inquiry into her effort towards not knowing. Audrey Jaffe recognizes that Esther is “divided from herself” (165). Jaffe argues that in writing her autobiography Esther “has all the limitation a critic interested in first person narrative could hope to find; limitation is in fact her chief subject. She is indeed the subject
presumed — primarily by herself — not to know” (166). Throughout her story, Esther “works to efface her own knowledge” (166). The problem which Jaffe calls to our attention is present from the very first moments in which Esther begins her story. Dickens emphasizes Esther’s predicament through the proliferation of negative grammatical structures in her writing. If Jo’s characteristic grammar is “I don’t know nothink,” then the grammatical structure that characterizes Esther’s thought is “I know I am not” (62). In the first few paragraphs of Chapter 3 alone, Esther repeatedly assures readers that “I am not,” “I have not,” “I was not,” “I never,” and “I had never” (62-3). In Esther’s writing, Dickens represents how the problems of not knowing and identity are interconnected. Although we cannot know much of the cause of the form of Esther’s thought until we have finished reading the novel, Dickens gradually makes it clear that Esther’s self-effacement is intimately related to her childhood desire, never forgotten, that “I would try, as hard as ever I could, to repair the fault I had been born with (of which I confessedly felt guilty and yet innocent)” (65). That fault, impressed upon her by her godmother/aunt, is that “your mother, Esther, is your disgrace, and you were hers” (65). Dickens designs the novel so that Esther’s telling is already influenced by the experiences of seven years ago which lead to the discovery and death of her mother, Lady Dedlock. I cannot examine at length the complexity of Dickens’s structure; however, I do want to call attention to one very important scene which anticipates and rivals Freud’s very best thinking about repression and not knowing.

The moment in Chapter 36 in which Esther meets Lady Dedlock within the relationship of child and mother is marked by a particularly extreme form of the negative grammar which characterizes her telling. In retrospect, Esther’s memory is a record of a continuing self-

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39 Judith Wilt examines Esther’s prose and concludes that “her personal syntactic shape is the parenthetical sentence; and the closer her knowing comes to herself, the thicker becomes the parenthesis, which signal the strain and confusion of knowing her knowing” (289). While this may be accurate in a way, Dickens emphasizes the incredible tension between Esther’s telling and her wanting to not know through the proliferation of negative grammatical structures. When Esther comes to moments in the story especially personal or self-revealing, her sentence structures include a greater number of negations; the conflict between what she knows but wants not to know is reinforced in this way.
effacement. The passage begins with a series of negatives: "I looked at her; but I could not see her, I could not hear her, I could not draw my breath" (565). Esther's language reveals more than she means in declaring "that I felt as if my life were breaking from me" (565). Indeed, it is: the present telling does enact a break from the past experience. Esther's retelling of the events is seriously complicated. Not only does she become some one's child in learning the identity of her mother, but she also discovers the person with whom she shares her disgrace, the terrible curse placed upon her as a child. But the most important detail in the passage is the fact that no connection can be made. She erases the recognition as it occurs: "I felt, through all my tumult of emotion, a burst of gratitude to the providence of God that I was so changed as that I never could disgrace her by any trace of likeness; as that nobody could ever now look at me, and look at her, and remotely think of any near tie between us" (565). The first two times Esther and Lady Dedlock meet, there can be no recognition of the mother-daughter relation. It is only when the physical resemblance has been erased that Dickens allows the recognition to occur. The problem of Esther's self-effacement is reiterated when she contemplates how "I had never, to my own mother's knowledge, breathed - had been buried - had never been endowed with life - had never borne a name" (569). Esther's negative thought is self-destructive. There is a partial wish that these "nevers" had been true. Esther's whole narrative is marked by her "heavily sorrowful" thoughts, caused by her reading of Lady Dedlock's letter, that "I had ever been reared," and "it would have been better... if indeed I had never breathed" (569). Esther's autobiographical narrative as a whole is very subtly marked by her realization that "I had a terror of myself" (569). And Dickens emphasizes Esther's terror through the dramatic sequence in which she becomes the fulfillment of the prophecy for the Ghost's Walk: "it was I, who was to bring calamity upon the stately house" (571). The moment reinforced her "despair of understanding" "with an augmented

40 In Chapter 18, "Lady Dedlock," Esther sees her mother in the church and then meets and talks with her in the lodge. See pages 304 and 309.
terror of myself" (571). Esther’s identity is defined by that terror of herself. Like Snagsby, Esther fears understanding and would rather not be told. She is the personification of being “quite content to know no more” (149). Knowing has made her life terrible to her, although she cannot fully realize the enormous problem in her thinking. The problem in Esther’s character is repeated with variations in other characters in the novel, most notably in Lady Dedlock; however, I think the central problem is sufficiently clear and this brief look at Esther should suffice.

Conrad transfigures the kinds of problems Dickens raises in Esther’s autobiography into his representation of Winnie. Winnie “felt profoundly that things do not stand much looking into. She made her force and her wisdom of that instinct” (172). For Conrad, the question is not simply about Winnie’s not knowing, but the motivations or causes and the consequences. In Winnie, Conrad concentrates all of his questions concerning knowing and not knowing. As Conrad explains in the “Author’s Note,” he is not interested in merely delineating Winnie’s “psychology” but rather her “humanity” (41). While Conrad may express some “contempt” or “scorn” for Winnie since she is the very embodiment of a being as “not an investigating animal,” Conrad does extend the pity that her “tragic suspicion” of life demands (41, 38, 41).

Winnie’s profound instinct for not knowing is largely informed or at least interconnected with her “maternal vigilance” surrounding everything related to Stevie (50). In the “Author’s Note,” Conrad asks readers to recognize that his novel began with “the dawning conviction of Mrs. Verloc’s maternal passion,” and then wrote the novel which is “that story, reduced to manageable proportions, its whole course centered on the absurd cruelty of the Greenwich Park explosion” (41). In representing Winnie as a sister and mother, Conrad makes use of both Esther

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41 Peter Garrett argues that in this scene “the sentence of guilt passed on [Esther] in childhood” returns to cause a “crisis in Esther’s story, at which she is poised between two interpretations of her life” (64). I agree with Garrett that her “sense of being a part of a coherent but terrible design seems to be confirmed” and Esther “never completely succeeds in throwing off the burden of the past” (65). But I think he does not recognize that Esther’s guilt informs her narrative and the negative grammar that characterizes her prose. I cannot see how these problems can be reconciled with Garrett’s claim that Esther is able to resist the “infectious sense of persecution and guilt” (70).
and Lady Dedlock, but the latter is arguably more important. No one registers the joke in Conrad making the English-sounding name “Dedlock” into a foreign and perhaps Polish or French-sounding name, “Verloc.” As Hugh Epstein argues, “Lady Dedlock seems to have played a significant role in Conrad’s imagination,” noting the connection with Madame Delestang in *A Personal Record* (124). Dickens only shows Lady Dedlock’s maternal passion in one or two scenes: when she reveals herself and her fears of exposure to Esther (563-69) and when she allows Rosa to leave her service in order to be educated and married to her lover, the young Rouncewell (706-13). Arguably, Lady Dedlock’s actions demonstrate her own “maternal vigilance” towards her real daughter Esther and her “adopted” daughter Rosa. Conrad adapts other parts of Lady Dedlock in having Winnie choose Verloc over her lover, the “only son of a butcher in the next street,” whose figure appears fleetingly in Winnie’s memory in the novel (72). Both women make a “bargain” in their marriages (SA 232). Lady Dedlock chooses wealth and security over her lover, and Winnie chooses security and protection for her brother Stevie over her lover.

Conrad also transposes a characteristic trait from Dickens’s character into his own. Lady Dedlock is characterized by her “freezing mood” which is “exhausted composure, and worn-out placidity, equanimity of fatigue not to be ruffled by interest or satisfaction” (57-8). Lady Dedlock is “perfectly well-bred” and “supposed herself to be an inscrutable Being” (58, 59). Although nothing of an aristocrat, Winnie also “preserved an air of unfathomable indifference” and “unfathomable reserve” (46, 47). The inscrutability and unfathomableness that the two women share are important to each plot. Lady Dedlock hides her past and lack of family connections from the world, and the revelation of her secrets is a major element of Dickens’s design. Winnie never reveals to her husband the premise upon which she entered into the marriage contract: the unspoken promise to protect Stevie. Conrad also makes use of Lady Dedlock’s flight. After Winnie murders Verloc, her attempt to flee London is represented as a flight from “idleness and irresponsibility” (236). After the murder, Winnie is no longer “a person
of leisure and irresponsibility” (237). Like Lady Dedlock, she no longer has access to her former life. Lady Dedlock’s self-destructive flight is largely informed by an avoidance of her husband to remove her “deeper shame” from his family (816). But Winnie’s flight is initially self-destructive; she enters into the one moment in her life wherein she “was compelled to look into the very bottom of this thing” and she is haunted by her fear of the “gallows” (237). But “she could not stand thinking of it. Therefore Mrs. Verloc formed the resolution to go at once and throw herself into the river off one of the bridges” (238). Despite Winnie’s momentary hope for salvation through the intervention of Ossipon, she kills herself as Lady Dedlock does.

Throughout the novel, Conrad emphasizes that Winnie’s “only real concern was Stevie’s welfare” (185). After her mother leaves, Winnie’s responsibility increases. When Verloc remarks “perhaps it’s just as well” that Winnie’s mother moved to the almshouse, Conrad writes that

Mrs. Verloc kept still, perfectly still, with her eyes fixed in a dreamy, quiet stare. And her heart for the fraction of a second seemed to stand still, too. That night she was ‘not quite herself,’ as the saying is, and it was borne upon her with some force that a simple sentence may hold several diverse meanings – mostly disagreeable. How was it just as well? And why? But she did not allow herself to fall into the idleness of barren speculation. She was rather confirmed in her belief that things did not stand being looked into. Practical and subtle in her way, she brought Stevie to the front without loss of time, because in her the singleness of purpose had the unerring nature and the force of an instinct. (173-4)

This passage reveals how Winnie’s mind moves away from speculation by indulging in her characteristic tendency towards not knowing and how this is immediately connected with her thoughts about Stevie. One way of reading the passage is to argue that Winnie’s not knowing is caused by her instinct for protecting Stevie. Winnie cannot indulge in speculation in examining either herself or Verloc because her first instinct and mental habit is to promote Stevie’s welfare.
Her being is concentrated upon him with a terrible intensity which precludes her thinking too much. As Conrad suggests in several passages, Winnie’s love for Stevie verges upon a kind of unquestioned faith. She believes in Stevie as a kind of Christ-like figure who lived “a life of single purpose and of noble unity of inspiration, like those rare lives that have left their mark on the thoughts and feelings of mankind” (219). After learning of Stevie’s death, “she assumed the biblical attitude of mourning – the covered face, the rent garments; the sound of wailing and lamentation filled her head” (223). When Conrad writes that “she had battled for him – even against herself,” part of his argument is that Winnie fought against her own being in some fundamental way (223). The central problem Conrad is raising concerns how Winnie’s thinking operates at the level of an instinct, and suggests that, for Winnie, Stevie’s preservation is more important than her own self-preservation while he is alive. Winnie has no thoughts about self-preservation until after she learns of Stevie’s death (228). Winnie’s constitutional unwillingness to look into anything is the counterpart to the concentration of her entire being upon her brother’s welfare. In Winnie, a form of self-sacrifice is interconnected with not knowing. But there is also the complication of the degree to which Winnie’s existence depends upon her brother and the exercise of her love for him and protection of him. The instincts for self-preservation and self-sacrifice are indistinguishable in her protection of Stevie.

Conrad reveals yet another complication in Winnie’s not knowing by questioning whether her love for her brother is also tainted by her instinct that it is not good to know too much. The problem is evident when, in witnessing Stevie’s “bodily agitation” following the encounter with the cabman and the horse,

Winnie soothed his excitement without ever fathoming its twofold character.

Mrs Verloc wasted no portion of this transient life in seeking for fundamental information. This is a sort of economy having all the appearances and some of the advantages of prudence. Obviously it may be good for one not to know too much. And such a view accords very well with constitutional indolence. (167)
Winnie's not knowing is meant to be for her brother but actually eliminates the potential for her to know Stevie other than as the child whom she protected from their abusive father. Or thinking back to Bucket or Inspector Heat, Winnie only knows Stevie in terms of what he means to her, what valuation he has in terms of her life. His being as separate from hers disappears from her knowing. Allowing for the change of pronouns, Conrad's idea of Verloc's justification for not knowing his wife works just as well for Winnie's inability to know Stevie: "it was impossible for [Winnie] to understand [him] without ceasing to be [her]self" (213). In making "Stevie's welfare" her only concern, Winnie has lost sight of her brother (185). In Winnie's mind there may be something of Inspector Heat's problem where an idea comes between the knower and the known. Winnie's preoccupation with protecting her brother is fundamental in her mind, but this knowing dominates in such a way that she does not know her brother. Like Dickens's philanthropists in *Bleak House*, Winnie performs her good works without really knowing the individual for whom they are performed. Stevie becomes an abstraction upon which Winnie projects her own maternal and fraternal passions. Again, like the assistance offered by Dickens's philanthropists, Winnie's assistance proves to be more harmful than good.

When Winnie experiences the "paralyzing atrocity of the thought" that "this man took the boy away to murder him," her mind is "governed too much by a fixed idea" (224). In one way Winnie's mind needs to replace the prior dominant idea with a new one since Stevie is dead and Winnie can no longer concentrate her being on her thoughts of protecting him. But Conrad also indicates that the identification of Verloc as the murderer enables Winnie to not know, not realize in any way how all of her plans in life have contributed to Stevie's death. Winnie chose Verloc over her previous lover. She deliberately pushed Verloc and Stevie together and imagined them as "father and son" (179). So when Verloc claims that "it's as much your doing as mine" he is right, but Winnie cannot endure nor recognize the truth in that thought (230). In showing how nearly all of the characters' actions in the novel contribute to Stevie's death, Conrad is not interested in portioning out the proper measure of blame for Winnie to bear. He is preoccupied
with how Winnie’s mind continually blinds itself from knowing and how her knowing causes the blindness.

It is only after Winnie’s “instinct for self-preservation” becomes dominant that “Mrs. Verloc, who always refrained from looking deep into things, was compelled to look into the very bottom of this thing” (228, 237). The idea of the gallows and her memory of the phrase “the drop given was fourteen feet” causes an instinctual revulsion in Winnie: “No! that must never be. She could not stand that. The thought of it even was not bearable. She could not stand thinking of it. Therefore Mrs. Verloc formed the resolution to go at once and throw herself into the river off of one of the bridges” (238). The relationship between Winnie’s knowing and her instinct for self-preservation is conflicted. She cannot bear to think the thought and live thinking it yet she is strongly compelled to have Ossipon save her. Her hope to escape with Ossipon signifies not only a physical escape from a punishment of death for murder, but also an escape from knowing what is unendurable.

Thus far, I have avoided discussing the importance of Stevie in The Secret Agent because he is a central concern in my chapter on Nietzsche. However, I want to note a significant analogy between Jo and Stevie. Conrad’s description of Stevie’s speech applies just as well to Jo:

The docile Stevie went along; but now he went along without pride, shamblingly, and muttering half words, and even words that would have been whole if they had not been made up of halves that did not belong to each other. It was as though he had been trying to fit all the words he could remember to his sentiments in order to get some kind of corresponding idea. (168)

Both characters’ speech is captured in this passage. Where Jo has no education at all, Stevie has had just enough to make it is necessary for us to recognize that the two figures associated with sympathy are antipathetic in their knowing. Whereas Jo “don’t know nothink,” Stevie will not rest in his knowing because “he wished to go to the bottom of the matter” (169). So the two
figures at the focus of the arguments the authors are making about sympathy are antipodal in their knowing and not knowing.

Of all the characters in Conrad's novel, Stevie's is the most troubling. Unlike his adopted parents, Stevie does not suffer from an indolence that makes him constitutionally incurious. Unlike Jo, Stevie struggles very hard to declare himself and his ideas. My trouble in understanding Conrad's construction of Stevie begins with the question of how to resolve the problem of Conrad's decision to make Stevie an idiot, which is connected with Dostoevsky's great novel, and the relation that has with the remark that "being no sceptic, but a moral creature, he was in a manner at the mercy of his righteous passions" (169). Conrad places skepticism in opposition to Stevie's identity as a moral creature, making me wonder whether Stevie is one of the "moralists" whose "idealization makes life poorer" in Michaelis's view (73). I will explore the problem at length in my chapter on Conrad's critique of Nietzsche.
Chapter Three: The Confessional Structure of *Under Western Eves*

As a Criticism of Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*

Conrad’s relationship with Dostoevsky has been the subject of a great deal of critical debate. In his 1911 review of *Under Western Eves*, Richard Curle unwittingly initiated the great profusion of academic speculation by calling attention to scenes in Conrad’s novel that are “strangely reminiscent” of Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (229). Since that time, seemingly every major critic of Conrad’s work has commented upon his relation to Dostoevsky, whether in passing or at length. The number of published articles and chapters in book-length studies is both impressive and daunting.\(^1\) Two decades ago, L. R. Lewitter all but dismissed any further consideration of the problem by complaining that “the superficial similarities and divergences between *Crime and Punishment* and *Under Western Eves* are so obvious that they hardly deserve mention” (658). Lewitter’s frustration notwithstanding, the critical conversation continued. While agreeing with Lewitter that “the fact of the matter is that the discussions have churned the same stew in a small pot, largely the same pattern of crime, confession, and punishment” (96), Edward Wasiolek demonstrated convincingly that “Lewitter is surely cavalier in dismissing the complexity and profundity of the comparison” (96). Unfortunately, despite Wasiolek’s efforts to call attention to some of the complexities involved, Ralph Matlaw recognized a decade ago that

the impressionistic conjunction of Dostoevskii’s name with Conrad’s recently has become a critical commonplace, though it has been limited to occasional remarks on the resemblance of certain types, characters, and situations, on the general purvey of the novelists, and on the recurrence of the ‘double theme’ in their works. (232)

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\(^1\) As Paul Kirschner remarks in “The French Face of Dostoevsky in Conrad’s *Under Western Eves*: Some Consequences for Criticism,” “the mimetic/dialectical relationship of *Under Western Eves* to *Crime and Punishment* needs no belabouring” (24).
Although several works have appeared since Matlaw’s remarks were published, the critical
discussion has not moved very far beyond the stage that he describes. There is little evidence to
corroborate Matlaw’s argument that “it is now easier to see [Conrad’s and Dostoevsky’s] works
in proper perspective and to assess them more accurately”; if this “proper perspective” exists then
it has not actually resulted in an altogether richer understanding of Under Western Eyes as a
“reassessment” of Dostoevsky’s art and thought (232-3). Critics continue to recycle the infamous
quotations in which Conrad describes Dostoevsky as “the grimacing, haunted creature” whose
works sound “like some fierce mouthings from prehistoric ages.”\(^2\) Critics also continue to
reproduce the “similarities and divergences” that Lewitter and others have recorded,\(^3\) partly by
relying upon Wasielek’s now formulaic conclusion in “Conrad and Dostoyevsky, and Natalia and
Sonia” that “one must repeat what is most fundamental about the comparison, that is, the similar
structure of crime, confession, and punishment” (97). The discussion of how to understand the
relationship between Conrad’s and Dostoevsky’s art and thought has stalled and must move
beyond the critical accomplishments recorded thus far.

Unfortunately for me, many critics have promised to “not only examine the ways in
which Conrad’s work is influenced by and departs from Dostoevsky’s, but also to reveal why
Conrad transformed what he found in his predecessor and made it his own,” thereby exposing any
new examinations to accusations of redundancy and superfluousness (Andersen 65).\(^4\) While
recognition of the convergences and divergences in Conrad’s and Dostoevsky’s art and thought is
important, my discussion is not concerned with merely revealing new sources of Dostoevskian

\(^2\) The first quotation is from a letter dated May 1917 and the second from a letter dated 12 May
1912, both addressed to Edward Garnett. See Letters from Joseph Conrad: 1895-1924, pages
240-41 and 248-51.

\(^3\) Instances of tracing the echoes of Crime and Punishment in Under Western Eyes can be found
in several works, but I have found the most enlightening to be the discussions by Matlaw,
Wasielek, and Kaplan. Kaplan provides the most recent and concise summary of the similarities
and divergences between the two novels (99-101).

\(^4\) As Stephen Bernstein remarks in relation to his discussion of Rousseau, “further comment...
may seem less than innovative” (161).
echoes. The justification for my argument is in my focus bearing directly upon Conrad’s novel as criticism. Under Western Eves does not simply rework or rewrite major characters and ideas that Dostoevsky used in Crime and Punishment; Conrad’s novel critiques Dostoevskian ideas and structures, thereby revealing problems in the art and thought of the great Russian novelist. Conrad’s novel straddles the boundary of art and criticism: Under Western Eves is a critical commentary on Dostoevsky manifested in the form of a novel.

In a letter dated 20 October 1911, Conrad asked Edward Garnett whether it is “possible that You haven’t seen that in this book [Under Western Eves] I am concerned with nothing but ideas, to the exclusion of everything else” (LJC 4, 489). To understand Conrad’s reassessment of Dostoevsky’s art and thought, it is necessary to take Conrad at his word. As Carola Kaplan argues, “in Under Western Eves, Conrad challenges the nineteenth-century Russian novel on its own terms: as a novel of ideas” (97). Conrad engages with the ideas that inform the art of Dostoevsky’s great novels. I agree with Kaplan that Conrad’s critique is enabled by “the appropriation and reworking of Dostoevskyan subject matter and techniques,” and that Conrad “attempts the ostensibly contradictory task of besting Dostoevsky at his own game” (97); however, Conrad’s response to Dostoevsky is more complicated than she allows. Kaplan argues that Conrad wants to dismiss Dostoevsky’s “demand to be taken seriously” and expose Crime and

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5 Stephen Bernstein lists an impressive number of “intertextual relationships” in the novel. See his opening paragraph.
6 Ralph Matlaw characterizes The Secret Agent and Under Western Eves as “polemical replies” to Dostoevsky (232-3). Kaplan makes the important observation that “in nineteenth-century Russia, it was common practice for one novelist to quarrel in his fiction with an influential predecessor” and that “Conrad follows in this tradition” and “argues with Dostoevsky” (99). One basic example of this tradition is Turgenev’s Fathers and Sons provoking Chernyshevsky’s response in What Is To Be Done? which then provoked Dostoevsky’s multiple responses in Notes From Underground, Crime and Punishment, and The Possessed.
7 Zdzislaw Najder also insists upon reading Under Western Eves as a novel of ideas. See “Conrad and Rousseau: Concepts of Man and Society” (85).
8 I disagree with Guerard that between Lord Jim and Under Western Eves the latter is “the less original novel of the two” and does not qualify as an “art novel” (Novelist 232).
Punishment as a “something less than a novel of ideas” (98, 99). On the contrary, Under Western Eyes demonstrates that Conrad recognized Dostoevsky as an important thinker and responded with serious criticism. Conrad’s attitude towards Dostoevsky bears analogies with Nietzsche’s idea of “a tempting and challenging, sharp-eyed courage that craves the terrible as one craves the enemy, the worthy enemy, against whom it can test its strength” (BT 4). So Matlaw’s argument that Conrad confronts Dostoevsky “at his strongest point” is more plausible (233). Both Conrad’s and Dostoevsky’s writings are marked by Nietzsche’s recognition of “the value of having enemies” (T 53). Conrad undoubtedly recognized that Dostoevsky engaged in similar critical practices. It is well known that Dostoevsky recognized and sought to expose the dangers inherent in the ideas represented by Chernyshevsky in What Is To Be Done?. As Joseph Frank argues, “Dostoevsky portrayed Nihilist ideas, not on the level at which they were ordinarily advocated, but rather as they were refashioned by his eschatological imagination and taken to their most extreme (though quite consistent) consequences” (Miraculous 101). Following Dostoevsky, who exposed the consequences of Chernyshevsky’s ideas, Conrad in turn reveals some of the problems in and the consequences of Dostoevsky’s ideas. And just as Chernyshevsky would object to Dostoevsky’s critical response as a misreading of his ideas, Dostoevsky would presumably have been horrified by Conrad’s critical revaluation of his ideals. In both cases, the later novelist recognizes problems in reading the previous writer’s art to

9 Kaplan’s argument that “although Dostoevsky originally conceived his novels in terms of ideas and intended them as works of social criticism, in execution they became a good deal more diffuse and ambiguous than his original conception” is flatly contradicted by Joseph Frank’s thorough and insightful use of Dostoevsky’s notebooks in his multi-volume literary biography (99). Also see Guerard’s discussion of The Possessed in The Triumph of the Novel. Frank and others have demonstrated that Dostoevsky was deliberate and careful in crafting his art.

10 Section 1.

11 Frank also demonstrates this in his criticism of Notes from Underground. See the extract in the Norton Critical Edition (217-8). In the latter, Frank summarizes Komarovich’s important argument demonstrating that Notes from Underground is “structurally dependent” upon Chernyshevsky’s What Is To Be Done? (216). In Notes From Underground, Dostoevsky writes parodies of scenes from Chernyshevsky’s novel; however, a basic feature of Dostoevsky’s art is the replies that he makes to other authors, whether it be Gogol, Turgenev, the Russian radicals, or others.
critique these limitations by testing the potential logical consequences of the ideas. Although I admire Dostoevsky's art, my concern is with Conrad's perspective on Dostoevsky and not with imagining the latter's potential rejoinders. However, this is only to call attention to the fact that one of the most important similarities between Conrad's and Dostoevsky's art is in the critical preoccupation that informs their novels. For both writers the novel is a form of criticism. Creativity and criticism exist simultaneously in the art.

_Under Western Eyes_ is an inquiry into a characteristically Dostoevskian idea and/or genre: the confession. Employing all of his remarkable technical virtuosity, Conrad creates a very complicated version of Dostoevsky's confessional form which is perplexing in the extreme. Conrad constructs a confounding layer of narrative structures in which the frame narrative, spoken by the English professor, is a confession recounting the details of several other written or spoken confessions, including those of Razumov and Peter Ivanovitch. And one of the primary documents out of which the frame narrative is constructed, Razumov's diary or journal, is itself a confession recounting the details of another confession, namely Haldin's. If only to be more accurate with my initial identification, Conrad's novel is a confession about a number of other confessions. Because of the design of the overarching structure, every aspect of Conrad's novel is then related or subordinated to the fundamental question of what occurs when one person attempts to explain or reveal his or her self to another person. A confession is made both the primary cause for and the consequence of the action in the novel: in the beginning Haldin reveals himself to Razumov, and in the end Razumov reveals himself to Natalia and the revolutionaries. Through both confessions, Conrad explores the terrible consequences that occur for both the speaker and the listener when one individual forces an unexpected and possibly unwelcome confession upon another individual. For Conrad, confiding in another may potentially destroy the self and the other. In this, Conrad contradicts Dostoevsky's ideal wherein the confession is the first step towards salvation, as manifested in Raskolnikov's self-revelation to Sonya.
In exploring Dostoevsky’s use of the confession, Conrad is critical of some of Dostoevsky’s most significant ideas. Beginning with Peter Ivanovitch and then including the narrator and Razumov, Conrad critiques what he identifies as Dostoevsky’s troubling idealization of women. While Conrad’s representation of Peter Ivanovitch’s relationship with Tekla poses special problems about how Dostoevsky inscribes his own ideas upon or speaks through his female characters, the English professor, Razumov, and Peter Ivanovitch all superimpose their own values and ideas upon Natalia, raising questions about whether any of the three men can know her apart from their own imaginative constructions. The caricature of some aspects of Dostoevsky’s art and life in the character of Peter Ivanovitch is interconnected with all of these ideas. But I will begin by briefly reconsidering the terms in which Conrad’s and Dostoevsky’s relationship has been discussed and then explore Conrad’s awareness of the problem of his simultaneous appositional and oppositional relationship with the great Russian writer.

Conrad’s relationship with Dostoevsky has been distilled into a formula, reproduced with some variations by different critics. Reduced to its most simple form, the formula resembles a Nietzschean antipode: a negative repudiation is also a sympathetic identification. In discussions of Conrad and Dostoevsky there is always the shadowy presence of Nietzsche’s warning that “he who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster” (BGE 102). In Conrad: The Psychologist as Artist, Paul Kirschner writes that “Conrad’s antipathy to Dostoevsky, like many antipathies, carries a strong suggestion of secret kinship” (252). But of the many descriptions, I find Ralph Matlaw’s the most suggestive. In contemplating Conrad’s relatively rare comments on Dostoevsky, Matlaw speculates that

If Conrad did not express himself on Dostoevskii it may be that his reaction was really of the irrational kind that resulted in hatred and fury, hinting at an even

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12 Section 146.
13 Morton Dauwen Zabel describes Under Western Eyes as Conrad’s “closest link with the Dostoevskian tradition in Russian fiction – a tradition which, though he persistently repudiated it and professed himself both baffled and repelled by it, opens a radical question of temperamental affinity and influence in his work” (117).
more profound irritant than Shakespeare proved to Tolstoi – who was at least able to discuss some of his objections intelligibly. Dostoevskii was a devil who could only be exorcised by the imaginative transformation of the offensive matter. (231)

Unlike the critics who suggest simultaneous antipathy and sympathy, Matlaw only emphasizes the negative element of Conrad’s response to Dostoevsky; however, Matlaw’s comments are important in recognizing that the lack of criticism of Dostoevsky in Conrad’s letters or essays is explained by Conrad having directed that criticism into his novels. But writing criticism in the form of art does not preclude the potential “to discuss some of his objections intelligibly.” Conrad’s objections are intelligible if we will only consider them intelligently, and diligently read the language and structure of his art. Under Western Eyes is the “imaginative transformation of the offensive matter,” a radical criticism of Dostoevsky. The problem with these previous discussions is that critics show little or no awareness of Conrad’s consciousness of the problem. Indeed, in “Conrad, Apollo Korzeniowski, and Dostoevsky,” Keith Carabine boldly declares that Conrad’s complex critical design in Under Western Eyes is “doomed to failure because of the inherent contradictions and manifest double thinking at the heart of this enterprise” (11). The assumption is that Conrad identified Dostoevsky as a devil or monster without realizing the simultaneous identification with that monster. But Conrad understood the problem of negative identification as well as Nietzsche and critics have mistakenly projected the simplicity and directness of Conrad’s comments in his letters over the subtle complexity of his art.

Conrad’s awareness of his antipodal relationship with Dostoevsky is manifested in the doubling that informs the basic structure of Under Western Eyes.14 By doubling I mean the overlapping sets of antipodal relationships – sympathetic and/or antipathetic – that pervade the

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14 Although Conrad employed doubling as a basic element of structure throughout his works, the problem became especially pronounced in the period that Under Western Eyes was composed. While writing the novel, Conrad also completed “The Secret Sharer,” which uses the double in a forceful and focused manner.
novel and inform the basic structure of Under Western Eyes: Western versus Russian, Geneva versus St. Petersburg, democracy versus autocracy, liberty versus tyranny, just to name a few of the obvious. None of these pairs are simple oppositions; Conrad collapses and confounds these sets of words, especially by overlapping different combinations of words. Everywhere in the novel, Conrad is thinking about the very problem that critics are attributing to him. It is only fair to ask what Conrad makes of the problem before concluding he is guilty of some strange unconscious identification with Dostoevsky that was beyond his understanding.\footnote{This is the implication of Morf's conclusion that "it was only in the nature of things that Conrad should dislike Freud intensely, as he disliked Dostoevski" (166). In Morf's view, Conrad thought of Dostoevsky in the same way as Freud, as "a too crude, a too explicit double of himself" (166).} I will discuss the doubling of Razumov with Haldin, Peter Ivanovitch, Ziemianitch, and the narrator in the course of my argument, so I will limit myself for now by briefly focusing on Haldin and the man he kills, Mr. de P, and the man who orders Haldin's death, General T. This is not to suggest that Conrad's or Dostoevsky’s thought can be located in any of these three characters, only that the relationship between these characters contains an element of complexity that is present throughout the novel.

In Conrad's construction of the antipodal relationship between Haldin and Mr. de P, the negative elements are obvious and elementary: the former is a revolutionary student advocating liberty and freedom while the latter is a government minister entrusted with "extirpating from the land every vestige of anything that resembled freedom" and who aimed at "the destruction of the very hope of liberty itself" (8). It is liberty versus tyranny, democracy versus autocracy. But the element that is common to both men, that reveals the identification of the characters, is the method with which they work. Both men kill to achieve their goals; murder is a means to an end. Mr. de P "served the monarchy" by "sending to the gallows men and women, young and old, with an equable, unwearied industry" (8). The two bombs thrown by Haldin and his partner not only kill Mr. de P and his servants, but also leave a "small heap of dead bodies" that includes
“innocent victims” (9). Haldin is also akin to Mr. de P in taking “very few precautions for his safety” (8). Mr. de P leaves himself open to a public attack by riding in his carriage and Haldin leaves himself open to a personal attack by confiding in Razumov. The lack of precautions creates the conditions that lead to the deaths of both men. But the real significance of Conrad’s structure is that in killing and exposing himself to be killed, Haldin becomes analogous to the man that Haldin hates. Haldin does not recognize how he transforms himself into the person he attacks. As Dwight Purdy argues in “Creature and Creator in Under Western Eyes,” Haldin has “killed his double, for de P also justifies himself by a perversion of the Biblical concept of history” (242). Conrad represents one man using Biblically or spiritually influenced convictions to kill another who has acted in the same manner. And if we miss Conrad’s reading lesson, he includes another, by constructing an antipodal relationship between Haldin and General T. Haldin tells Razumov that “men like me leave no posterity” (17). Speaking of rebels such as Haldin, General T tells Razumov “that brood leaves no posterity” (38). Both men claim to make sacrifices: Haldin argues that revolutionaries such as himself “have made the sacrifice of our lives” (16); General T is also “ready to lay down my life” (38). In the name of liberty and revolution, Haldin kills Mr. de P, the embodiment of tyranny and autocracy, and then in the name of autocracy and the Tsar, General T kills Haldin, the embodiment of liberty and revolution. For all these men killing is a necessary occupation. They define themselves in their work. The antipodal structure informing the relations between the characters informs the structure of the plot for the novel as a whole. One could read Under Western Eyes as an inquiry into the causes and effects of antipodes through time, making the novel a commentary on Nietzsche’s (and perhaps even Hegel’s) ideas. Clearly Conrad understands the nature of antipodal relationships very well.

For Conrad, opposition is interconnected with sympathy and the double movement informs all of his antipodal structures. So if Dostoevsky is a devil that must be argued against, Conrad understands the element of identification inherent in the attack. Making the case for Conrad's negative reaction has always been fueled by the explicit comments in his letters. But I
want to call attention to an important moment in Under Western Eyes in which Conrad reveals the element of identification informing his relationship with Dostoevsky: the scene wherein Razumov writes under the statue of Rousseau.16

Aaron Fogel is the only critic I have read who recognizes that Dostoevsky should be connected with Razumov.17 This is especially important because many critics have compulsively identified Razumov as a thinly-disguised self-projection of Conrad18 or the novel as a veiled confession of Conrad’s unconscious. For instance, in “Conrad, Apollo Korzeniowski, and Dostoevsky,” Keith Carabine identified Under Western Eyes as “the most tortured and autobiographical of all his novels” (11). Carabine attempts to reveal Conrad’s sympathies with his “alleged enemy” Dostoevsky by insisting that “Conrad’s determination to distance himself from Dostoevsky... sprang not only from a shocked sense of identification, but also from the similarities between his father and the great Russian nationalist writer” (4, 9). He concludes that “Conrad’s case against Russia in [A Personal Record and Under Western Eyes] is characterized by an extraordinary piece of double thinking” (15). Carabine is right about the “extraordinary piece of double thinking”; however, Conrad is not anxious to conceal his identification with

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16 The scene occurs in the last seven paragraphs of Part 3.
17 In Coercion to Speak, Aaron Fogel includes a compelling chapter comparing the conversations, or the lack thereof, in Conrad’s and Dostoevsky’s art. Fogel argues that Conrad’s “main motive” for reworking Dostoevsky’s art and thought was “to enter a forced dialogue with Dostoevsky” (199). Forced dialogues abound in Under Western Eyes: for instance, Haldin forces a confession upon Razumov, Razumov forces a confession upon Prince K, Madcap Kostia and the other students force confessions upon Razumov, Tekla forces a confession upon Natalia, and Razumov forces a confession upon Natalia. Fogel follows other critics in identifying repudiation as Conrad’s primary motive: “the explicit reform of someone else’s text to criticize it and make it radically different” (201). For Fogel, this is “obviously an aggressive dialogical act” (201). Later in the chapter he discusses a significant anecdote concerning “a forced confrontation between Dostoevsky and Turgenev” (205). Acknowledging that the accuracy of the story is doubtful, Fogel recounts how during a heated exchange Turgenev implied that Dostoevsky “might turn police informer” (205). The accusation would have been “especially ‘galling’ to Dostoevsky the ultra-reactionary because he himself was the incessant object of police surveillance” (205).
18 This argument pervades the critical literature, especially psychoanalytic readings of Under Western Eyes. For instance, see Keith Carabine’s “The Figure Behind the Veil: Conrad and Razumov.” Or consider Penn Szittya’s argument about the double narrative and double authorship of Under Western Eyes in which he connects Conrad with both the frame narrator and Razumov.
Dostoevsky. The problem may be that Conrad reveals the allegedly secret identification in something less than a veiled manner. Assuming that there would be evidence of aggressive denials, the lack of tortured repression is surprising and explains why critics have not understood Conrad’s design.

Conrad raises the question about the potential identification of himself with Dostoevsky when Razumov goes to “that unfrequented tiny crumb of earth named after Jean-Jacques Rousseau” and discovers that “this was the place for making a beginning of that writing which had to be done. The materials he had on him. ‘I shall always come here,’ he said to himself” (205). Razumov “unconsciously” chooses the small island after “the idea of writing evoked the thought of a place to write in” (205, 204). Conrad emphasizes the importance of Rousseau’s presence by describing how “the exiled effigy of the author of the Social Contract sat enthroned above the bowed head of Razumov in the somber immobility of bronze” (206). The effigy of Rousseau is a “silent spectator” watching Razumov write, much as the narrator insists that he is a “silent spectator” of Razumov’s confession to Natalia (242). His presence haunts the book as a whole. But Rousseau also stands behind Razumov, and the shadow he casts includes his influence on the confessional genre in nineteenth-century literature; the Confessions made Rousseau the unquestioned godfather of the confessional genre. Conrad was well aware of this fact. In writing the autobiographical A Personal Record, he reminds readers that

The matter in hand, however, is to keep these reminiscences from turning into confessions, a form of literary activity discredited by Jean Jacques Rousseau on account of the extreme thoroughness he brought to the work of justifying his own existence; for that such was his purpose is palpably, even grossly, visible to an unprejudiced eye. But then, you see, the man was not a writer of fiction. (95)

The real “extraordinary piece of double thinking” is in Conrad implicating himself alongside Dostoevsky by placing Razumov at work writing under the shadow of Rousseau. By explicitly emphasizing Razumov’s occupation as an author, Conrad links himself with Dostoevsky in the
work of writing that they share. As Jeffrey Berman and Donna VanWagenen observe, when Razumov writes “in the presence of the bronze effigy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, we are reminded not only of the illustrious author of the Confessions but of the even more celebrated if notorious author of Crime and Punishment and The Diary of a Writer, who more than any other single artist developed the confessional novel to its perfection” (273). In effect, Conrad reveals that, like Razumov, he and Dostoevsky “always come here” to write under the shadow of Rousseau using the genre of the confession. Conrad’s and Dostoevsky’s works continuously rework Rousseau’s characteristic genre.19

To be accurate about Conrad’s design in Under Western Eyes, it is necessary that we recognize the novel not only as a response to Dostoevsky and Rousseau, but also as Conrad’s

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19 Many critics have commented upon Dostoevsky’s response to Rousseau as well as his extensive reworking of the genre that Rousseau made popular. Not having reviewed all the critical literature on Dostoevsky’s relationship with Rousseau, I am relying upon essays by Robin Feuer Miller, Barbara Howard, Tanya Mairs, and J. M. Coetzee. As Robin Feuer Miller writes, “Dostoevsky’s reaction to Rousseau spanned the length of his writing career” and he “chose to polemicize with and parody the ‘Jean-Jacques’ of the Confessions” (Imitations 78). I agree with her conclusion that in the end Dostoevsky not only succeeded in making passages from Rousseau’s book into his own, but appropriated the confessional genre so that it “belongs as much to Dostoevsky himself as it does to Rousseau” (Morality 11). In Crime and Punishment, Razumikhin tries to convince Raskolnikov to work at translating “some really boring spicy bits from the second part of the Confessions” (154). In The Possessed Stavrogin’s confession contains a passage in which he reveals that “having indulged until the age of sixteen with unusual immoderation in the vice to which Jean-Jacques Rousseau confessed, I ceased doing so at the age of seventeen, just as soon as I so decided” (463). In Notes from Underground the underground man explains that his story is an “experiment” to answer the question is it possible to be absolutely honest even with one’s own self and not to fear the whole truth? Incidentally, I’ll mention that Heine maintains that faithful autobiographies are almost impossible, and that a man is sure to lie about himself. In Heine’s opinion, Rousseau, for example, undoubtedly told untruths about himself in his confession and even lied intentionally, out of vanity. (28) Dostoevsky makes the genre a characteristic element inseparable from his own art and thought: Notes From Underground as a whole is a confession (and Barbara Howard reveals how it is a polemical reply to Rousseau); Raskolnikov makes his famous confessions to Sonya and Svidrigailov makes his to Raskolnikov; Keller confesses to Prince Myshkin; Ferdishchenko leads the game of confessions at Natasya’s birthday; Ippolit reads his written confession to the audience assembled for Prince Myshkin’s birthday; Stavrogin prints his confession and has Tikhon read it; Dimitry Karamazov makes his compelling “Confessions of a passionate heart” to Alyosha; Alyosha records the “life of the Schemahiermonk Father Zosima” in Book Six of The Karamazov Brothers; and of course there is Dostoevsky’s own “confessions” in The Diary of a Writer. There is no doubt that Dostoevsky excelled in reworking the confessional genre.
attempt to rethink and rework his own ideas and structures. *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* are both variations upon confessional works; in the former Marlow confesses and justifies his nineteenth-century ideals about duty, restraint, and work, as well as his morally confounding meeting with Kurtz, and in the latter he does the same in response to Jim’s initial confession and/or justification. Many critics have commented upon how Conrad revisits questions in *Under Western Eyes* that he raises in earlier works. Morton Dauwen Zabel remarks on some of the continuities that include questions of betrayal, guilt, self-condemnation, isolation and solitude, and confession (132-33). In *Conrad the Novelist* Guerard focuses upon the analogies between *Lord Jim* and *Under Western Eyes*:

> Once again we have the story of a not uncommon man whom chance and suffering render extraordinary; who suddenly has to face a boundary-situation and most difficult choice; whose crime both makes and breaks him. The act of betrayal, carrying him out of one solitude and into another, lends him a somber magnitude and new moral awareness, and compels him to destroy himself. (231)

The description applies almost equally well to both Jim and Razumov.20 Besides the importance of confessions, the most important analogy linking the two works is the frame structures of the two novels: in *Lord Jim* a younger man thrusts or forces a confidence or confession upon an older man who later recounts the story; in *Under Western Eyes* an older man uses a younger man’s confession as part of his quasi-academic historical account of Russian character.21 Of course, the primary “text” is different in that Jim’s is a spoken confession and Razumov’s is a written confession, but the importance of the mediating and distancing frame structure remains the

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20 In “Joseph Conrad and Revolution,” Robert Haugh makes claims similar to those quoted here from Guerard. Jackson Heimer develops an analogy between Razumov and the skeptical intellectual Decoud from *Nostromo*. In terms of *Under Western Eyes* as a Dostoevsksian novel, the typical connection is *The Secret Agent*, which is often noted as a possible rewriting of *The Possessed*.

21 In *Lord Jim*, Marlow does not welcome Jim’s confession, although he is in conflict about whether to sympathize with or judge Jim. In the first paragraph of the fifth chapter Marlow laments how others loosen “their tongues at the sight of me for their infernal confidences” (25).
same. So *Under Western Eyes* is a record of Conrad’s response to Dostoevsky as well as a response to or extension of his own art and thought. Conrad makes it impossible to discern whether Razumov’s confessional writing is a reflection upon his own or Dostoevsky’s works.

The importance of confessions in *Under Western Eyes* is obvious to any reader of the novel. The confessions proliferate at a compound rate. Having noted that the novel belongs in a “literary tradition of confession,” Andrew Long counts six confession scenes in the novel: “Haldin confesses to Razumov, who then confesses to Prince K, General T, and finally to Privy Councillor Mikuljin. In Geneva, Razumov confesses to Natalia, Haldin’s sister, and then to the anarchist group, which he has infiltrated and betrayed” (498). He also notes that “the text itself is a mediated confession” because “the narrator... compiles and then presents Razumov’s secret diary” (498). Long’s accounting actually falls short, because his definition is limited. Part of the problem is that Conrad insists upon the word “confidence” as much if not more than “confession” throughout the novel, as he does with Jim and Marlow in *Lord Jim*. So in addition to Long's list I would add at least these others: the narrator’s story is itself a confession of his regard for Natalia; Madcap Kostia confesses to Razumov; Natalia confides in the narrator; and Tekla confides in Natalia, who then retells her story to the narrator. But perhaps most important in terms of Conrad’s response to Dostoevsky, there is the confession of Peter Ivanovitch.

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22 Indeed, thinking of the structure of *Under Western Eyes*, it is easy to see Conrad returning to the Marlow tales and the Carlylean-inspired, *Sartor Resartus*-type frame narratives. It is important to remember that Conrad stopped working on *Chance* to begin working on *Under Western Eyes*. *Chance* is the fourth and last of the Marlow tales. The constant emphasis upon work in Razumov’s character is a deliberate return to the problem that Conrad began thinking about in *Heart of Darkness*. Carlyle’s use of the frame narrative must have been partly a response to Rousseau’s direct confessional style. Carlyle does not allow Herr Teufelsdröckh to make unmediated confessions or confidences to readers. Similarly, Conrad will not allow Jim or Razumov make direct confessions to readers. Their confidences are always mediated, emphasizing Conrad’s distrust of Rousseau’s unmediated style. And it is interesting to note that Father Zosima’s confession or life in Book Six of *The Karamazov Brothers* is mediated by Alyosha’s record of his words. Dostoevsky’s frame narrative is more transparent than in Carlyle or Conrad, but nevertheless, he introduces a slight distance between Zosima’s life and his readers.

23 In this, Conrad constructs a structure analogous to the novel as a whole. Natalia is the narrator of Tekla’s confession just as the English teacher is the narrator of Razumov’s confession. This structure emphasizes the analogy between Tekla’s and Razumov’s lives.
The narrator of *Under Western Eyes* anticipates that "readers of these pages will be able to detect in the story the marks of documentary evidence. And that is perfectly correct. It is based upon a document" (5). He reveals that "the document, of course, is something in the nature of a journal, a diary, yet not that exactly in its actual form" (5). The narrator is referring to Razumov's writings, the confession that provides the primary basis of the narrator's story in the novel. But the narrator's insistence upon the use of one document is misleading, and Conrad makes this evident in Part 2, Chapter 2 of the novel. Meeting Peter Ivanovitch for the first time, the narrator introduces a second document as another source of his information for the story. Like Razumov, Peter Ivanovitch has also written a document in the nature of a confession, an autobiography containing "whole pages of self-analysis," that was once a popular bestseller: "at one time all Europe was aware of the story of his life written by himself and translated into seven or more languages" (87). Although the narrator emphasizes the primacy of Razumov's document, Conrad constructs *Under Western Eyes* as a narrative based upon two documents containing multiple confessions. Conrad doubles Razumov and Peter Ivanovitch in the occupation they share: both men are authors of autobiographies and confessions. But whereas Conrad implicates both himself and Dostoevsky in Razumov, in my best judgement Peter Ivanovitch is a caricature of elements of Dostoevsky's art and life. 24 Of course, critics have extensively debated the sources for Peter Ivanovitch's fictional biography, and attributed different parts of his story to many famous nineteenth-century figures, both literary and political. 25

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24 In caricaturing Dostoevsky is this manner, Conrad is simply following a very strong tradition in the nineteenth-century novel. For instance, Dostoevsky caricatured Turgenev in the character of Semyon Yegorovich Karmazin in *The Possessed*, Dickens caricatured Leigh Hunt in the character of Harold Skimpole in *Bleak House*, and Trollope caricatured Carlyle in *Dr. Anticant* and Dickens in *Mr. Sentiment in The Warden*.

25 In *The Political Novels of Joseph Conrad*, Eloise Knapp Hay has attributed characteristics of Peter Ivanovitch's character to Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, and Leo Tolstoy and provoked much subsequent discussion of these three figures. In the notes to his edition of *Under Western Eyes*, Paul Kirschen includes Turgenev, Ford Madox Ford, and Anatole France's poet Choulette (280). Margaret Rusk White invokes the confessions of a Polish political convict named Rufin Piotrowski. I believe that along with Dostoevsky, Rousseau is actually the other target of Conrad's strange humour. In "Conrad and Rousseau: Concepts of Man and Society" Zdzisław
However, I am concerned only with Conrad’s criticism of Dostoevsky, and I believe that the elements of Peter Ivanovitch’s story that critics have thought are incongruous with Dostoevsky’s biography, works, and thought are not so. Conrad’s design is masterful.

There is substantial evidence for recognizing Peter Ivanovitch as a caricature of some important elements of Dostoevsky’s art and life. The most impressive evidence produced thus far is Jeffery Berman’s and Donna VanWagenen’s discovery that “even as Conrad parodies Dostoevsky’s confessional art through the character of the ‘heroic fugitive,’ he pays tribute to his famous nineteenth-century Russian rival by apparently taking Peter Ivanovitch’s actual speeches from Dostoevsky’s The Diary of a Writer” (270). Berman and VanWagenen demonstrate how Conrad “paraphrases” Dostoevsky’s proclamations concerning the “future of democracy in Russia and on the subject of women” from the May 1876 entry in The Diary of a Writer entitled “Unquestionable Democracy. Women” (270). In the notes for their essay, Berman and VanWagenen also recognize that “the confessional autobiography that Peter Ivanovitch writes after his escape from prison recalls Dostoevsky’s The House of the Dead, which depicts his harrowing personal experiences during his years of imprisonment and suffering in Siberia” (274). They note that the work “became an immediate bestseller and established [Dostoevsky’s] international reputation” (274). Keith Carabine has corroborated this idea in his study of the Razumov manuscript in “From Razumov to Under Western Eyes: The Case of Peter Ivanovitch”

Najder makes the connection between Peter Ivanovitch and Rousseau (84). The significant links between Rousseau and Dostoevsky include not only their confessional writings, but also the hints given in Najder’s suggestive observation that “Dostoevsky belongs to the Rousseau tradition in his moral psychology and his approach to religion” (86).

26 Berman and VanWagenen quote at length the relevant passages of Dostoevsky’s article from a translation compiled by Boris Brasol. The edition of Dostoevsky’s work that I have read is translated by Kenneth Lantz, who chose the title A Writer’s Diary. The relevant article from May 1876 in Volume I of Lantz’s translation is entitled “A Democratic Spirit, for Certain. Women.” See pages 500-2. Peter Ivanovitch’s first speech in my edition of Under Western Eyes occurs on page 86.
(6). And it is important to note that Berman and VanWagenen describe Conrad’s caricature of elements of Dostoevsky’s art and life in Peter Ivanovitch as a “tribute,” which suggests there is a positive quality in the design. Although he is not concerned with Dostoevsky in his discussion of Peter Ivanovitch in *Conrad: the Novelist*, Guerard also recognizes a “creative sympathy with the exceptional buffoon or exceptional object of contempt” in Conrad’s thought (246). He describes “the ironic account of Peter Ivanovitch’s absurd heroic progress across Siberia, engirdled by his chain” as one of “the summits in Conrad’s work” (246). Indeed, for Guerard, “mere scorn” could not have enabled the carefully crafted details that mark Conrad’s representation of Peter Ivanovitch (246). In his “Author’s Note” Conrad states that “Peter Ivanovitch and Madame de S are fair game. They are apes of a sinister jungle and are treated as their grimaces deserve” (lxxxiv). With the partially sympathetic treatment of Peter Ivanovitch in mind, I cannot help but wonder if Conrad remembered that in response to Polonius’s idea that “I will use them according to their desert” Hamlet replied, “Use every man after his desert, and who should scape whipping? Use them after your own honour and dignity” (2.2.507-11). Conrad does not treat Dostoevsky with contempt; he is treated with the respect of a rival artist and thinker.  

One great stumbling block to identifying Peter Ivanovitch as a caricature of aspects of Dostoevsky’s thought has been his position as a “revolutionary feminist” (95). The problem is that Conrad’s idea of Dostoevsky as a “revolutionary feminist” is yet another of his jokes. Part of the difficulty, as evidenced in Gordon Spence’s article “The Feminism of Peter Ivanovitch,” is that critics demand a level of exactness or precise correspondence in Conrad’s caricature that he does not provide. Of course in creating a caricature Conrad is writing art and not writing a historical biography. Hence, in discussing Berman’s and VanWagenen’s argument concerning Conrad’s allusions to Dostoevsky’s *The Diary of A Writer*, Spence argues that the work

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27 Carabine carefully notes how Conrad reduced the explicitness and the number of allusions to both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy in revising the manuscript for *Under Western Eyes*. See especially page 8.

28 This is analogous to Nietzsche’s treatment of his great opponent, Christ, in *The Anti-Christ*. 
“contained several passages in praise of Russian women, but in none of them did Dostoevsky seek to establish a cult” (117). Paul Kirschner also misses Conrad’s joke in his introduction to Under Western Eyes in questioning Conrad’s inclusion of feminism in the novel, “as if the Revolution were only about that” (xxii). I disagree with Kirschner that Conrad is primarily concerned with manifesting the “strong compositional roles of women” and “various kinds of womanly love” (xxii). If Conrad really is motivated by either of Kirschner’s suggestions, it is not in the way that the critic thinks. Although Conrad is making a serious criticism of Dostoevsky, the element of comedy must be taken into account. The whole chapter on Peter Ivanovitch is written in a partly comic yet partly serious register. Another difficulty is in recognizing that Conrad is fusing or synthesizing elements from Dostoevsky’s biography with elements from his artistic productions. Critics have been quick to expose Conrad through his works because of his statement that “a writer of imaginative prose (even more than any other sort of artist) stands confessed in his works” (PR 95). But as this passage follows upon his remarks on Rousseau’s use of the confession, and as Conrad associates Dostoevsky with the confessional genre, it stands to reason that Conrad is not only thinking of himself or Rousseau, but also has Dostoevsky in mind. The passage illuminates the narrator’s description of Peter Ivanovitch’s autobiography: “There are in his book whole pages of self-analysis whence emerges like a white figure from a dark confused sea the conviction of woman’s spiritual superiority – his new faith confessed since in several volumes” (88). Dostoevsky’s “new faith” in women may appear most prominently in The Diary of a Writer, but Conrad is including Dostoevsky’s other works, the “several volumes” of his novels.

Conrad’s use of the word “feminist” is comic and ironic. Conrad reveals that Dostoevsky’s thought is marked by a strange kind of feminism in the sense that some of his heroines, in the case of Crime and Punishment specifically Sonya Marmeladov, are exceedingly important and vital characters in his novels. The reference is ironic in that Conrad reveals how Dostoyevsky’s heroines are idealizations of women, repeatedly inscribed with Dostoyevsky’s
own thoughts about suffering and self-sacrifice. Dostoevsky’s ideal is that the highest form of
individualism requires individuals to accept suffering and self-sacrifice in order to enact God’s
will. In Crime and Punishment, Dostoyevsky’s ideal is represented in the figure of Sonya,
especially in her reading of the story of the resurrection of Lazarus from the Gospel according to
St. John. Dostoyevsky’s ideal is captured in the biblical passage in which Jesus exclaims “I am
the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live”
(386). Dostoyevsky is at one with Sonya in her “confessing her creed for all to hear” (386). Sonya
represents the good in her self-sacrifice for her family, and later in her self-sacrifice in
acting as Raskolnikov’s confessor by instructing him to “accept suffering and redeem yourself by
it” (489). In developing an argument that Svidrigailov and Sonya reflect opposing tendencies in
Raskolnikov’s character, David McDuff quotes a passage from Nicholas Berdyaev in which
Dostoevsky is described as “the defender of freedom” who “exhorts man to take suffering upon
himself as an inevitable consequence of freedom” (25). In having “accepted the necessity and
inevitability of suffering,” Sonya “exists in true freedom” (25). And it is important to note that
Sonya is a development of Liza from Notes from Underground, who embraces the underground
man after recognizing his suffering (86-7). Liza represents the “genuine act of love – a love
springing from that total forgetfulness of self” which Frank recognizes in his discussion of Notes
From Underground as Dostoevsky’s “highest value” (244):

Liza’s complete disregard of her own humiliation, her whole-souled
identification with [the underground man’s] torments – in short, her capacity for
selfless love – is the only way to break the sorcerer’s spell of egocentrism. When
she rushes into his arms, thinking not of herself but of him, she illustrates that

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29 John 11: 25.
30 Ernest J. Simmons also concludes that “Dostoevsky places in Sonya’s mouth his own doctrine
of earning one’s happiness by suffering” (511). I agree with Simmons that Dostoevsky represents
Sonya as a “kind of living universal symbol of crushed and suffering humanity that bears within
itself the undying seed of joyous resurrection” (513).
31 David McDuff observes that Notes from Underground serves as a “philosophical prologue” to
Crime and Punishment (15).
“something else” which his egoism will never allow him to attain – the ideal of the voluntary self-sacrifice. (248)

It is clear throughout Dostoyevsky’s works that the greatest achievement, the greatest possible form of self-fulfillment for any individual is in the acceptance of suffering that leads to the attainment of a self-sacrifice in the service of God and all humanity. As Dostoevsky explains in a letter included in the Norton critical edition of Notes from Underground, he is not repudiating the notion of individuality, but

On the contrary, on the contrary, I say, not only is it unnecessary to be without individuality, but it is even essential to achieve a greater degree of individuality than actually exists now in the West. Understand me: voluntary, completely self-conscious, and totally un-constrained sacrifice of one’s self for the good of everyone is, in my opinion, a sign of the highest development of individuality, of its greatest power, its greatest self-mastery, the greatest freedom of its own will. (101)

Dostoevsky’s faith is that self-sacrifice and the acceptance of the suffering that it potentially entails enables the individual to repudiate egoism and relinquish the will to power and strength in order for God’s will to be fulfilled. Dostoevsky repeatedly confessed his faith, and Conrad recognized that in his works.

With these ideas in mind, it is possible to recognize that Conrad’s caricature of Dostoevsky’s thought in Peter Ivanovitch fuses elements of Dostoevsky’s ideals and convictions with elements of his novels. Consider the passage in which the narrator describes Peter Ivanovitch’s escape from Siberia:

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32 See the postscript to Chapter 4 of the July and August issue of A Writer’s Diary. Dostoevsky elevates his ideal to the level of the Russian people as well as the Slavic people as a whole. The “Slavic ideal in its highest sense” is “the notion of sacrifice, the need to sacrifice even oneself for one’s brother” (598). See pages 598-601.
All this is precise, yet symbolic; and the file had its pathetic history. It was given to him unexpectedly one evening, by a quiet, pale-faced girl. The poor creature had come out to the mines to join one of his fellow convicts, a delicate young man, a mechanic and a social democrat, with broad cheek-bones and large, staring eyes. She had worked her way across half Russia and nearly the whole of Siberia to be near him, and as it seems, with the hope of helping him to escape.

(87)
The “symbolic” character of the events points towards Dostoevsky’s self-revelation in his characterizations of women. The young convict in prison with Peter Ivanovitch could be Raskolnikov or Dimitry Karamazov, and the young woman might be either Sonya or Grushenka (more likely it is an allusion to The Brothers Karamazov, since Grushenka and Ivan planned Dimitry’s escape). Throughout the description of the prison escape, Conrad includes several important encounters with women during Ivanovitch’s journey back to civilization and humanity. After the Sonya/Grushenka figure provides Ivanovitch with a file to escape, he succeeds in removing only one of the chains attached to his legs. Having lost the file, Ivanovitch feels profoundly ashamed of his weakness. She had selected him for the gift of liberty and he must show himself worthy of the favor conferred by her feminine, indomitable soul. It appeared to be a sacred trust. To fail would have been a sort of treason against the sacredness of self-sacrifice and womanly love. (88)

In this passage Conrad begins to make what becomes an extremely complex criticism of Dostoyevsky’s thought concerning women. Conrad reveals that Dostoyevsky presents his idealized heroines as having the possession of an “indomitable soul” in his novels. The suggestion is that Dostoyevsky has a “sacred trust” with his female characters to include some element of this “feminine, indomitable soul” in all the central female characters of his novels. Most importantly here, for Liza in Notes from Underground and Sonya in Crime and Punishment. In Dostoyevsky’s thought the failure to include something of the “feminine, indomitable soul” in
these women would be an act of “treason against the sacredness of self-sacrifice and womanly love.” Much more than any of his male characters, Liza and Sonya display Dostoyevsky’s ideal of the individual accepting suffering and self-sacrifice. Womanly love and self-sacrifice seem to be inseparable in Dostoyevsky’s thought. Conrad reveals that the interconnection of womanly love and self-sacrifice is central to Dostoyevsky’s art; hence the comment concerning “the conviction of woman’s spiritual superiority – his new faith confessed since in several volumes” (88). Conrad is calling attention to Dostoyevsky’s idealization of Sonya in Crime and Punishment or Liza in Notes From Underground as a central tenet of his faith, which Dostoyevsky repeatedly “confessed since in several volumes,” referring to the major works that follow.

Peter Ivanovitch’s last encounter with a woman secures his return to civilization and humanity. The core of the passage begins with an allusion to Crime and Punishment; specifically, the scene of Raskolnikov’s murders. Conrad writes that Peter Ivanovitch

approached [the woman] silently, his hatchet stuck in his iron belt, a thick cudgel in his hand…. A faint clink of his fetters made the woman turn her head. Too terrified even to scream, she was yet too stout-hearted to faint…. Expecting nothing less than to be murdered on the spot she covered her eyes to avoid the sight of the descending axe. (89)

In this passage, Conrad is rewriting Raskolnikov’s unplanned murder of Lizaveta. Dostoevsky writes that Raskolnikov

rushed at her with the axe; her lips grew contorted in the painful manner common to very young children when they begin to be afraid of something, stare fixedly at the thing that is frightening them and prepare to cry out loud. Moreover, this unhappy Lizaveta was so simple, downtrodden and utterly intimidated that she did not even raise her hands to protect herself, even though this would have been a most natural, lifesaving gesture for her to make at that moment, as the axe was
raised right above her face. She merely raised her unengaged left arm the tiniest distance, a long way from her face, and slowly extended it towards the axe, as though in an attempt to ward it off. (117)

Yet unlike the passage from Crime and Punishment, wherein Lizaveta is killed by Raskolnikov, the woman that Ivanovitch meets finds “the courage to look again,” and sees Peter Ivanovitch “sitting on the bank six feet away from her” (89). Peter Ivanovitch has no intention of killing the woman; he desperately wants her help and needs the woman to save him. In showing Peter Ivanovitch’s desire for assistance to return to humanity, the passage also recalls the moment of Raskolnikov’s unspoken confession:

he looked at her, and suddenly in her face he saw the face of Lizaveta. He had a vivid memory of the expression on Lizaveta’s features as he had approached her with the axe and she had backed away from him towards the wall with her hand held out in front of her and a look of utterly childish terror in her eyes.... Almost the same thing took place now with Sonya: it was with the kind of helplessness and fear that she looked at him for a time and then suddenly, holding out her left hand, rested her fingers slightly, the merest fraction, on his chest and began to get up from the bed, backing further and further away from him, as her gaze fastened on him ever more motionlessly. Her horror suddenly found its way to him, too; the same fear was displayed in his face, and he began to look at her the same way, almost with the same childish smile. (478-479)

It is in this moment that Sonya finally realizes the nature of what Raskolnikov is hesitant to confess. Dostoyevsky interconnects the first passage of the murder with the second to reveal the intimate relation between Sonya and Lizaveta, but also suggests the terrible potential in Raskolnikov’s confession to shake Sonya in her very being and to kill her faith in him. This possibility is not realized. Sonya’s faith in Raskolnikov is redoubled in her exclamation “what have you gone and done to yourself” (479), which also reveals her infinite capacity for
forgiveness. Rather than seeing a murderer, Sonya sees Raskolnikov as the victim of his own misguided actions.

In one variation of the confession scene from *Crime and Punishment*, Conrad compresses Dostoevsky’s thought into a short passage in which Peter Ivanovitch plays a role akin to Raskolnikov and the woman plays a role akin to Sonya:

> It seemed as though he had lost the faculty of speech. He had become a dumb and despairing brute, till the woman’s sudden, unexpected cry of profound pity, the insight of her feminine compassion discovering the complex misery of the man under the terrifying aspect of the monster, restored him in the ranks of humanity. This point of view is presented in his book with a very effective eloquence. She ended, he says, by shedding tears over him, sacred, redeeming tears, while he also wept with joy in the manner of a converted sinner. (89)

The passage contains all of the important elements of the famous confession scene: the loss of Raskolnikov’s power of speech until Sonya guesses his guilt; the “cry of profound pity” and the “insight of her feminine compassion” that allows Sonya to discover “the complex misery of the man”; the partial restoration of Raskolnikov to the “ranks of humanity” because he is able to communicate and share his isolation with another human being; and Sonya’s shedding of “redeeming tears” and Raskolnikov’s first tears that lead him towards becoming a “converted sinner.” Yet it is important to recall that Peter Ivanovitch is a caricature of Dostoyevsky’s thought in this passage. In having Peter Ivanovitch/Dostoyevsky playing the role of Raskolnikov, Conrad is suggesting that the confession scene in *Crime and Punishment* is very personal, and possibly even a kind of fantasy for Dostoyevsky himself; hence Conrad’s criticism that Dostoyevsky’s books contain “whole pages of self-analysis” and Dostoyevsky’s “new faith” is confessed in “several volumes.” Dostoyevsky repeats this confessional scene with different variations throughout his later works, but the structure is essentially the same. The guilt-stricken man confesses to the woman that he loves, and she sacrifices herself by helping him realize his
own suffering and rewarding his confession with love. Conrad asks us to consider whether Dostoyevsky’s continuous reworking of the same idea exposes the great Russian writer’s own deeply-rooted identification with the relationships between the guilty man and the redeeming woman. Conrad asks us to consider whether Dostoyevsky is working through his own moral problems in this kind of relationship.

The problem is written into Conrad’s representation of the relationship between Peter Ivanovitch and Tekla. Through the relationship of the great author and the self-sacrificial woman, Conrad emphasizes how Peter Ivanovitch’s process of writing is a violation of Tekla’s individuality and being, which is a comment upon Dostoevsky’s writing of his female characters.33 Like Sonya or Liza, Tekla is one of the insulted and the injured who has experienced “the horrors from which innocent people are made to suffer in the world” (107). But the most important lesson that Tekla has learned in her unfortunate life concerns Peter Ivanovitch: “I know Peter Ivanovitch sufficiently well. He is a great man. Great men are horrible” (165). To Tekla, the great revolutionary “is an awful despot” (165). The cause of her horror stems from her intimate knowledge of the process of Peter Ivanovitch’s writing. Tekla knows “the secret of composition” (107). But while Tekla is referring to how she witnessed the “great author” “groping for words,” Conrad is more interested in how “Peter Ivanovitch could treat any woman so rudely” (106). The primary problem is that Peter Ivanovitch uses Tekla as “the blind instrument of higher ends” (107). Peter Ivanovitch dictates his thoughts to Tekla, writing his self over hers (106, 110). Conrad reveals how Peter Ivanovitch writes through Tekla, or, in other words, makes her a medium for his thought. The question Conrad raises is the degree to which, like Peter Ivanovitch with Tekla, Dostoevsky employs Sonya as a “blind instrument” of his own higher ends, which are the propagation of his self-sacrificial ideal. In terms of the art of the novel, Conrad is questioning

33 Prior to their marriage, Dostoevsky’s second wife recorded Dostoevsky’s dictation of his novels. This biographical detail may be an important element in Conrad’s representation of the relationship between Peter Ivanovitch and Tekla, but I have no evidence about whether Conrad had definitive knowledge of the fact or not.
whether Dostoevsky violates Sonya’s character by inscribing her with his own ideals. Conrad emphasizes that the total of Tekla’s suffering before her employment with Peter Ivanovitch “was infinitely less killing than the task of sitting for hours at a table in a cold study to take the books of Peter Ivanovitch from dictation” (110). The previous suffering was “less killing” because Tekla was able “to think by myself” despite it being “not very easy, such thinking” (107). But once she begins writing and thinking according to Peter Ivanovitch’s dictation, any of her own “illusions” are “destroyed” because “it seemed to freeze the very beliefs in me” (107). Her individuality is forcefully displaced by the thoughts of another mind. Being forced to think the thoughts of another is destructive, and Conrad’s criticism is that Dostoevsky violates, if not destroys, the individuality of his female characters in forcing them to become mouthpieces of his own ideals.

And yet again, Conrad compounds his criticism of Dostoevsky’s idealization of women by doubling Peter Ivanovitch’s “special devotion” to the “cult of the woman” in the narrator, Ziemianitch, and in Razumov (90). Razumov marks Ziemianitch as “a feminist of a different stamp from Peter Ivanovitch,” but this is true of the narrator and himself as well (200). Conrad links Peter Ivanovitch, the narrator, and Razumov through their admiration of and/or desire for Natalia. Like Peter Ivanovitch with Tekla, Razumov and the narrator violate Natalia’s individuality by superimposing their own thoughts and ideals upon her. Rather than recognizing what she is, they inscribe upon her being what they want her to be. In doing so, they fail to acknowledge her otherness. In the next few pages I will explore some aspects of the doubling among these characters while revealing the troubling quality of their knowing concerning Natalia.34

The case for seeing a connection between the narrator and Peter Ivanovitch is strongest in Conrad’s typescript version of the novel. In “Conrad’s ‘Unkindest Cut’: The Cancelled Scenes in

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34 These arguments anticipate my discussion of the relationship between Freud and Dora in the last chapter.
Under Western Eyes.” David Leon Hidgeon and Robert F. Sheard transcribe a scene describing a meeting that occurs between the narrator and Peter Ivanovitch in a café (173-8). The scene emphasizes the antipodal nature of the relationship between the two men, as the narrator “felt with displeasure that a mysterious mental contact was being established between our two mental personalities” (174). In the typescript, the mutual dislike that the two men share for one another is obvious. But Conrad includes sufficient evidence in the published version of Under Western Eyes to reveal the narrator’s connection with Peter Ivanovitch. Like Peter Ivanovitch, the narrator engages in his own idealization of women; unlike Peter Ivanovitch, with his indiscriminate elevation of all women, the narrator is engaged in the idealization of only Natalia. He absolutely gives himself away in defining himself negatively against Peter Ivanovitch: “I am not a feminist, like that illustrious author, Peter Ivanovitch, who, to say the truth, is not a little suspect to me” (132). The persistent negative grammar should cause some doubts about the narrator. Conrad provides more than enough evidence to suggest an appositional relation. The two men are guides or teachers for Natalia. The narrator takes Natalia “through a course of reading the best English authors” (74). After Peter Ivanovitch’s appearance, Natalia contemplates whether to accept him as a “guide” because there is “no harm in having one’s thoughts directed” (96). Conrad reveals that the narrator resents the idea that Peter Ivanovitch has appeared to the Haldin women as a substitute “to say the right thing, to strike the true, perhaps a comforting note. But I did not like to see him sitting there. I trust that an unbecoming jealousy of my privileged position had nothing to do with it. I made no claim to a special standing for my silent friendship” (91). The thought of being replaced antagonizes the narrator. Although the narrator admits that “it is not becoming for an obscure teacher of languages to criticize a ‘heroic fugitive’ of worldwide celebrity,” his recounting of Peter Ivanovitch’s autobiography is full of sarcasm and irony; for instance, he defines the book by its “mystic treatment and symbolic interpretation” (90). The narrator gives himself away. His “claim to a special standing” is in his continuous self-denial or self-sacrifice towards Natalia; he refuses to indulge in his passion for Natalia.
Conrad wants readers to doubt the narrator as well so that we recognize his idealization of a woman. His admiration for Natalia is persistent. Upon first meeting Natalia the narrator confesses that “I became aware, notwithstanding my years, how attractive physically her personality could be to a man capable of appreciating in a woman something else than the mere grace of femininity” (74). Where Peter Ivanovitch admires the “sacredness of self-sacrifice and womanly love,” the narrator chooses Natalia’s “attractive… personality,” but in both cases the woman is something more or other than herself (88, 74). For the narrator, Natalia becomes the idealized version of the wife or daughter that he never had, reminding us somewhat of George Eliot’s depiction in Middlemarch of Casaubon’s and Dorothea’s relationship, although Conrad reverses the relation in a particular way. Rather than the young woman idealizing the older scholar, in Conrad’s novel the old scholar idealizes the young woman. Although the narrator qualifies his passion for Natalia by representing them as “excellent friends,” he continually confesses more than he knows in his carefully controlled admissions: “Without fear of provoking a smile, I shall confess that I became very much attracted to that young girl” (75). Adam Gillon is right to remark that Natalia is “courted by both Razumov and Peter Ivanovitch,” but he should also include the platonic courting that the narrator engages in as well (“Strange” 122). To the narrator, Natalia is an “exceptional creature,” with “indefinable charm,” whose hand possessed a “seductive frankness, a sort of exquisite virility” (82, 84, 85). The narrator’s descriptions of Natalia are a prolonged meditation upon “the harmonious charm of her whole person, its strength, its grace, its tranquil frankness” (119). I might produce many other examples, but it is clear that “she compelled” the narrator’s “wonder and admiration” (127).

The narrator’s recounting of Razumov’s and Peter Ivanovitch’s lives and confessions is simultaneously an opportunity for him to indulge in his own memory of and passion for Natalia. His passion for Natalia is simultaneously concealed and revealed by attributing ideas to Razumov that are also self-revelations, such as in the moments before Razumov’s confession when the narrator comments “It was as though he were coming to himself in the awakened consciousness
of that marvelous harmony of feature, of lines, of glances, of voice, which made of the girl before him a being so rare, outside, and, as it were, above the common notion of beauty” (241). It is difficult to know with any certainty whether these are the narrator’s or Razumov’s thoughts. In this Conrad creates an analogy with Dostoevsky because the narrator projects his own ideas onto others, as Dostoevsky does in writing Sonya. So through recounting Peter Ivanovitch’s and Razumov’s interest in Natalia, the narrator reveals his own, whether he intended to or not.

The narrator's antipathy towards Peter Ivanovitch informs his role in the story and is another of his motivations for his own confession, concealed and revealed by the recounting of Razumov’s and Peter Ivanovitch’s lives. If the narrator cannot have Natalia, he will be sure that Peter Ivanovitch will not have her either. This complicates his claim only to be “thinking of [Natalia’s] preservation” and “personal safety” in asking her to return to Russia (96). He works to save her from being a “victim” of the revolution, but really it is Peter Ivanovitch that he wishes to save her from.  

But the narrator’s effort to “save” Natalia leads him to misread Razumov, and his knowledge is only corrected by his witnessing Razumov’s confrontation with Natalia and later reading his written confession. In effect, the narrator’s story is about assigning guilt as he attempts to show that he cannot be blamed for his misreading of Razumov and nearly leading Natalia into a disastrous marriage with him.  

In this, the narrator is a strange combination of Lockwood and Nelly Dean from Wuthering Heights: Lockwood reveals an intermittent passion for the young Cathy through his telling of the tale and inadvertently and unknowingly participates

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35 In “From Razumov to Under Western Eyes: The Case of Peter Ivanovitch,” Keith Carabine discusses Peter Ivanovitch’s and the narrator’s “rival concerns” over Natalia (9).
36 In “Under Western Eyes and the Missing Center,” Eloise Knapp Hay asks why the narrator “doesn’t throw the diary away” (138). My answer is that the narrator needs the corroborating evidence contained in Razumov’s diary to strengthen his own argument that he is not to blame for Natalia’s victimization. He places the blame on Razumov. Knapp Hay describes the narrator and Razumov as “opposites,” “supplements,” or “alter egos” (134). But she does not register how the narrator uses Razumov’s confession as a cover to his own confession.
in Nelly Dean’s plot to get the young Cathy married. The narrator’s fantasizing about arranging a marriage causes him initially to misread the confession scene which he witnesses between Razumov and Natalia as a straightforward love scene. Just as Razumov and Natalia come together before the confession the narrator claims that

The period of reserve was over; he was coming forward in his own way. I could not mistake the significance of this late visit, for in what he had to say there was nothing urgent. The true cause dawned upon me: he had discovered that he needed her—and she was moved by this same feeling. It was the second time that I saw them together, and I knew that the next time they met I would not be there, either remembered or forgotten. (244)

The narrator is right and wrong in his assumptions. He is right in that Razumov and Natalia need each other, but he is wrong in thinking that what will follow will be a straightforward love scene. And Conrad makes a joke about the narrator’s role in the novel which the narrator cannot understand. The narrator believes he is describing Razumov’s meetings with Mikulin:

To the morality of a Western reader an account of these meetings would wear perhaps the sinister character of old legendary tales where the Enemy of Mankind is represented holding subtly mendacious dialogues with some tempted soul. It is not my part to protest. Let me but remark that the Evil One, with his single passion of satanic pride for the only motive, is yet, on a larger, modern view, allowed to be not quite so black as he used to be painted. (215)

The allusion to the devil conversing with “some tempted soul,” whatever else Conrad has in mind, recalls Ivan’s strange conversation with the devil in Book 11, Chapter 9 of The Karamazov Brothers. Although the narrator makes a pitiful specimen of “the Evil One” (perhaps one

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37 See Brian Crick’s arguments concerning Lockwood’s and Nelly Dean’s roles as participant/narrators in “On Valuing Wuthering Heights” in Love Confounded: Revaluing the Great Tradition (113-48).
38 Guerard also makes this observation (Novelist 239).
analogous to the shabby devils Marlow meets in *Heart of Darkness*, Razumov doesn’t fail to identify him as a devil who “was egging me on to the unpardonable sin of stealing a soul. Could he have been the devil himself in the shape of an old Englishman?” (252). Despite the narrator’s efforts to minimize the blame he must bear for the collision between Razumov and Natalia, Conrad reveals that the old man was “betrayed by a short-sighted wisdom” (215). In producing Razumov’s diary to substantiate his own claims of Razumov’s guilt, the narrator makes Razumov into something of a scapegoat. Of course, fortunately for the narrator, Razumov has already revealed himself more than willing to bear the sacrifice. I will return to this later.

Razumov’s special brand of feminism is realized in his idealization of Natalia. This is revealed in the second confession to Natalia which he records in his diary following the confrontation at her home. Razumov’s idealization of Natalia rivals the narrator’s in representing her as “truth itself” with her “trustful eyes,” and “pure forehead,” that “bore a light which fell on me, searched my heart, and saved me from ignominy, from ultimate undoing” (253). He claims she has “freed me from the blindness of anger and hate – the truth shining in you drew the truth out of me” (253). Early in the novel, Razumov laments that he “had no heart to which he could open himself” despite his desire “to be understood” (29). In this, Razumov is analogous to Raskolnikov, who is deeply troubled by the thought that “every man must have at least somewhere he can go” (79). Later Razumov identifies Natalia as the one person who will understand and he can trust with his confidence. Only to her will he make “the true confession” (252). And Razumov claims that in provoking him to confess, not only has Natalia “saved me” but she “saved” herself too (253). So his idealization of Natalia is interconnected with his motivations for confession.

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39 In his argument concerning the narrator in *Conrad: Almayer’s Folly to Under Western Eyes*, Daniel Schwartz does not consider Conrad’s criticism. He does not acknowledge how the narrator’s participation severely qualifies his moral judgement. So I disagree with Schwartz’s conclusion that the narrator is the one character in the novel that is “capable of a subtle moral response” (210). Nor does the narrator possess an “incisive ability to penetrate beneath vague complexities” making him the “one character who understands” (199). The narrator is no more an “attractive alternative” than the other characters (195).
In writing the confession scene between Razumov and Natalia, Conrad revisits the confession scene between Raskolnikov and Sonya for a second time, having provided a reading lesson earlier in Peter Ivanovitch’s experiences with the woman who saves him. But the later confession scene is more complicated because, unlike Dostoevsky, Conrad breaks the confession into three acts: there is the initial confrontation with Natalia when the narrator is present, and then the written confession, followed by the spoken confession to the revolutionaries. In the first act Conrad recycles some important moments from Dostoevsky’s novel. For instance, like Raskolnikov, Razumov cannot bring himself to utter a confession in the presence of the woman. After asking Sonya several times to “guess,” Raskolnikov evades the responsibility of uttering his confession because she comes to the realization herself (478). Sonya divines what Raskolnikov has done. Although he reveals some broken details surrounding his betrayal of Haldin, Razumov does not utter a confession in Natalia’s presence. Instead, he “pressed a denunciatory finger to his breast with force, and became perfectly still” (249). But the precise meaning of Razumov’s physical sign of self-accusation remains indefinite, especially because the moment before he makes the movement he declares that “the terrors of remorse, revenge, confession, anger, hate, fear, are like nothing to the atrocious temptation which you put in my way” (248). Razumov is not primarily preoccupied with his betrayal of Haldin at this moment; he is more concerned with the “temptation” concerning his relationship with Natalia. This is important because in Dostoevsky’s novel, Raskolnikov’s confession is about the murder he has committed. He both confesses to the act and attempts to justify or explain the motivations of that action; however, that is not Razumov’s preoccupation. The initial transgression of betrayal is not the central subject weighing upon Razumov’s mind.

The other considerable problem that Conrad creates concerns the nature of Razumov’s and Natalia’s relationship. In Crime and Punishment, the confession scene is also partly a love scene. In the moments before he confesses, Raskolnikov recognizes the “love” in Sonya’s “gaze,” which makes him realize that the time to confess has arrived (476). Although
Raskolnikov's confession to Sonya may not be precisely the cause of the love that later grows between them, his confession does enable their relationship to transform into something different than it was because Sonya is then able to make her self-sacrifice for him. In Under Western Eyes, the narrator initially thinks that the scene he is witnessing is a love scene between Razumov and Natalia; however, Conrad actually reverses Dostoevsky's idea. Instead of revealing or igniting a latent love, the confession in Conrad's scene causes the death of the strange love between them. To emphasize the point in a different way, Razumov's confession destroys Natalia's idealization of him. Previously, she unquestioningly accepts Haldin's idea of Razumov as an "unstained, lofty, and solitary existence" and imagines that Razumov is an "extraordinary man" (97, 144). Her love for Razumov is at least partially a kind of displaced love for her dead brother: Razumov is a substitute for her brother, and she assumes that he shares all of the best qualities she attributes to her brother.\footnote{40} However, the most important change that Conrad makes is in the focus of Natalia's thoughts, and he marks the significant reversal by placing a paraphrase of one of Sonya's most memorable lines into Natalia's speech. After Raskolnikov confesses, Sonya tells him that "there's no one, no one in the whole world more unhappy than you are now" (480). For Sonya, every other concern falls away from her mind because of her intense focus upon Raskolnikov. After Razumov leaves, Natalia says "it is impossible to be more unhappy" and then completes the thought by saying "it is impossible... I feel my heart becoming like ice" (250). Natalia's thoughts are concentrated upon herself. She is not concerned with Razumov in the way Sonya is concerned with Raskolnikov. However, to be fair to Natalia, the quality of Razumov's concern for her is questionable.

When reading the second act of Razumov's confession, that is the written confession, the most important quality in Razumov's style is his hyperbolic idealization of Natalia. It is

\footnote{40} The problem I am raising here in suggesting that Natalia's love for Razumov is interconnected with her love for her brother deserves a great deal of explication, but I will leave my argument for another time. In the meantime, see Brian Crick's arguments concerning the confounding of conjugal and fraternal love in Love Confounded: Revaluing the Great Tradition, especially his insight into Conrad's critique of this subject.
important to recognize that Razumov's valuation cannot be equated with Conrad's valuation of Natalia. Conrad exposes the dangers in Natalia's thought through her idealization of "love" which makes it nothing less than a despotic tyrant (264). Natalia is "looking forward to the day when all discord shall be silenced," "all is still," and all men are "united" "because so many ideas have perished for the triumph of one" (264). Natalia's vision is the death of thought and culture, if not also the death of the many individuals whose "hearts shall be extinguished in love" (264). Having doubts about Natalia's idealization of love, Conrad also has doubts about Razumov's idealization of Natalia. At least partly because of Haldin's description of Natalia's "trustful eyes," Razumov imagines Natalia as a kind of goddess (18, 252). When thinking of Natalia, Razumov places himself in the position of a "believer who had been tempted to an atrocious sacrilege" against a higher being or god, which is to say like a man worshipping an idol (253). He imagines her as "truth itself" (253). But Natalia is not a goddess, so the question Conrad raises is then why does Razumov imagine her in such a way? The cause of the idealization is at issue, because the idealization informs or enables Razumov's actions towards Natalia here. Conrad reveals that Razumov's idealization is interconnected with his desire to avenge the wrongs he has suffered and seriously complicates the love that Razumov might feel for Natalia.

Razumov's written confession is not like Raskolnikov's because Razumov is not confessing to his responsibility for betraying Haldin. While Dostoevsky is preoccupied with the question of how Raskolnikov will reveal his crime, explain his motivations, and perhaps achieve some real self-knowledge about his terrible transgression, Conrad's thought is focused elsewhere. Razumov seems to be unconcerned with his betrayal of Haldin; instead, his confession to Natalia is about his plan to "steal" her heart and soul (252). The problem is that, despite Razumov's declaration that he "had ended by loving" Natalia, his confession cannot be read simply as an act of love (253). Despite whatever measure of love that he may feel towards Natalia, Razumov has not exhausted the "inexhaustible fund of anger and hate" that he has for Natalia and Haldin (251). His confession of love reads also as an act of revenge, but Razumov cannot recognize it. Conrad
writes Razumov’s style so that the language is strongly marked by verbs denoting a compelled action. He repeats again and again that “I felt that I must tell you” or “I must first confess” (253). Yet he claims that Natalia is the cause of the confession, that her “light” or “truth” forced him to confess (253). Or in other words, she is the cause. But she is the cause only because his idealization of and love for her act as a cover story which obscures the revenge upon her. Razumov claims that she “saved” him which in turn “saved” her from his plan (253). Razumov believes that this is so, but for Conrad it is a complicated question. Instead of Dostoevsky’s idea that the confession leads to salvation, Conrad reveals that the confession, at least potentially, leads to damnation.

There are at least two major problems with Razumov’s confession. In Razumov’s mind, Natalia is represented as a substitution for the essay prize that Razumov knows that he will never win. For Razumov, Natalia is “the prize” that compensates for the wrong that Haldin committed in stealing “years of good work” (253, 252). The other problem is that Razumov doubles Haldin in making his confession to Natalia. Haldin forces an unwelcome and morally destructive revelation upon Razumov at the beginning of the novel; Razumov does nothing less than force an unwelcome and morally destructive revelation upon Natalia at the end. Razumov writes that “you must believe what I say now, you can’t refuse to believe this,” but we should hear Conrad raising the problem of the degree to which Razumov’s claims are believable or not (254). If Natalia “drew the truth out of” Razumov, then a large part of that truth is still Razumov’s resentment towards Haldin and the loss of all the potential work that he might have accomplished (253). Razumov’s claims to be acting solely out of love are too simple, and his repudiation of hatred and revenge is questionable at best. Razumov might think that “you could not suspect me,” but Conrad is asking readers to do otherwise (253). Razumov has been a “suspect” throughout the novel and does not cease to be a suspicious character (48). His confession is not only about his betrayal of Haldin or his love for Natalia, but is also a confession and justification of his desire for revenge against Natalia which simultaneously becomes an act of revenge because
it destroys her faith or idealization of him. Which would have been the worse crime? Would Razumov really have avenged himself by marrying Natalia, allowing her to retain her faith in him and giving her the compensation for the missing love that she wants? Or does Razumov avenge himself by destroying Natalia’s illusions and eliminating the possibility for love and marriage? Conrad makes it exceptionally difficult to know whether Razumov’s plan or his confession about the plan constitute the worst form of revenge.

So Conrad’s criticism of Dostoevsky’s confession scene has several implications. In idealizing Sonya, Dostoevsky is able to create a perfect receptacle or instrument for Raskolnikov’s confession to ensure his salvation thereafter. Dostoevsky makes Sonya the perfect embodiment of self-sacrifice so she cannot respond but by embracing Raskolnikov and trying to save him. In short, Dostoevsky constructs the best conditions possible. In Under Western Eves, Conrad makes this kind of outcome impossible by constructing the worst possible conditions. The figure of womanly self-sacrifice in Conrad’s novel is Tekla and not Natalia. In effect, Conrad makes Razumov confess to the wrong person if the book is to be about salvation.

However, if the novel is about the terrible consequences caused by unwelcome confessions or revelations, then Conrad designs the action to focus directly upon the terrible dangers that result from forcing the self upon the other. The terrible irony for Natalia is that at the moment of his confession, Razumov is behaving very much like her brother: he commits the same act of forcing a confession upon an unreceptive listener. Conrad reveals that she has loved the man most like her brother and now will suffer for it. So when, at the end of writing his confession, Razumov reflects that “I had neither the simplicity nor the courage nor the self-possession to be a scoundrel, or an exceptionally able man,” Conrad makes it difficult to know whether Razumov is a scoundrel or an exceptional man (254). Most likely, Razumov is some combination of both, which brings me to the problem of Raskolnikov’s thought about the relationship between ordinary and extraordinary men.
Conrad spares nothing in order to make readers understand that *Under Western Eyes* is about the ideas surrounding "exceptional" or "great" or "inspired" men. Several characters in *Under Western Eyes* are described, ironically and seriously, as exceptional or great: Peter Ivanovitch is described as "great" and "inspired" (105, 268); Razumov is described as an "extraordinary person" and a "superior creature" (121, 144, 146, 174); Haldin is described as "heroic," "inspired" (112, 113); and even Natalia is described as "heroic," and "exceptional" (88, 95, 82). If Carlyle's thought is included in the conversation, then *Under Western Eyes* is about heroes, real and sham, and what actions or sacrifices compel admiration and worship.\(^4\) In this, Conrad is responding to yet another of Dostoevsky's important ideas. Dostoevsky explores the problem of whether or not there are great or exceptional men and especially concentrates on the problem of whether these men have a right or a duty to transgress laws and boundaries. *Crime and Punishment* is an argument about the repudiation of exceptional men who have a right to transgress according to their will. The novel works to reveal how Raskolnikov's experiment to see "whether I could take the step across" fails terribly because, as Raskolnikov comes to realize, "it was myself I killed, not the old woman!" (488). The point of Dostoevsky's novel is that there is no exceptional man or no man with the right to transgress according to his will. Conrad uses the theories Raskolnikov explores in his article "On Crime"\(^4\) in making Razumov's character; they inform the latter's actions and his confessions. In doing so, Conrad works to demonstrate how it is difficult, if not impossible, to discern whether Razumov displays "ordinary" or "extraordinary" qualities. Razumov claims to be an ordinary worker, but the nature and consequences of his work are difficult to measure. However, I will review Raskolnikov's thought here first.

\(^4\) Again, Conrad is returning to a subject that he explores repeatedly in *Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim, Nostromo*, and other works. And Conrad's critical reconsideration of the ideas about heroes continues the argument with Carlyle that he began in *Heart of Darkness*.

\(^4\) The discussion of Raskolnikov's article among Raskolnikov, Porfiry Petrovich, Razumikhin, and Zamyotov occurs in Part 3, Chapter 5 of *Crime and Punishment* (299-321).
In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov publishes a theory concerning a division between “extraordinary” and “ordinary” men months before committing the double homicide. Dostoevsky does not reveal the existence of Raskolnikov’s article until after the murders; however, he does introduce Raskolnikov’s ideas obliquely before the murder in the scene where Raskolnikov overhears a conversation between a student and an officer (101-102). Porfiry provides a brief summary of Raskolnikov’s article during the first meeting between the two men:

The whole point of his article is that the human race is divided into the “ordinary” and the “extraordinary.” The ordinary must live in obedience and do not have the right to break the law, because, well, because they’re ordinary you see. The extraordinary, on the other hand, have the right to commit all sorts of crimes and break the law in all sorts of ways precisely because they’re extraordinary. (311)

Although Raskolnikov admits that this is a “completely correct” account of his theory, he “decided to accept the challenge” implicit in Porfiry’s comments (311). Raskolnikov argues that an “extraordinary” person has a right... not an official right, of course, but a private one, to allow his conscience to step across certain... obstacles, and then only if the execution of his idea (which may occasionally be the salvation of all mankind) requires it.... if the discoveries of Kepler and Newton could not on any account, as a result of certain complex factors, have become known to people other than by means of sacrificing the life of one person, the lives of ten, a hundred or even more persons, who were trying to interfere with those discoveries or stand as an obstacle in their path, then Newton would have had the right, and would have even been obliged... to get rid of those ten or a hundred persons.... The crimes of these people are, of course, relative and multifarious; for the most part what they are demanding, in highly varied forms, is the destruction of the present reality in the name of one that is better. But if such a
person finds it necessary, for the sake of his idea, to step over a dead body, over a pool of blood, then he is able within his own conscience to give himself permission to do so – always having regard to the nature of the idea and its dimensions – note that. (312-313)

Raskolnikov’s “extraordinary” person not only has a right, but a duty to transgress whatever laws are necessary to realize his idea, or to make his idea of a future reality prevail by destroying the present reality, thereby furthering humanity. The “execution of the idea” becomes the guiding principle for human action, repudiating the most basic of human laws: “Thou shalt not kill.” In Raskolnikov’s first dream sequence, Dostoyevsky argues that there is a subconscious instinct or impulse that repudiates the idea of murder.\(^4^3\) Dostoyevsky’s argument is that the prohibition against murder is not simply a social law, but a natural law for human beings. What happens when this impulse is ignored or openly repudiated by the individual that “allow[s] his conscience to step across” his own moral impulses and better judgement? This leads to the situation where all values and judgments are relative, and Dostoyevsky is right to perceive this as a threat to humanity because it openly avows the notion that pluralism is the basis of human society. Dostoevsky asks us to consider that when the common pursuit of true judgement is replaced by the individual assertion of one’s own judgement, whether right or wrong, society has reached a dangerous juncture. In rejecting the extraordinary man’s right to transgress according to his conscience, Dostoevsky sides with the ordinary Russian who suffers and makes sacrifices in his living. But Conrad does not draw the same conclusion. As I have discussed in the previous chapters, Conrad’s attitude towards exceptional and heroic men is conflicted. Conrad complicates the implications of Raskolnikov’s antipode in Razumov.

To understand Conrad’s design in raising the question of whether Razumov is ordinary or extraordinary, it is necessary to return to the moment when Haldin forces his confession upon

\(^4^3\) In the first dream sequence in Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky depicts Raskolnikov’s horror at the scene in which the peasant Mikolka beats a horse to death. See Part 1, Chapter 5, pages 89-95.
Razumov and violates Razumov’s life and work. This is the first forced confession in the novel, the first forced dialogue. Haldin’s confession to Razumov is simultaneously a sermon explaining his revolutionary faith and the convictions that enable it. But for Razumov, it is a confession of faith that undermines his existence. Haldin’s confession to Razumov is represented as the third explosion occurring in the novel. There are also, of course, the first bomb thrown by Haldin’s partner and the second bomb thrown by Haldin (9). These two “engines” are physical manifestations of the ways in which Haldin’s ideas destroy lives indiscriminately (14); it is important to remember that Haldin’s bomb kills not only the Russian official, but also his partner and numerous people in the crowd as well. But there is a third murder or assassination in the opening chapter that is not physical, but moral. When Razumov encounters Haldin in his room, and Haldin declares that “It was I who removed de P this morning,” Razumov’s entire existence is exploded as well (13). Alongside Razumov’s ironic “half-derisive mental exclamation, ‘There goes my silver medal!’” is the realization that “his life [is] utterly ruined by this contact with such a crime” (14). Later, after his interviews with the Prince and the General, Razumov reveals the best manner of understanding his position in thinking that “I am a suspect now” (48). He is condemned to be an object of suspicion, whether he is actually under the surveillance of the authorities or is troubled in his own mind by the possibility that he is under surveillance. His very being has been exploded. In Lord Jim Conrad explores the dangers inherent in listening to confessions or confidences. Marlow’s moral being is disrupted in becoming a receptacle for Jim’s confession. Like Marlow, Razumov is compelled to hear an unwanted and dangerous confession. But Marlow’s life is not threatened in the same immediate manner as Razumov’s. And in Under Western Eyes, Conrad moves the confessor-character at the frame of the narrative to the center, and then constructs another frame around that new center creating a third distancing layer. Haldin now occupies Jim’s position, Razumov occupies Marlow’s position, and the narrator’s recounting is a confession about a confession. As far as I know, Dostoevsky never created such a complex layer of confessional narratives. In Notes from Underground the
confession is mediated slightly by the editorial notes that Dostoevsky provides at the beginning and end, but these hardly create the same complications as occur in Conrad's novel.

Following his encounter with Haldin, Razumov moves into a position in which he believes himself to be an extraordinary man. But Conrad does not necessarily value Razumov’s actions in the same way: Razumov may be somewhat ordinary in his motivations. I find it difficult to know with any degree of certainty whether Haldin’s confession releases an idea that already existed in Razumov’s mind or Haldin infects Razumov with the idea. In confessing to Razumov, Haldin declares that “speaking to a superior mind like yours I can well say all the truth” (16). Later, Haldin repeats his idea by describing Razumov as “a young man in this town head and shoulders above common prejudices” (42). Deciding whether or not this comment initiates Razumov’s idealization of himself as an extraordinary man is complicated by a passage in which the narrator describes Razumov’s dreams. Sometime in the future Razumov hopes that Prince K’s family would

be aware of him as a celebrated old professor, decorated, possibly a Privy councillor, one of the glories of Russia – nothing more!

But a celebrated professor was a Somebody. Distinction would convert the label Razumov into an honoured name. There was nothing strange in the student Razumov’s wish for distinction. A man’s real life is that accorded to him in the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love. (12)

Reading the passage is complicated because it is spoken by an old professor. I cannot know where Razumov’s thoughts end and the narrator’s thoughts begin. Razumov does work for distinction, starting with the essay prize. But is his “real life” accorded to him by Haldin’s idea that he is a “superior mind”? Or does he already believe this before Haldin has made the comment aloud and opened Pandora’s Box as it were? While I remain unsure, Dwight Purdy argues that Haldin “infects” Razumov, who is “converted to faith in the messianic deliverer to come” (“Peace” 86). Certainly, Razumov begins thinking like Haldin in the moments before he
decides to betray Haldin. Echoing Haldin’s earlier remark, Razumov refers to his own “cool, superior reason” (27). Razumov believes he “was sacrificing his personal longings” (27). And then the “conversion” of Razumov into a likeness of Haldin is all but complete when Razumov begins calculating the relative value of different human lives as Haldin did in committing the murders (26):

What is this Haldin? And what am I? Only two grains of sand. But a great mountain is made up of just such insignificant grains. And the death of a man or of many men is an insignificant thing. Yet we combat a contagious pestilence. Do I want his death? No! I would save him if I could – but no one can do that – he is the withered member which must be cut off. (28)

His language recalls Haldin’s argument about “removing” Mr. de P. Purdy argues that although Razumov “recognizes the specific quality of Haldin’s disease... he succumbs nonetheless” and “perhaps like Haldin, Razumov believes that he himself may be the man, for, like Haldin, Razumov has a messianic text to excuse betrayal” (“Peace” 87). Razumov is assuming the extraordinary man’s position as the judge of human life.

These thoughts inform Razumov’s “extraordinary experience” of stepping across the “extraordinary illusion” of Haldin lying on his back in the snow (28). Conrad repeats the word “extraordinary” several times in the passage, recalling Dostoevsky’s interest in the problem of transgressions and Raskolnikov’s theory that an extraordinary man relies upon the judgement of his conscience alone in stepping across obstacles in order to realize his idea. Conrad invokes Raskolnikov’s idea explicitly in Razumov’s reflections upon his own “superior mind”: “Not one of them is capable of feeling and thinking as deeply as I can. How many of them could accomplish an act of conscience” (29). This follows Razumov’s realization that “I shall give him up,” and his rationalization for betraying Haldin:

Betray. A great word. What is betrayal? They talk of a man betraying his country, his friends, his sweetheart. There must be a moral bond first. All a man
can betray is his conscience. And how is my conscience engaged here; by what bond of common faith, of common conviction, am I obliged to let that fanatical idiot drag me down with him? On the contrary — every obligation of true courage is the other way. (29)

Razumov’s struggle is with the question of whether or not he possesses an extraordinary conscience. It is a test that Dostoevsky shows Raskolnikov fails. But in Conrad’s version it is difficult to tell whether the argument is that Razumov fails to prove that he possesses an extraordinary conscience, or succeeds in displaying an extraordinary conscience with a capacity for suffering and self-sacrifice beyond even Dostoevsky’s Sonya. In Conrad’s novel, self-sacrifice becomes the test for the extraordinary; Conrad is questioning whether an extreme self-sacrifice makes a person extraordinary. The problem is evident in Razumov’s confessions to Natalia.

Edward Wasiolek has already traced the important similarities and differences between Dostoevsky’s and Conrad’s confession scenes in his excellent article “Conrad and Dostoevsky, and Natalia and Sonia.” Wasiolek notes Raskolnikov’s and Razumov’s confessions are both strange in that the two men confess only after they are safe, neither man “is quite able to get the words out,” and each performs the act with a third person present (97). However, despite Wasiolek’s insightful comparison, I disagree with his conclusion that “we know why Raskolnikov confesses” but “we do not know why Razumov confesses” because “he confesses for no reason at all” (101). Wasiolek argues that “Razumov does not believe in anything before the confession, and he does not believe in anything after the confession. Indeed, one can argue that the confession simply maims him” (101). But however strange it might seem, Razumov’s confession is inspired by Haldin’s words and ideas.

In Razumov’s confessions, Conrad brings into sharp focus the question of what kind of story he is writing. He asks readers whether we have recognized the design of his novel. Just before making the silent gesture in which he reveals himself as Haldin’s betrayer, Razumov
suggests that he knows “a whole story” in which “there is a staircase in it, and even phantoms, but that does not matter if a man always serves something greater than himself – the idea. I wonder who is the greatest victim in that tale?” (248). Conrad’s novel is full of victims and different forms of victimization. Making a proper account of all the variations would be difficult, but not necessary here. A quick summary would include the victims of Mr. de P’s policies and the people, innocent or otherwise, that Haldin and his partner kill. Haldin is victimized by Razumov’s betrayal after Razumov is victimized by Haldin’s confession. After suffering as a victim of the oppressive Tsarist state, Peter Ivanovitch victimizes Tekla. The man tortured and interrogated by the state officials that Tekla serves is yet another victim. Like so many of Dostoevsky’s works, Under Western Eyes is about the insulted and the injured of the world. But in Razumov, Conrad creates a very strange version of an insulted and injured man.

Haldin’s confession to Razumov “robbed” the latter of his “guiding idea”: “my hard-working purposeful existence” (251). But during or after that confession, Razumov inherited, or Haldin awakened in him, a vision of self-sacrifice that recalls Tekla’s self-effacement in her serving Peter Ivanovitch. We can view the idea at times through Conrad’s doubling of Razumov and Ziemianitch. The early scene in which Razumov beats Ziemianitch recalls the first dream sequence from Crime and Punishment in which commentators have noted that the vicious beating and murder of the horse is partly Raskolnikov viewing the self-punishment his conscience is inflicting upon himself. The dream is a projection of his own suffering: both the horse and the peasant Mikolka are components of Raskolnikov himself. The “terrible fury” and “rage of self-preservation” that “possessed Razumov” and cause him to beat Ziemianitch leads to the “weird scene” that recalls the important passage from Dostoevsky’s novel (23-24). After this, Ziemianitch haunts Razumov, his name being the one word that Razumov struggles so hard to conceal. In his first meeting with Mikulin, Razumov tells himself “all he had to do was keep the Ziemianitch episode secret with absolute determination when the questions came. Keep Ziemianitch strictly out of all the answers” (66). But for Razumov “it seemed impossible to keep
Ziemianitch out. Every question would lead to that, because, of course, there was nothing else” (66). In a very different way than the captain and criminal of “The Secret Sharer,” Conrad makes Ziemianitch into Razumov’s secret sharer or double or second self. In “The Secret Sharer,” Conrad writes about how the captain ensures the safety of the criminal that he protects. Ziemianitch does the same, but involuntarily and without knowing, for Razumov. Conrad emphasizes this by borrowing an element of Dostoevsky’s art in which the devil appears as a projected double for a character. In The Karamazov Brothers, Ivan is tortured by a devil that visits him and is partly a double and projection of himself. Ziemianitch endures the same troubling ideas as Ivan, in that “Ziemianitch was notoriously irreligious, and yet, in the last weeks of his life, he suffered from the notion that he had been beaten by the devil” (198). That would make Razumov the devil. In case we misunderstand the doubling, Conrad emphasizes the importance of the connection between the two men when Razumov reflects that “it was obvious that [Sophia Antonova] did not make much of that story – unless, indeed, this was the perfection of duplicity” (199). The “perfection of duplicity” is in Conrad’s design, not Sophia’s understanding.

It is only after Ziemianitch’s suicide that Razumov is safe. And only then does he find a place “for making a beginning of that writing which had to be done” under the statue of Rousseau (205). But most importantly, after the death of his secret sharer, Razumov wonders “is it possible that I have a conventional conscience?” (204). The question is whether Razumov is conventional or superior and extraordinary. Through the writing of his confession, Razumov comes to realize that “I had neither the simplicity nor the courage nor the self-possession to be a scoundrel, or an exceptionally able man” (254). That is, he could not follow the examples given by Raskolnikov or by Haldin and transgress according to his conscience. However, Razumov does work to reveal that he is capable of suffering and self-sacrifice, thereby proving that he has an “extraordinary” and “superior” conscience in another sense. He will take the blame for his crime and endure the punishment. He will make a sacrifice of himself in the third act of his confession. To the
revolutionaries, Ziemanitch stands guilty of Haldin’s betrayal and death: he stands in for Razumov. For a period in the novel Ziemanitch becomes a scapegoat for Haldin’s death. When Razumov makes his confessions to Natalia and the revolutionaries, he takes possession of his own crime and the suffering that comes with it. Conrad makes Razumov’s claim to suffering explicit in his declaration that “I am independent – and therefore perdition is my lot” (254). Whatever Razumov’s written rationalization for his confessions might argue, Conrad renders the ideas doubtful because Razumov is writing in retrospect. Razumov is composing justifications and explanations which may or may not have informed his previous actions. It is difficult to know with any certainty. For instance, Razumov claims that the marriage to Natalia would have been in revenge for what Haldin had caused him to do. But in renouncing his revenge Razumov also rejects the marriage and family that he so desperately wanted.\footnote{The problem is that despite Razumov’s renunciation his confession is still a vengeful act. Razumov destroys Natalia’s idealization of himself as the replacement of her brother. He eliminates himself as a support and source of consolation for her. Of course, Conrad makes any discussion of Razumov and Natalia’s relationship highly speculative. In his account of the story, the narrator excludes any descriptions of the relationship that Razumov recorded in his confessions. We never see the substance of their conversations alone in the garden.} And if revenge, and not love, really was the motive for the marriage, Razumov turns the revenge upon himself. In every way, he works to make himself the “greatest victim” of the tale, a very different kind of prize that earns him a distinction very unlike the essay and professorship he had dreamed about at the beginning of the tale. It is important to remember that Razumov realizes “in giving Victor Haldin up, it was myself, after all, whom I have betrayed most basely” (253-4). So when Razumov explains that “I had to confirm myself in my contempt and hate for what I betrayed,” that vengeful movement is directed towards himself. Razumov reclaims the position that had been mistakenly attributed to Ziemanitch, and also claims for himself the self-sacrifice informing Haldin’s actions. The superior act of conscience through which Razumov proves himself to be “superior,” “extraordinary,” and “independent” is self-betrayal. In Razumov, Conrad demonstrates how self-sacrifice and suffering can become an ideal in and of itself, without being
interconnected with dreams of delivering the oppressed or instigating a revolution in mankind. In Razumov, self-sacrifice reaches an extreme in being elevated into a strange autonomous distinction; it displaces his original ideal of work as the center of his moral existence.

In the end, Tekla may be the one character in Under Western Eyes who earns Conrad's sympathy. Undoubtedly she is one of the insulted and injured. The story of her suffering is genuinely moving and she has no notions of claiming for herself the distinction of being the "greatest victim" in the novel.\textsuperscript{45} Sofia Antonova's praise for Tekla possessing "a faithful soul, an undaunted spirit and an indefatigable body" sounds like Conrad's own judgement (265). Furthermore, she is the most straightforwardly Dostoevskian character in the novel, but with one important difference. She suffers without recourse to an ideal such as Sonya's and Dostoevsky's Christ, and her willingness to serve others without any thought for herself is truly extraordinary.

\textsuperscript{45} I point this out because, as Waiqoie also observes, Natalia is quick to claim the role of the victim in labeling herself as "defenceless" (263). See Waiqoie's criticism of Natalia, pages 99-100.
Chapter Four: Conrad’s Inquiry into the Relation
Between Self-Preservation and Self-Destruction

When compared with the other chapters included in this thesis, the present chapter is something of an ugly duckling: it does not fit neatly among the others. However, in some ways this chapter is the center of my thesis because it marks an important transition from the first three chapters to the last two. Therefore, I offer these opening remarks as a way of explaining not only the importance of the argument that follows in this chapter, but also how it relates to what has come before and will come afterwards. In the first three chapters, I have been examining Conrad’s critical preoccupation with the ideas and structures he encountered in the works of Carlyle, Dickens, and Dostoevsky, writers he identified as significant thinkers in the nineteenth century whose works must be confronted and reevaluated. Each of the three chapters has involved comparing and contrasting Conrad’s thought with the thought of one of the other authors by focusing narrowly on the potential conversations that occur in reading one of Conrad’s major works. All three previous chapters are also concerned with the impression the language and structure employed by Carlyle, Dickens, and Dostoevsky make on Conrad’s work. There is a significant creative proximity between Conrad’s work and Carlyle’s criticism of culture, Dickens’s use of the novel as a mode of inquiry, and Dostoevsky’s preoccupation with confessional structures. Conrad’s criticism reveals the indebtedness of his art and thought to these writers, as well as his attempt to explore some of the implications of their ideas. In short, I would argue that Conrad’s conversations with Carlyle, Dickens, and Dostoevsky are important for his development as a writer and the employment of his art as a heuristic critical endeavour.

The present chapter is significantly different because Conrad’s thought is compared with two important predecessors, Charles Darwin and Friedrich Nietzsche, and one important contemporary, Sigmund Freud. Unlike the previous chapters, the emphasis here is on Conrad’s thought about and relationship with philosophical or scientific theorists. The major question
concerns how Conrad works differently by writing his inquiries in the form of a novel. Focusing on *Lord Jim*, I will reveal how Conrad responds to Darwin's and Nietzsche's arguments concerning the relationship between the instincts for self-preservation and self-destruction. Conrad writes the novel as a critical reconsideration of Darwin's observations regarding the central importance of the instincts towards self-preservation and self-sacrifice from an almost Nietzschean perspective in which the two instincts are collapsed, making it difficult to discern one from the other. In this, Conrad's response is significantly different from Freud's. In the late, major works such as *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud constructs a dualist theoretical explanation which radically separates the instinct for self-preservation from the instinct for self-destruction. In *Lord Jim*, Conrad renders Freud's positions unconvincing by questioning and undermining the kinds of antipodal structures upon which Freud builds his theories. So the critical preoccupation with the problems surrounding work in the previous chapters continues here, with a slightly different emphasis. By comparing Conrad's thought with Darwin's, Nietzsche's, and Freud's, I am calling attention to how Conrad's writing works differently from these other writers, especially in terms of the grammar of his knowing. As a novelist, Conrad does not work through scientific or pseudo-scientific categorization or typological differentiation. Through the analogies he constructs in *Lord Jim*, Conrad undermines the categorical distinctions made between different ideas and perspectives by exploring the interrelatedness of the different arguments. Conrad's thinking is radically heuristic in that he explores the implications when ideas come into collision. He is interested in problems and explores potential outcomes by representing multiple variations on the relationship between the two instincts. In Conrad's work, ideas are tested through particular lived experience: the abstract idea of an antipodal relation between self-preservation and self-destruction is made a question of living and being through the analogical scenes that compose the trajectory of the novel. By confounding antipodal structures, Conrad works to reveal important questions which Darwin and Nietzsche do not raise and to articulate insights which Freud's assumptions render him incapable
of recognizing. The argument has implications for the next two chapters in which I examine how Conrad critiques Nietzsche's antipodal relationship with Christianity and Christ and how Conrad critiques Freud's psychoanalytic knowing.

The critical preoccupation with heroes in the previous chapters is also a major element in the present argument; however, the emphasis changes slightly because heroism becomes one element in a larger problem. Conrad's reconsideration of the relationship between the instincts for self-preservation and self-destruction is located directly in Jim's dreams about becoming a hero. In the first chapter, after examining the quality of Marlow's hero-worship of Kurtz, I examined how Marlow's and the accountant's practical application of the belief in Carlyle's ideal of work could be read as a self-preservative measure. The second chapter explored Conrad's and Dickens's ambivalence towards the role of the hero as man of letters and the argument the two writers make that reveals the relation between not knowing and self-preservation. In the third chapter I demonstrated that Conrad complicates Dostoevsky's ideal of self-sacrifice through the representations of Tekla and Razumov. Elements of all of these problems are once again included here, at least implicitly. In presenting Jim's thoughts about heroism in Lord Jim, Conrad makes it impossible to know whether Jim believes that heroism involves self-preservation or self-sacrifice (hence, self-destruction). The quality of Conrad's preoccupation with fundamental human instincts is analogous to Nietzsche's argument that "these instincts contradict, disturb, and destroy one another" (T 107).1 In representing Jim's character, Conrad is thinking about Nietzsche's definition of "the modern as physiological self-contradiction" (T 107). When instincts are at war with one another, differentiating the antagonists through the descriptions and confusions caused in the very moment of the battle becomes increasingly difficult. At the end of the nineteenth century, Conrad challenges us to consider whether the systematic distinctions are tenable.

1 Section 41.
This part of my argument relates directly to the discussions published in recent years by Matthew Condon, Michiel Heynes, and Andrew Mozina that question Jim’s function as a scapegoat in Conrad’s novel.2 In effect, what all three of these critics are interested in is Jim as the hero or failed hero who becomes a scapegoat. The following remarks on the question of whether to identify Jim as a sacrifice, a suicide, or a victim bear directly upon my discussion of Conrad’s criticism of Nietzsche in the next chapter. Conrad works to make it exceptionally difficult to differentiate between the three roles, choosing instead to superimpose the three ideas throughout the novel.

Condon, Heynes, and Mozina each emphasize the problem slightly differently by focusing upon Jim as either a communal sacrifice or as a self-sacrifice. Condon examines how Jim’s failure to find absolution through confession results in the “sacramental obverse” of confession which he identifies as “sacrifice” (142). For Condon, both “confession and sacrifice are purgative rituals of a transgression” but “where it could be said that confession is on the side of life, that it aspires to affirm an individual life within the community, sacrifice affirms the life of the community at the expense of the death of the sacrificial victim” (142). Heynes calls attention to Jim as “the scapegoat of the narrative” to demonstrate how Conrad examines “the system of beliefs of his listeners” (193-4). For Heynes, Conrad is questioning both the justice and revenge that two communities exact from Jim, as well as Jim’s self-punishment. Heynes makes the important observation that “this self-scapegoating narrative, an impulsion rather than an expulsion, can have no closure, because the communal judgement has become internalized and exaggerated in Jim’s own perception of his disgrace” (206). But of the three critics, I find Mozina’s study the most thought provoking. Mozina argues that “Lord Jim explores on what

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2 See Condon’s “The Cost of Redemption in Conrad’s Lord Jim,” the fourth chapter of Heynes’s Expulsion and the Nineteenth-Century Novel: The Scapegoat in English Realist Fiction, and the second chapter of Mozina’s Joseph Conrad and the Art of Sacrifice: The Evolution of the Scapegoat Theme in Joseph Conrad’s Fiction. It is important to recognize that all three critics are drawing upon René Girard’s arguments concerning the scapegoat mechanism. See Girard’s The Scapegoat.
terms sacrifice is possible in the late nineteenth century” and that “Conrad pursues the scapegoat theme by narrating a series of sacrificial moments that test the relation between romance and reality, guilt and innocence, perception and conception, and naked fact and rhetorical investment” (42). Mozina calls attention to the analogies between the sacrifices made by Jim and Christ. In both drawing upon and summarizing René Girard’s theories, Mozina reflects upon how

From the point of view of the mob, Jesus is guilty and suffers an expulsion sacrifice, but from the point of view of the Gospels, Jesus is an innocent martyr and performs a rescue sacrifice, putting an end to all scapegoating by revealing its workings. Jim’s would-be sacrifices, then, are would-be imitations of Christ’s rescue sacrifice. (50)

Although I will not attempt to directly answer the readings offered by these three critics, the argument in this chapter complicates their ideas about what Conrad is doing with Jim as a sacrifice of some kind in the novel. The quality of Jim’s own instincts becomes a significant problem worth exploring when thinking about Jim as a scapegoat and the punishments leveled by the two communities. The question is the degree to which the community does not simply work against the instincts of the individual, but in some strange manner works to enable and confirm the very movements and ends which those instincts demand.

With these ideas in mind, it is easier to recognize one other major element informing Conrad’s thought about the relationship between self-preservation and self-destruction which is analogous to the idea in a remarkable passage that Nietzsche includes in Human All Too Human:

The two greatest judicial murders in world history are, not to mince words, disguised and well disguised suicides. In both cases the victim wanted to die; in both cases he employed the hand of human injustice to drive the sword into his own breast. (233)4

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3 See especially Chapters 2, 9, and 10 in The Scapegoat.
4 Section 94.
Although Nietzsche leaves the names of the two victims unclear, it is not very difficult to guess that he is thinking about Socrates and Christ. Nietzsche is questioning our understanding of two of the most important deaths in the history of western civilization. The argument is that the two deaths have been misidentified, or only partially understood. In Nietzsche's view, the communal punishment of the scapegoat, regardless of whether it was in the name of justice or revenge, can be read as realizing the victim's desire to become a self-sacrifice. In reading *Lord Jim*, Conrad challenges us to think about the question that Nietzsche raises so that the meanings of both judgements leveled against Jim become highly ambiguous. To anticipate my argument, can either of the judgements be read simply as punishments if the consequences actually enable Jim's desire to become a hero through a self-sacrificial act? The issue is Marlow's realization that Jim "was eager to go through the ceremony of execution," and not only in confronting the European court but also at his final trial in Patusan (92). Jim's eager anticipation, or at least uninhibited willingness, makes for a real problem in reading the novel. My argument is that Conrad undermines the fundamental assumption that the instinct for self-preservation is the most important of laws governing human behaviour, anticipating Freud's insights by at least a decade. But unlike Freud, Conrad does not claim to know precisely where self-preservation ends and self-destruction begins. Also, by making the connection between the instinct for self-destruction and the idea of heroism, Conrad offers an important insight into the greatness that sometimes accompanies self-sacrifice. This insight is necessary to understand Conrad's conflicted response to Nietzsche discussed in the next chapter. Finally, it seems to me that Conrad raises real questions about the degree to which Jim's life is typical or atypical: he is both "one of us" and a

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5 See Sung Ryol Kim's discussion in "Lord Jim's Heroic Identity" for a lengthy summary of the many contemporary arguments concerning the relationship between Jim's heroism and the ideas of self-sacrifice or suicide. Kim observes that "because of its implications for his heroic identity, Jim's death is one of the interpretive cruxes of the novel" (99). While I agree with the observation, my discussion is focused on the manner in which Conrad constructs the action of the novel in a way that makes Jim's initial punishment and then his death even more difficult to judge with any certainty.
hero. Is the troubling conflict between the instincts for self-preservation and self-destruction only true in Jim’s strange and tragic life, or is it true for human living as a whole?

The basic outline of my argument is as follows: Freud’s theory, which constructs the instinct for self-preservation and the instinct for self-destruction as antipathetic, simplifies and obscures the complexity of the relation between the two. In Lord Jim, Conrad makes a much more subtle inquiry and demonstrates that constructing a simple antithesis between the two instincts is insufficient and should be replaced by the realization that the two instincts are often indistinguishable. Also, through Jim’s actions, Conrad demonstrates how the appearance of an instinct for self-preservation can conceal an instinct for self-destruction; the former can provide a cover story for the latter. Rather than describing a problem and offering a solution to it, Conrad challenges us to recognize that there is a problem and to think about the questions that are raised in the contemplation of that problem.

I have no doubt that both Conrad and Freud are engaged in conversations with Darwin and Nietzsche; however, in discussing the history of an idea establishing the sources or the lines of influence is not always the central concern. In making the connection between Conrad and Darwin, Redmond O’Hanlon argues that “we must remember that Victorian science was still

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6 Gillian Beer makes this point as well (6). Redmond O’Hanlon and Allan Hunter have written full-length studies documenting Conrad’s knowledge of and response to Darwin’s works. In Joseph Conrad and the Ethics of Darwinism, Hunter argues that Conrad was not only familiar with Darwin, but also A. J. Wallace, Herbert Spencer, T. H. Huxley, Henry Drummond, C. Lombroso, J. A. Hobson, and others. For a very brief summary, see Hunter’s introduction. In Joseph Conrad and Charles Darwin O’Hanlon demonstrates that Conrad possessed an even wider familiarity with contemporary scientific thought. For a discussion of Conrad’s familiarity with and relation to Nietzsche, see my next chapter.

In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud reveals his familiarity with Nietzsche by quoting the phrase “eternal recurrence of the same” (60), an important concept throughout Nietzsche’s later writings following Thus Spake Zarathustra. In my sixth chapter I have noted the repeated references to Nietzsche, explicit or implicit, in The Interpretation of Dreams. Freud includes Darwin’s The Descent of Man in a proposed list for the “ten most magnificent works (of world literature)” in a letter entitled “Contribution to a Questionnaire on Reading” quoted in Peter Gay’s selection of Freud (540). And Freud discusses Darwin in his works: for instance, in Part IV of Totem and Taboo (162-63).
almost immediately accessible to all intelligent men” (11). And Gillian Beer reminds us that in the nineteenth-century scientists still shared a common language with other educated readers and writers of their time. There is nothing hermetic or exclusive in the writing of Lyell or Darwin... they shared a literary, non-mathematical discourse which was readily available to readers without a scientific training. Their texts could be read very much as literary texts. (6-7)

I would add that this is also the case for some philosophy in the nineteenth century. It is important to recognize how the group of authors included in this chapter conduct inquiries into a set of ideas making their works enter into a dialogue with one another. Of course, I am primarily concerned with Conrad’s contribution to the conversation, and therefore his perspective and his criticism which takes into account the earlier contributions made by Darwin and Nietzsche while making an oblique criticism of the assumptions that enable Freud’s thinking. Conrad is one of the readers of whom Beer speaks in suggesting that “it was possible for a reader to turn to the primary works of scientists as they appeared, and to respond directly to the arguments advanced” (7). **Lord Jim** is a record of Conrad’s response. His most generous clue for readers is Stein.

Conrad’s representation of Stein bears remarkable analogies to Darwin, Nietzsche, and Freud in their roles as arrangers and classifiers of facts or information. Stein is a “naturalist” or “learned collector” (122). He loves “classing and arranging specimens” and “writing up a descriptive catalogue of his treasures” (125). The important point of similarity is the drive to categorize and catalogue, to distinguish among and between types, to separate the butterflies from the beetles and then create sub-categories within those divisions.\(^7\) Darwin, Nietzsche, and Freud are taxonomists in practicing the science of classification, or typologists by engaging in the study or interpretation of types. All three are also genealogists, tracing the histories of the types they

\(^7\) As Linda Shires observes in relation to Stein, “some men will undoubtedly try to analyze Jim scientifically and label him” (22)
identify. Darwin is undoubtedly the great nineteenth-century representative of Stein’s passion to collect and classify, specifically, biological types.\footnote{As Philip Appleman notes in his introduction to the Norton critical edition, Darwin was an “industrious collector, a keen observer, a canny theorist,” all characteristics that might be attributed to Stein (xv). Also, it is worth noting that both Jocelyn Baines and Ross Murfin argue that Stein’s character is partly based upon one of Darwin’s fellow naturalists, A. R. Wallace (Baines 254, Murfin, \textit{Truth} 12).} But Nietzsche practices Darwin’s art by identifying and categorizing moral types: the German, the Romantic, the Christian, the noble, the slave, etc. \textit{The Twilight of the Idols} is a catalogue of types, which is especially apparent in the section entitled “Expeditions of an Untimely Man” wherein Nietzsche identifies and categorizes some of his major contemporaries. And psychoanalysis is Freud’s application of Darwin’s art to the mind, differentiating and categorizing mental processes and faculties as well as symptoms of mental health and sickness. Part of Conrad’s objection to these different schemes of classifying the world is that the labels and categories can obscure as much as they illuminate. In any attempt to know the butterflies and the beetles the difficulty is to simultaneously recognize the distinct differences and the important resemblances. In effect, Stein’s separation of the butterflies from the beetles, the beautiful from the monstrous, is successful in performing the former but a failure in performing the latter. Conrad not only places the butterflies and the beetles together in the same display case and the beautiful and monstrous in the same character, but calls into question the markers or definitions distinguishing the two. Conrad questions our knowing, our ability to judge decisively between one and the other. The critical preoccupation here is with how we know and why we know, and the relationship between knowing and not knowing. Conrad’s work provokes questions about why Freud is consistently compelled to construct antipodal systems in order to formulate solutions for his questions. What does Freud want to know or not know? As I suggest in the last chapter, the drive to be a successful detective dominates how Freud answers questions, often reducing complexities in order to formulate satisfactory solutions.

Reading Stein as a composite of these three different thinkers illuminates one important aspect of his oft-debated wisdom. I do not want to enter into the debate about clarifying the
strange grammatical structure or uncovering the "real" meaning of Stein's obscure pronouncement about immersing one's self into the destructive element. I have a suspicion that Conrad wrote the passage knowing how "[v]ery funny this terrible thing is" and that readers would be endlessly fascinated with discussing the intricacies of the passage (129). So I will simply count myself as another victim of Conrad's humour and suggest that when reading the famous passage in Chapter 20 it is significant that Stein is discussing life and death, or to be more specific, self-preservation and self-destruction:

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 hand and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up. (129)

The instinct for self-preservation compels a person to act if he falls into water. The instinct may cause a person to perform the wrong action leading to self-destruction. But in some strange manner, submitting to the "destructive element" may be self-preservation. If water is potentially the destructive element, then it can be used as a self-preservation element as well by swimming. Perhaps my reading is too simple by half, but the point is that the basic problem of the relation between the instinct for self-preservation and the instinct for self-destruction is contained in this passage. And in some degree like Stein's grammar and syntax in this passage, Conrad articulates the relation between the two instincts in a manner that is anything but clear, explicit, scientifically rigorous, or in any way offers a satisfactory solution. The passage is nothing if not a problem and the structure of the passage defies finding a solution.

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9 In The Idiot, Dostoevsky includes a brief passage in which Lebedev debates the relation between self-preservation and self-destruction and concludes that "The law of self-destruction and the law of self-preservation are equally powerful in humankind!" (394). So I am keenly aware that Dostoevsky might also be included in this chapter. For instance, the degree to which Jim's Christ-like self-sacrifice is indebted to Dostoevsky's representation of Prince Myshkin is a question worth exploring.
One of the basic differences between Conrad’s and Freud’s thought involves the problem of structure. Conrad and Freud construct relations between ideas very differently. In Peter Brooks’s language, it is partly a question of plotting, as if to ask: where does an author place an idea on the map of his thought? Or, how does an author manipulate an idea through the trajectory of a plot or argument? In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud is insistent on his understanding of the relation between the self-preservative and self-destructive instincts. He repeatedly articulates the relation as a pair of antipodes, and his language leaves no room for doubt: “sharp distinction”; “dualistic”; “two opposites”; “antithesis”; and “two polarities” (92-3). He reinforces the distinction in the chapter heading to Part 4 of *The Ego and the Id*: “The Two Types of Drives.” Freud’s entire argument is premised upon the idea that he can distinguish the self-preservative drive from the self-destructive drive. He claims to witness the “merging” and “de-merging” of the two drives (131). At one moment Freud comes close to confessing that “our grounds for distinguishing between the two types of drives seem not altogether strong enough” (132), but ends by concluding in a very characteristic fashion that

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10 In the “Preface” to *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, Brooks explains that “this is a book about plots of the dominant modern narrative tradition” and that “most of my examples are taken from nineteenth-century novels and from those twentieth-century narratives that, however complicating and even subversive of the tradition, maintain a vital relation to it” (xii). Brooks argues that “most viable works of literature tell us something about how they are to be read, guide us toward the conditions of their interpretation. The novels of the great tradition all offer models for understanding their use of plots and their relation to plot as a model of understanding” (xii). Although I disagree with the scientifically-inspired language about establishing “models” for reading plot and structure, Brooks is right to point towards the novels themselves as a great source of thought on these problems. And the contents of the book look promising as Brooks includes Dickens, Conrad, Stendhal, Flaubert, and Faulkner among the novelists he examines. However, Brooks’s argument in his “Preface” does not correspond with his practice later in the book. Instead of looking towards novels for a way of understanding the dynamics of plot, Brooks chooses Freudian theory as “a model that would provide a synthetic and comprehensive grasp of the workings of plot” (90). Brooks finds “the most suggestive indications for the needed model in the work of Freud, since this still offers the most probing inquiry into the dynamics of the psychic life, and hence, by possible extension, of texts” (90). Indeed, in very telling language, Brooks declares that his design is to “superimpose psychic functioning on textual functioning” without any doubt that the superimposition may obscure or reduce the work of literature (90). So the claim that the novelists have the most to say about their own art and understanding is flatly contradicted. Brooks does not attempt to recognize how the novelists declare themselves but utilizes a pseudo-scientific psychoanalytic theory to read the novelists.
If it were not for the arguments set forth in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and ultimately also the sadistic admixtures encountered in Eros, we would have difficulty in holding firm to our fundamental dualist position. But since we have no alternative, we are driven to the supposition that death drives very largely remain silent, and that the clamour of life comes mostly from Eros. (136-7)

Freud is unwilling to question the arguments he has created; or, in other words, the theories that he has formulated are directing the course of his thought. Rather than seeing the problem and adjusting his theory to the observations, Freud sees the problem only through his theory. He cannot or will not modify the basis of his assumptions. Despite his determination to “follow an idea right through to its logical conclusion,” Freud stops at the boundaries created by his own arguments (BPP 63). Freud does have an alternative, and that is to confess that he cannot tell one drive from the other and that the relation between the two is too difficult to discern. But as I discuss in the sixth chapter, to do so would be to admit defeat and not reach a satisfactory solution, and then Freud would not be Freud. However, Conrad seriously doubts any knowing that claims to have such certainty. For Conrad, the relation between the two instincts is more indefinite and in the novel the plot questions whether we can tell one instinct from the other.

Conrad’s thought is fundamentally different. Of course, Conrad does not dismiss the possibility of antithetical positions or antipodal ideas, but he poses a problem in thinking of the relation between the ideas in terms of perspective.¹¹ Perhaps the best example from *Lord Jim* is Jim’s reflection that “It was not a lie – but it wasn’t truth all the same. It was something…. One knows a downright lie. There was not the thickness of a sheet of paper between the right and the wrong of this affair” (80). Jim wants to believe that he can recognize a “downright lie,” but for Conrad the problem is not so simple. The grammar of the entire passage points towards the

¹¹ See J. Hillis Miller’s discussion of Conrad’s “manipulation” of “binary pattern” of light and dark in “*Lord Jim*: Repetition as Subversion of Organic Form” (452). Miller argues that the “juxtaposition of light and dark offers no better standing ground from which what is equivocal about the rest of the novel may be surveyed and comprehended than any other aspect of the text” (452).
difficulty, starting with the negations in the first sentence. It is neither this nor that, and the best that can be said is that "it was something." Jim might have said it was anything, because the thought remains unclear. The very act of knowing, classifying, and distinguishing is questioned here. The last sentence both reinforces and extends the problem. Right and wrong are brought into collision, and if there is "not the thickness of a sheet of paper between" them, then it is very difficult to discern one from the other with any certainty. The basic problem is repeated with different variations throughout Lord Jim so that Conrad can emphasize the difficulties involved. The repetition of the grammar creates continuity and a kind of rhythm in the work. When Chester reflects upon Robinson's ship disaster, there is a glance back to Jim's comment about distinguishing between right and wrong: "the Lord God knows the right and wrong of that story" (99). The connection is immediately recognizable in Marlow's variation: "I strained my mental eyesight only to discover that, as with the complexion of all our actions, the shade of difference was so delicate that it was impossible to say. It might have been flight and it might have been a mode of combat" (119). The repetition of the conditional "might" emphasizes the ambiguity and indecisiveness. In one other passage, "there is so little difference, and the difference means so little," Conrad calls into question the impulse to distinguish differences, suggesting that the similarities matter just as much if not more (135). He questions the importance of establishing differences, indicating that those distinctions potentially obscure our knowing. Conrad is not abandoning the idea that there is a distinction between A and B or right and wrong in favor of moral and perspectival relativity, but he is questioning whether there is a position from which anyone can attain a clear view to know absolutely.

Nietzsche offers a good summary of the problem\(^{12}\) by acknowledging the danger inherent in the "Habit of seeing opposites"\(^{13}\):

\(^{12}\) Despite the awareness demonstrated here, Nietzsche all too often continues to manifest the habit of which he is critical. One need not look any farther than constructing himself as the Anti-Christ in relation to Christ, which I explore in the next chapter.

\(^{13}\) Number 67 of "The Wanderer and His Shadow."
The general imprecise way of observing sees everywhere in nature opposites (as, e.g. "warm and cold") where there are, not opposites, but differences of degree. This bad habit has led us into wanting to comprehend and analyze the inner world, too, the spiritual-moral world, in terms of such opposites. (HA 326)

As Nietzsche says, the difficulty is “being unable to see both sides of a thing at the same time, we see and represent them one after the other, but in such a way that we always misjudge or deny the other side in the delusion that what we are seeing in it the whole truth”\(^{14}\) (HA 230). Like Nietzsche, Conrad recognized the problem inherent within dualist structures and in Lord Jim he explores the problem that Nietzsche describes here. The result is that if there is a set of antipathetic ideas, then we must be careful not to misjudge or deny either one side or the other in an attempt to discern which side we are seeing. The challenge is to recognize the simultaneous presence of disparate ideas, if only for a moment or in quick glimpses. Language works against this in identifying one thing as A and the other as B. In grammatical terms, Freud tends to structure his arguments in terms of either/or dichotomies, whereas Conrad’s plot makes us think of the problem in terms of a both/and conjoining which implies simultaneous apposition and opposition. Unlike Freud, Conrad does not believe that “precisely how drives of the two types connect, combine and blend with each other remains entirely unimaginable” (BPP 131). Lord Jim is an extended meditation upon the connection and potentially the identification between the drives. Or to use one of his often repeated words in Lord Jim, Conrad is exploring how the two instincts become “confounded” (30). Conrad challenges us with the problem of whether or not we can tell one from the other or know which of the two is either present or absent at any given moment. This informs the basic plot of the novel. He makes it very difficult to declare with any certainty what exactly Jim is struggling for. When Marlow asks “is he satisfied?” in the penultimate paragraph of the novel, Conrad forces us to wonder what it is Jim wanted to satisfy (246). Conrad sends us back to the beginning of the novel to find the cause.

\(^{14}\) Number 79 of “Assorted Opinions and Maxims.”
The problems with grammar are inseparable from the problems concerning plot. Freud's fundamentally dualist structure informs his vision about the basic trajectory underlying the life of any living organism. Declaring that "the goal of all life is death," Freud idea of plot may appear simple, but the action is not (BPP 78). In life there is the struggle between drives for self-preservation and self-destruction, and as Freud summarizes in *The Ego and the Id*,

in pursuing their respective goals both drives behave in a strictly conservative manner in that they see the restoration of a state that was disrupted by the emergence of life. According to this view, the emergence of life is therefore the cause both of the urge to carry on living and, simultaneously, the urge for death, while life itself is a battle and constant compromise between the two urges. (131) Because "the organism wants only to die in its own particular way," the life-preservative drives resist "in the most energetic way external influences ('dangers') that could help it take a short cut to its life goal (to short circuit the system, as it were)" (BPP 79). As life evolved the external influences forced an organism "to take ever greater diversions from its original course of life and ever more complex detours in achieving its death goal" (BPP 79). Conrad anticipates Freud with ideas that are in some ways similar, but there are complications. As I have suggested, Conrad makes it very difficult to discern the trajectory of Jim's life. Distinguishing between self-preservation and self-destructive acts is not easy and in some passages in the novel may not be possible. One of the ideas informing Conrad's plot is the many ways in which the two drives can become confounded, thereby challenging whether we can know with any certainty. But there is a second idea which is more difficult to read, making it difficult to prove. In *Lord Jim*, the appearance of an instinct for self-preservation is often a cover-story, obscuring what is a desire for self-destruction. There is a troubling connection between self-destruction and self-sacrifice. The part of Jim's heroism that works towards self-sacrifice is a movement towards death. I do not mean that Jim is plotting his own death as a suicide, as Giles Mitchell argues. Yet in some way Jim is arranging his death as a self-sacrifice whether he realizes it or not. The trajectory of
the plot reveals the movement towards that end, but the movement is not decisively willed by Jim. There are too many external complications to identify Jim as the author of his own existence. Yet for Jim to die in his own way, his death must come serving others.

There is no simple way to explore these questions in Lord Jim. The structure of the novel as a whole is informed by Conrad’s conversation with Darwin’s and Nietzsche’s ideas, so I cannot point to a passage and definitively identify either writer’s presence in a straightforward manner. The problem is that Conrad collapses, reconfigures, and recombines the ideas of these two major intellectual predecessors. The ideas are not separated either temporally or spatially in the text. Because we live in a post-Darwinian, Nietzschean, and Freudian world, recognizing Conrad’s ideas about the problems is especially difficult. As Beer suggests, the formulations of the other thinkers are familiar, and exist like habits in our thinking.\(^5\) We look for reproductions of their ideas in Conrad’s text and find it difficult to recognize how and why Conrad is doing something different. Freud might like to think of reading as an archaeological or geological survey, but Lord Jim is neither a monument from ancient Rome nor an exposed geological

\(^5\) See Beer's argument concerning the impression made by the thoughts of past thinkers on the language and thought of later thinkers:

> We now live in a post-Freudian age: it is impossible, in our culture, to live a life which is not charged with Freudian assumptions, patterns for apprehending experience, ways of perceiving relationships, even if we have not read a word of Freud, even to take the case to its extreme – if we have no Freudian terms in either our active or passive vocabulary. Freud sufficiently disrupted all possible past patterns for apprehending experience and his ideas have been so far institutionalized that even those who query his views, or distrust them, find themselves unable to create a world cleansed of the Freudian. (5)

If past patterns of apprehending experience have been disrupted, that does not mean that there are no other modes of thought capable of criticizing Darwin and Freud. For instance, Darwinian, Nietzschean, and Freudian modes of apprehending experience are disrupted in Conrad’s novel. The question is not one of how to cleanse the world of a certain way of thinking, but of how to be critical and thoughtful in a world dominated by certain assumptions and ideas. Conrad’s position between Darwin and Freud makes for a compelling examination. He is thoughtful and critical of the ideas that he inherits from Darwin, demonstrating at least one way of thinking differently from how Darwin proposes. And writing Lord Jim before Freud publishes his later post-war works, Conrad offers a criticism of late Freudian psychoanalytic theory that has not been influenced by Freud’s ideas and language as we have. But if we were to disregard the problem of historical position, the point is that in Lord Jim Conrad creates an action, a plot with a trajectory which not only includes the ideas discussed by Darwin and Nietzsche, but investigates these claims and ideas.
formation. Darwin’s and Nietzsche’s ideas are not stratified in the novel like layers of sediment. But in order to make my argument, I will impose an artificial clarity on the discussion, knowing that the clarity is only apparent. Before exploring all the complications in Conrad’s text, I will briefly outline important ideas from Darwin and Nietzsche. Although many other ideas might be included, the key question raised by Darwin concerns the instincts for self-preservation and self-sacrifice, and the key questions from Nietzsche concern the essential self-regarding quality of all actions and instincts and the thwarting of the instinct for self-preservation by self-sacrifice.

Alan Hunter reveals the “direct debts of Conrad to most of the major writers on evolution in his day” and argues that “it is quite obvious that not only is Conrad using their findings, but also he is in most cases extending and re-writing their rather theoretical works” (6). Hunter demonstrates that Conrad “had begun to explore evolutionary thought in order to understand its mechanism” and his “investigation” is marked by “skepticism at the applicability of Darwin’s doctrine to all aspects of life” (12). Redmond O’Hanlon reads Lord Jim as “Conrad’s tortuous exploration of contemporary scientific ideas” and argues that it is “produced by a germinating cluster of very powerful ideas” of which Darwin is a major contributor (55).

Both critics point towards a set of important passages from The Descent of Man in which Darwin explores the relation between the instinct for self-preservation and the instinct for self-sacrifice. In Chapter 4, Darwin offers a catalogue of examples of both instincts and how they come into conflict, repeatedly returning to the problem of “the instinctive impulses hav[ing] different degrees of strength” and “hence a struggle may often be observed in animals between different instincts, or between an instinct and some habitual disposition” (114, 111). The two passages that manifest the closest analogy to Lord Jim raise questions that bear directly upon Jim’s actions. In questioning how one instinct overcomes another, Darwin notes:

Nevertheless many a civilized man, or even boy, who never before risked his life for another, but full of courage and sympathy, has disregarded the instinct for
self-preservation, and plunged at once into a torrent to save a drowning man, though a stranger. (114)

Then a page later Darwin offers the opposite case: "In a timid man, on the other hand, the instinct for self-preservation might be so strong, that he would be unable to force himself to run any such risk, perhaps not even for his own child" (115). The courage of self-sacrifice is apparently what the French Lieutenant and Bob Stanton demonstrate, whereas Jim is unable to overcome his instinct for self-preservation. O'Hanlon argues that Jim is "burdened with the weight of an uncontrollable instinct for self-preservation" (35), and Hunter agrees, with the qualification that Jim's actions are "involuntary" and only made possible because he "resigns himself to die" (32). I will return to his idea of Jim's resignation later.

In evaluating Jim's actions, both O'Hanlon and Hunter work with a set of assumptions that are questionable. Although I cannot tell whether either critic is aware of the problem, they both categorize Jim as belonging to a lower order of humanity. Hunter repeatedly describes Jim as "sub-human" and "animalistic" (35). O'Hanlon places the instinct for self-preservation beneath "the higher social instinct of a man whose intellect and capacity for sympathy are both well advanced" (41). The assumption is that between the two instincts, the instinct for self-preservation is unquestionably a base and animal impulse whereas self-sacrifice belongs to the higher instincts of man. It is worth recording that Darwin does not share this judgement and argues several times in his chapter that animals display an instinct for self-sacrifice as well, such as the "heroic little American monkey" who saved his keeper from "the great and dreaded baboon" (114). However, in describing the "social instinct" as the "foundation stone" for cooperation among animals and human beings, Darwin does make ideas such as sympathy and self-sacrifice vitally important (103).

The valuation of self-sacrifice above self-preservation is openly attacked by Nietzsche throughout his works. O'Hanlon and Hunter assume not only that there is an easy distinction separating self-preservation and self-sacrifice, egoism and sympathy, self-regarding actions and
altruistic actions, but that the second word-ideas in each pair are more valuable than the first. Nietzsche argues that this distinction is false, in two ways. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche attacks their assumptions by undermining the “belief that ‘unegoistic’ and ‘egoistic’ are antitheses” because “there are neither egoistic nor unegoistic actions: both concepts are psychologically nonsense” (45). For Nietzsche, thinking with these word-ideas obscures the real problem. The question is not whether any action is egoistic or unegoistic, but rather if actions are self-preservative or self-destructive. The change in terms is important, because Nietzsche aligns self-sacrifice and altruism, that is unegoistic actions, with self-destruction. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche addresses a lesson “To the teachers of selflessness” in which he articulates his view that self-sacrificing acts are harmful to the self and praised only because they bring benefits to others: “The ‘neighbour’ praises selflessness because it brings him advantages!” (45).

Characteristically, the central focus is on valuation: “The praise of virtues is the praise of something privately harmful – the praise of drives which deprive a human being of his noblest selfishness and the strength for the highest form of self-protection” (44). For Nietzsche, a morality which praises self-sacrifice is a decadent and degenerate morality. In *Twilight of the Idols* he argues that a “healthy morality, is dominated by an instinct of life” (55). In *The Anti-Christ* Nietzsche explains that an instinct for life is “for growth, for continuance, for accumulation of forces, for power” (129). An instinct of life must consider that “when within an organism the meanest organ neglects even to the slightest degree to assert with absolute certainty its self-preservation, indemnity for its expenditure of force, its ‘egoism’, the whole degenerates.... When one directs any seriousness away from self-preservation... what else is it but a *recipe for decadence*” (EH 67). Nietzsche’s attack on a morality of self-sacrifice is interconnected with his criticism of Christianity, but I will explore this problem in the next chapter.

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16 See “Why I Write Such Good Books,” Section 5.
17 Section 21.
18 Section 4.
19 Section 6.
So Darwin's original opposition which places self-preservation against self-sacrifice is complicated by Nietzsche's argument that self-sacrificing impulses are really drives that are harmful and destructive. But it is important to recognize that neither Darwin nor Nietzsche argues that there is an impulse unto death. For Nietzsche, the morality that he attacks undermines life and quickens the movement towards death, but does so inadvertently; Christianity is not a will to death, but instead a degenerate form of life, a devaluing of the instinct for life. In a sense, Conrad perceives Darwin's antipodes through a Nietzschean lens: he does not simply see opposites but a more subtle relation between the two. And like Nietzsche, Conrad is skeptical about the nature of self-sacrifice and its relation to self-destruction. One way of reading *Lord Jim* is to recognize that Jim's self-sacrifice to and for the Bugis is potentially a cover for an instinct for self-destruction. However, this does not mean that Conrad merely corroborates or advocates Nietzsche's conclusions.

There is a problem in identifying Jim solely with the instinct for self-preservation, that is, with only one of the antipodal ideas. In the first chapter, before Jim's first real test, Conrad makes it clear that both of Darwin's instincts are involved. The language Conrad uses to represent Jim's "hope of a stirring life in the world of adventure" raises the question of what is happening in Jim's thought when "he would forget himself, and beforehand live in his mind the sea-life of light literature" (9). Jim's dream, his ideal conception of heroism,\(^{20}\) is simultaneously comprised of acts of self-preservation and acts of self-sacrifice: "He saw himself saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through a surf with a line; or as a lonely castaway, barefooted and half naked, walking on uncovered reefs in search of shellfish to stave off starvation" (9). The first half proposes a series of self-sacrifices, of endangering the self in order to save others; the second half proposes a solitary struggle for self-preservation, of

\(^{20}\) Although Daniel Cottom's discussion of Jim's heroism is provoking, he does not actually question the substance or the ideas that enable Jim's ideal of heroism. Of all the criticism that I have read on *Lord Jim*, I have not found one critic who recognizes the importance of the bifurcated ideal of heroism that Conrad represents as Jim's vision.
maintaining one’s existence. In this passage, the struggle that Darwin observes between the two instincts is momentarily silenced. In the peacefulness of his imaginings, Jim is not troubled by the conjoining of the two opposing instincts under the overarching ideal of heroism. Conrad is revealing the difficulty inherent in word-ideas such as heroism. As Nietzsche characteristically remarks, a “word is said so quickly it almost seems as if it could contain no more than one conceptual and perceptual root…. As if every word were not a pocket into which now this, now that, now several things at once have been put!” (HA 316).21 In his mind Jim dreams of a concept that he calls heroism, but never really examines the contradictory elements contained within that ideal. For Conrad, the conflicting elements contained within a seemingly unified idea are the kinds of questions that preoccupy his mind.

So there is a basic misreading or misidentification when Giles Mitchell refers to Jim’s “idealized self-image, his “ego ideal” or “heroic fantasies of his ego-ideal” (163). The grammar of a single ideal fails to recognize and acknowledge that Jim’s conception of heroism is heterogeneous, a combination of two ideas, instincts or impulses compounded together. A similar misreading exists in Mitchell’s conclusion that there is a “fatal contradiction between the wish to die and the wish to live a heroic role” (173). The “wish to die” is contained within Jim’s idea of a “heroic role.” The two ideas cannot be read as simply contradictory or even as wholly distinct as Mitchell argues. And Conrad constructs his plot as a complex working through or playing out of the two ideas existing simultaneously in Jim’s mind. But the working through of the plot is Marlow’s task in the telling, and this is another complication to consider.

As the teller of the tale, Marlow makes the primary representation of Jim’s actions through his account of Jim’s life. In recounting his knowledge of Jim, Marlow is simultaneously writing the plot of the novel and reconstructing, to the best of his understanding, the trajectory of Jim’s life. But as J. Hillis Miller argues in “Lord Jim: Repetition as Subversion of Organic Form,” “in Lord Jim no point of view is entirely trustworthy,” not even Marlow’s (447). For

21 Section 33 of “The Wanderer and His Shadow.”
Miller, Marlow may be the epitome of what contemporary theory has identified as the unreliable narrator (447). However, as with the problems I raised about the detectives in Chapter 2, the issue is about knowing and not knowing. The capacity for knowing varies significantly throughout Conrad’s novel. Though Marlow’s is undoubtedly the dominant perspective on Jim’s life, Miller is right to recognize that “the novel is a complex design of interrelated minds, no one of which can be taken as a secure point of reference from which the others may be judged” (447). Through a “pattern of recurrent motifs” Conrad “reveals more about Jim than Marlow comes to understand” (446). Conrad’s language and structure reveal a greater knowing than Marlow possesses. Without entirely realizing the problem, Marlow anticipates the kind of mistake that critics such as Mitchell make in speaking of Jim’s “superb egoism,” “exalted egoism,” and “ideal of conduct” (246). Speaking of an “ideal” obscures the fact that Jim’s thoughts are a composite of contradictory ideas. Granted, Marlow does not know this. It is the narrator of the first four chapters of the novel who reveals this important detail. So in recounting Jim’s life in Patusan, Marlow’s idea of heroism is not necessarily the same as Jim’s. Not having the omniscient mind that Freud claims to possess in his case histories, Marlow cannot understand that Jim’s “recklessly heroic aspirations” are simultaneously self-preservative and self-sacrificial/destructive (53). For Marlow, the end of Jim’s life in Patusan exemplifies that “he was going to prove his power... and conquer the fatal destiny itself,” a conclusion that is ambiguous at best, though I am not sure that Marlow realizes this (242). He does not imagine that Jim’s heroism is a strange offering of himself up as a sacrifice, nor that this sacrifice could be a cover for a self-destructive instinct. This brings into question Marlow’s capacity to understand Jim’s actions, and forces us to judge the trajectory of Jim’s life differently from the account Marlow makes.

Conrad continually emphasizes the strange duality of Jim’s heroism, and Marlow’s repeated allusions to Jim’s dreams of heroism do not help to clarify the problem. If Jim is

\[22\] Marlow readily confesses this fact, even prefacing the last account he gives to the privileged man with “it is impossible to see him clearly – especially as it is through the eyes of others that we take our last look at him” (201).
“projected headlong into the fanciful realm of recklessly heroic aspirations” then we must stop to consider what Marlow means in reflecting “he had no leisure to regret what he had lost, he was so wholly and naturally concerned for what he had failed to obtain” (53). Which of the two impulses embodied in his ideal of heroism is Marlow pointing towards? After the first test Jim faces he convinces himself that “now he knew what to think of” in reference to the menace of the storm (10). In not participating

    He had enlarged his knowledge more than those who had done the work. When all men flinched, then – he felt sure – he alone would know how to deal with the spurious menace of wind and seas. He knew what to think of it. Seen dispassionately, it seemed contemptible. He could detect no trace of emotion in himself, and the final effect of a staggering event was that, unnoticed and apart from the noisy crowd of boys, he exulted with fresh certitude in his avidity for adventure, and in a sense of many-sided courage. (10)

It is important to recognize that at the end of this passage, Jim returns to his emotional and intellectual position before the test. Jim’s mind returns to dreams of heroism, which means the unarticulated contradictory impulse to save and sacrifice himself. He may think that he now knows better, but Conrad knows otherwise. Though Jim is perhaps more experiences that he was, his instincts are no less confused. Later, after the jump from the Patna, Jim thinks “it is all in being ready” (52), and Marlow explains that

    Ever since [Jim] had been “so high” – “quite a little chap,” he had been preparing himself for all the difficulties that can beset one on land and water. He confessed proudly to this kind of foresight. He had been elaborating dangers and defences, expecting the worst, rehearsing his best. He must have led almost exalted existence. Can you fancy it? A succession of adventures, so much glory, such a victorious progress! And a deep sense of his sagacity crowning every day of his inner life. (60)
Jim's preparations to be in a constant state of readiness are interconnected with his ideal of heroism. His readiness shares the contradictory instincts of that heroism. This is the problem with Jim's "perfect state of preparation" (60). Jim is mistaken in claiming that "he had been taken unawares" by the events on the Patna (60). On the contrary, he is ready and able, but the contradictory instincts simultaneously present in his "perfect state of preparation" both answer the call for action. This will become clearer momentarily, but first there is another problem to consider.

In The Descent of Man Darwin examines the struggle that occurs among instincts by considering the difference between "actions performed impulsively" and "actions done deliberately" (115). Darwin confesses that "it appears scarcely possible to draw any clear line of distinction of this kind" (115). The difficulty that Darwin recognizes is represented by Conrad in Jim's actions during the storm. To Jim, "it seemed" as though "he was whirled around" by the "furious earnestness" and the "brutal tumult" of the storm (9). The instinct for self-preservation appears to force Jim to stand passively watching, but at the last moment Jim shows something of the instinct for self-sacrifice because he "seemed on the point of leaping overboard" (9, 10). The repeated use of the conditional and questionable "seemed" should be noted. Grammar becomes a problem here because there is no conclusive evidence that Jim deliberates, decides, or wills. The distinction between impulse and deliberation is obliterated, at least in this passage. Part of the difficulty is that Jim's dream of heroism, having been the primary focus of his conscious thoughts, have become a kind of second nature, or even possibly a first nature. The thoughts have become habits, and as Darwin repeatedly suggests, there is hardly any difference between what has become habit and what has become instinctual. Jim's ideal of heroism (containing the contradictory impulses towards self-preservation and self-sacrifice/destruction) may have began as a conscious thought, but has become intertwined if not synonymous with Jim's nature. And Conrad is careful to teach his readers to recognize the complication in Jim's being.
Conrad calls attention to his own art and thought and helps readers orient themselves to the structure of thought in his novel. He includes a series of variations on Jim's problem that are something like Soren Kierkegaard's "attunements" in *Fear and Trembling.* Kierkegaard's "Attunement" is a concentrated section located at the beginning of the work, whereas Conrad scatters his examples throughout the text; however, the effect is much the same. Through a series of stories or miniature plots within the larger whole, Conrad illuminates and comments upon different aspects of Jim's dilemma. These several different perspectives complicate any single reading of Jim's action, as the examples in themselves are complex and if read carefully pose difficult questions concerning the causes and motivations of the acts. J. Hillis Miller argues that in the sequence of discrete episodes which makes up the novel, no episode serves as the point of origin, the arch example of the *mythos* of the novel, but each is, by reason of its analogy to other episodes, a repetition of them, each example being as enigmatic as all the others. (448)

While Miller might be correct in his observation that "no episode serves as the point of origin," he places too much emphasis on the centripetal force of the different episodes. The central action is the trajectory of Jim's life, and the other episodes are meant to provide different perspectives on that plot. The sequence in which Conrad orders the novel is important and any reader can recognize that the questions surrounding Jim's actions are already being developed when other examples, such as Brierly, the French Lieutenant, and Bob Stanton, are introduced. If

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23 See pages 44-48.
24 Ralph Rader discusses Conrad's use of a "shaping commentary" through the presence of "secondary characters" (229, 228). Rader discusses Conrad's use of Brierly, the French Lieutenant, and the "principal instrument" Stein (230). I disagree with Rader's judgement that Stein is "unequivocally reliable" (231). Each of the commentaries Conrad offers is meant to raise questions about alternative or conflicting readings, and not to provide stable positions from which readers can naively assume they may read the text correctly.
25 Mozina also disagrees with Miller over the question of the relation between the centripetal and centrifugal movements in the trajectory of the action in the novel. He locates a central action in the scapegoat narrative. See pages 39-40.
readers do not recognize the ambiguity in Jim’s actions, these passages are meant to make us more careful and deliberate in our reading.\footnote{See Ian Watt’s discussion, especially on “thematic apposition,” in \textit{Conrad in the Nineteenth Century} (270-86). As Watt argues, the smaller episodes are “structured so as to engage our bewildered participation in a puzzle; the narrative order in both scenes is clearly intended to be interrogative rather than indicative; and this interrogative effect lingers after the episodes have ended” (279).}

The synthesis or conjoining of the two instincts within Jim’s character is important. The possibility of the two instincts co-existing or being in some way interdependent should be compared with the examples of Bob Stanton, Captain Robinson, and Brierly.\footnote{Daniel Ross separates Conrad’s characters into grotesques and heroes, which is at least partially analogous to the problem I am identifying in Stein’s character (50-1). However, he does raise questions about the heroism of characters such as Bob Stanton and Brierly. The difficulty that I have with Ross’s argument is the distinction he draws between “illusion” and “knowledge” (49). Into which category would Ross place the demands upon the self made by non-rational instincts or impulses? Neither category really applies, and yet a violent conflict between different instincts may account for more in Jim’s behaviour than either his beliefs or his conscious knowledge.} All of the characters are examples of Conrad playing with Darwin’s and Nietzsche’s ideas. While Freud believes that he can witness the merging and separation of distinct drives, Conrad shows us otherwise. The perspective from which the actions of these two men are described is as important as the actions themselves. The passages are lessons in reading and judgement. With Bob Stanton and Captain Robinson, the two characters enter and exit \textit{Lord Jim} in quick succession in Chapters 13 and 14. The short amount of space these characters are given should not be mistaken as an adverse judgement about their importance. The close proximity in which they appear in Marlow’s recollection emphasizes that readers should compare the two figures.

The best judgement that can be made about either Bob Stanton or Captain Robinson is that the stories recounting their actions are indeterminate and equivocal. Bob Stanton is apparently the ideal representation of Darwin’s self-sacrifice. O’Hanlon’s judgement is that Bob is nothing short of the epitome of bravery (98). In a situation resembling the first test for Jim, Bob Stanton tries to rescue a girl who has been left behind after all the passengers of a ship involved in a collision have been taken to safety. But the story is strange in a couple of ways.
The girl "had gone completely crazy – wouldn’t leave the ship – held to the rail like grim death." as if she did not want to be rescued and was determined to die (92). And Bob, after initially engaging in a "wrestling-match" with the girl to rescue her from the sinking ship, "had given up hauling at the gal, and just stood by looking at her, watchful like," as if infected by her desire to die (92). Bob would not let any other rescuers intervene, "letting out a yell now and then to warn his boat to keep well clear of the ship," although he undoubtedly knew that the boat "daren’t come alongside for our life" (92). There is a strange ambivalence in the representation of Bob’s actions. In calling attention to the humorous tone in the voice of the narrator of the story, Daniel Ross argues that there is an element of comedy in the passage in suggesting that Bob’s life ends “in comic impotence,” but the comedy is muted (51). If Bob represents the ideal of self-sacrifice in which a person is willing to die in order to save the life of another, there is also the potential that he represents the ideal of self-sacrifice which acts a cover for a person wanting to die. It is as if Bob decides that his self-sacrifice requires that he drown with the girl. It is a perfect sympathy in the altruistic sacrifice. Unlike Freud’s prose, Conrad’s art does not allow readers to witness a merging or de-merging of distinct instincts. Darwinian self-sacrifice and Nietzschean self-destruction are brought into collision here. The “complications of a love affair” and a “mode of life more barren of consolation” certainly suggest that Bob was troubled in his living (92, 91). Conrad would not have included the details had he not wanted to create some measure of doubt about the causes for Bob’s actions. My point is that the description of Bob’s actions makes it difficult to determine which of the judgements is true. Potentially, both are true and readers are forced to weigh the consequences of judging the scene in one way or another.

O’Hanlon shows a similar credulity in accepting Chester’s story that “Robinson gratifies his own desires at the rather excessive expense of other men – by eating them” (91). For O’Hanlon, Robinson is the epitome of self-preservation; however, the story that Chester tells is less credible and more ambiguous, because he is not a witness to the events, unlike the man, Bob’s cousin, who recounted Bob’s experience to Marlow. Chester’s belief that Robinson is a
"cannibal" is undermined by his comment that "God knows the right and wrong of that story" (99). The consequences for the "seven of them that got ashore" after the shipwreck are anything but "obvious" (99). Found "naked as the day he was born," Robinson possibly did revert to a state in which the instinct for self-preservation dominated his actions; however, that idea is compromised by Robinson "chanting some psalm-tune" making it difficult to know whether he is praying or madly singing some remembered song (99). Here too no clear judgement is available. What is important is the suggestion, perhaps only a rumour but important nevertheless, of Robinson killing others to ensure his own self-preservation. There are two other cases close to this in the novel: when Stein and Jim kill their would-be assassins. Both killings are apparently acts of self-defence. With that in mind, the suggestion that "seven of them got ashore, and it seems they did not get on well together" so to solve the "trouble" Robinson gave them a "knock on the head" implies that these were necessary murders (99). There is at least the possibility that the instinct for self-preservation is being used to cover murder. Again, my reading of this passage is conjectural, but it is important to recognize the essential ambivalence in Conrad's representation of how the action is recounted.

Conrad constructs another analogy with Jim in the figure of Brierly, but there is a difference from Bob Stanton and Captain Robinson.38 While the others have no direct contact with Jim, Brierly is one among the panel of magistrates that sits in judgement on Jim's case following the Patna incident. He contributes to the judgement that cancels Jim's certificate and contributes to the series of self-punishments Jim creates and endures afterwards. Within a week of delivering the judgement, Brierly commits suicide. Marlow's representation of Brierly has practically dictated the critical response to his character and the nature of his suicide: however, Conrad includes good reasons to doubt Marlow's judgement here. Marlow remembers Brierly as

38 Readers are encouraged to compare my reading with Watt's in Conrad in the Nineteenth Century (276-80). My reading poses a problem for Watt's idea that the episode with Brierly is meant to suggest "Jim's courage in living on" (279). The timing of Jim's death is very much at issue, and I am unsure that identifying Jim's courage or cowardice is very helpful in the discussion.
a “complacent soul” whose “self-satisfaction presented to me and to the world a surface as hard as granite” (39). But Marlow thinks

No wonder Jim’s case bored him, and while I thought with something akin to fear of the immensity of his contempt for the young man under examination, he was probably holding silent inquiry into his own case. The verdict must have been of unmitigated guilt, and he took the secret of the evidence with him in that leap into the sea. If I understand anything of men, the matter was no doubt of the gravest import, one of those trifles that awaken ideas — start into life some thought with which a man unused to such a companionship finds it impossible to live. (39)

Conrad raises the question of whether Marlow can “understand anything of men” not to discount his argument, but to signal to readers that Marlow’s understanding may be flawed in this passage. Marlow represents Brierly as a man with no higher faith than a “belief in his own splendor” who leaves him at a loss to “tell what flattering view he had induced himself to take of his own suicide” (43). Marlow’s judgement of Brierly’s character is corroborated by Jones’s remark that “neither you nor I, sir, have ever thought so much of ourselves” (43). And Marlow echoes Jones’s remark in remembering the story: “I strongly suspect it was strictly in character: at bottom poor Brierly must have been thinking of himself” (44). Marlow’s account has been accepted much too often without being sufficiently questioned by many critics. For instance, in The English Novel Dorothy Van Ghent categorizes Brierly as belonging to the “devious course of identifications and distinctions” that mark the plot of Lord Jim (241). Her characterization of Brierly is typical yet significant:

Brierly, the unimpeachable professional seaman, in some astounding way identifies himself with the accused man, Jim, and commits suicide. Is this

29 This kind of repetition should be noted as further evidence of Marlow’s willingness to appropriate the judgements of others and then apply them as his own, as seen with Stein’s charge that Jim is a romantic.
another version of Jim’s “jump”? If so, in avoiding by suicide the possibility of
being Jim, Brierly succeeds merely in being what he was trying to avoid: this is
Jim’s case all over again. (241)

Other typical responses include Ressler’s argument that “Brierly’s exalted self-regard is evident
in his suicide” and “the world, obviously, does not revere Brierly as he idolized himself” (33).
For Stape, the identification of Brierly with Jim contributes to the idea that for both men the “life-
impulse is inevitably self-directed and narcissistic” (Jim 73). While the identification with Jim is
important, Brierly’s example cannot be reduced to narcissism or an excessive self-regard.

When Brierly destroys himself, he demonstrates a noticeable regard for others; for
instance, in writing the letter to the shipping company he recommends Jones for a command (41).
Also, Brierly ensures that his dog Rover will not act upon its instincts of self-sacrifice like
Darwin’s monkey. As Stape comments, “the dog would have been faithful until death had its
master not prevented it from jumping overboard with him, and Rover’s purely instinctive
impulse, an unthinking fidelity, must be constrained in order for him to survive” (Jim 73).
Despite Marlow’s and Jones’s characterization of Brierly’s suicide as a self-regarding act, the
evidence of the manner in which Brierly prepares for death suggests otherwise. Brierly does
everything to ensure the safety and well-being of others. He even tells Jones that “I am going aft,
and shall set the log at zero for you myself, so that there can be no mistake. Thirty-two miles on
this course and then you are safe” (40). A large measure of his thought is for the well-being of
the crew and the ship. As he writes in the letter to the company, “even now he was not betraying
their confidence, since he was leaving the ship to as competent a seaman as could be found” (41).
Brierly’s self-destruction is potentially a self-sacrifice for the good of others. What might be read
as a straightforward suicide is connected with self-sacrifice.

The important element of Brierly’s identification with Jim is captured in Jones’s remark
“Maybe his confidence in himself was just shook a bit at the last” (41). To emphasize the
importance of the remark Conrad has Brierly repeat a variation of it: “Such an affair destroys
one's confidence” (45). Having seen Jim's failure in the face of danger, Brierly questions himself, and he loses confidence in his abilities. The question is whether he sees himself as "competent." He begins to doubt whether, "when the call comes," he will be capable of fulfilling his duties (45). The suspicion that he is a danger to his ship and crew informs his decision to destroy himself. The idea is that self-preservation becomes synonymous with endangering others. Through Brierly's example, Conrad creates a lesson in reading how self-destruction can become equated with self-sacrifice. In the three different examples, Conrad is playing with different pairs of word-ideas, aligning different apposites and opposites to explore what occurs when they come into contact. The lessons in these episodes help emphasize the different elements comprising Jim's actions. Having attuned our thought to his art, Conrad challenges us to recognize the complications in the trajectory of Jim's life that accumulate throughout the story.

Conrad carefully prepares his readers for the account of Jim's jump with some important passages of conversation and reflection between Marlow and Jim in Chapter 7. Three connected ideas are repeated several times: that Jim did not think of himself; that Jim was not afraid of death; that Jim was resigned. Believing that "the ship would go down at any moment," Jim "imagined what would happen perfectly; he went through it all motionless by the hatchway with the lamp in his hand" (55). He concludes "that there was nothing I could do. It seemed to take all life out of my limbs. I thought I might just as well stand where I was and wait" (55). Jim is resigned to the events, being "overburdened by the knowledge of an imminent death" (54). He repeatedly "protested he did not think of saving himself" and that all his thoughts were for the "silent company of the dead," the eight hundred passengers that would drown when the ship sank. Jim suspects that Marlow doubts him and asks "do you think I was afraid of death?", then declares "I am ready to swear I was not — I was not" (55). It is important that later Jim remembers saying to himself "sink — curse you — sink" because he "wanted it over" (63).

Alan Hunter points to the exchange in Chapter 7 as evidence that a relaxation of Jim's perfect state of readiness is the cause of his jump. Jim is undermined by "the weariness of having
to wait, alert, for the unexpected” (42). A fall from this state of readiness into “relaxation” caused him to make his irreversible jump” (42). Jim has “given up and is waiting for death” (42). In effect, Jim’s relaxation allows his instinct for self-preservation to dominate, so that when “his sense of duty relaxes” his “involuntary muscles come into action” (34). Jim’s jump is not only “involuntary” but “animalistic” (35). Hunter sees that a kind of willingness for death creates the conditions that make self-preservation possible. In doing so, he drastically undercuts the importance of Jim’s repeated assertions that he was ready to die, and separates the potential of a self-destructive impulse from the jump. For Hunter, the jump must be self-preservation and cannot be connected with Jim’s willingness to die. He wants to attribute the jump to one cause; however, Conrad’s representation makes the cause of the action partly indeterminate because of the multiple causes involved. If Jim is resigned to die, why not make the connection with the jump? Giles Mitchell chooses to disregard the evidence in Chapter 7 altogether. In making a case that “Jim is attacked by death fear” and “rendered volitionless by this fear” (166), Mitchell asks readers to dismiss Jim’s assertion that he was not afraid of death. He argues that it is Marlow “who wants to believe that Jim was not, really, afraid of death” (167). But Conrad is careful to place the words in Jim’s speech, and not in Marlow’s reflections about what he believes Jim was or was not. The conclusion is that Jim’s involuntary jump is determined unconsciously by his death fear. Again, the idea that Jim is actually resigned to die is eliminated, and the cause must be self-preservation.

The problem with Hunter’s and Mitchell’s readings is that they do not recognize nor take into account Conrad’s insistent and emphatic doubling of Jim with George, the acting third engineer identified as the “donkey-man” (27). Of all the criticism I have read, Philip Weinstein alone has recognized the significance of the connection between the two characters: “Jim’s account unintentionally but insistently associates himself with George. He jumps into the place reserved for George; more darkly, he jumps into George” (465). Before Jim jumps, the officers that have already abandoned the Patna are calling “Jump, George! Jump! Oh, Jump!”; of course.
it is Jim who answers the call (69). After the jump, Jim recalls that the officers "were abusing me – abusing me... by the name of George" (73). As Weinstein argues, the importance of the doubling is that Jim "carries George within him – a secret sharer – and George is dead. The implication, borne out in a number of ways, is that Jim is dead too," or that Jim should be dead, that he has an instinct for self-sacrifice/destruction (465). The possibility is that the jump was meant to ensure his death by plunging into the sea instead of safely landing in the boat. Before recounting the jump, Jim remembers tripping past the dead man and explains to Marlow "It was easy to see he did not want to die either. Droll, isn't it? May I be shot if he hadn't been fooled into killing himself. Fooled – neither more nor less. Fooled into it, by heavens! just as I... Ah! If he had only kept still" (67). The broken phrase "just as I" makes Jim's comments reflect upon himself as much as they do George. The identification complicates Jim's earlier insistence that he was resigned to die and was not afraid of death. As the one who remains alive and takes George's place in the lifeboat, Jim is "fooled" into saving himself, despite his readiness to die. Like George, Jim does not want to die, but this does not mean that only self-preservation is operating in Jim's jump. In jumping Jim has also been "fooled into killing himself." He is dead in life after the jump, but not literally dead; therefore the sacrifice is not complete.

In reading Jim's life afterwards, it is important to remember Kierkegaard's argument that "unless you grasp that it requires all the strength of spirit to die, that the hero always dies before his death, you will not come particularly far in your observations on life" (FT 141). Conrad repeatedly signals the importance of Kierkegaard's observation. The captain of the ship that brought Jim to Patusan reinforces this idea in telling Marlow that "the gentleman was already 'in the similitude of a corpse'" (145). So one way of reading the remainder of Lord Jim is that Jim attempts to preserve a life that he has already destroyed. Another way of reading is that the remainder of the novel is Jim's attempt to consummate the self-sacrifice/destruction that eluded him here because he was "fooled" into saving himself. As William Martin argues, Jim "damns himself to death," and he works towards finding a suitable death to end his death in life (236).
In this way the jump is informed by a self-destructive instinct as much as it is a self-preservative instinct. The jump parallels others in the novel: Brierly’s jump is self-destructive and potentially self-sacrificial. The second engineer also associates jumping with self-destruction: “If I thought I was drunk I would jump overboard – do away with myself” (20). Through these parallels Conrad teaches us to read the jump as a double movement. Both instincts are engaged in a struggle and there is no clear evidence that one has conquered the other or that one dominates in being the cause of Jim’s action. But we must consider the possibility that Jim’s jump only appears to be self-preservative and that it really was meant to be self-destructive. And all the actions that follow this decisive moment in Jim’s existence that have been read as self-preservative are potentially self-destructive as Jim moves towards death. The repetitions are unto death, not unto life.

Conrad emphasizes the connection of self-sacrifice and self-destruction in Jim’s lamentations “ah! what a chance missed! My God! what a chance missed!” (53). The chance missed is the self-sacrificial death with the pilgrims. Jim explains that once he was in the life boat the abuse poured upon him by the officers “kept me alive” and “saved my life” (73), while his mind was focused on other things. Thinking that the boat sank, Jim was thinking of the missed chance, as Marlow recounts:

I believe that, in this first moment, his heart was wrung with all the suffering, that his soul knew the accumulated savour of all the fear, all the horror, all the despair of eight hundred human beings pounced upon in the night by a sudden and violent death, else why should he have said, “It seemed to me that I must jump out of that accursed boat and swim back to see – half a mile – more – any distance – to the very spot...”? Why this impulse? Do you see the significance? Why back to the very spot? Why not drown alongside – if he meant drowning – why back to the very spot, to see – as if his imagination had to be soothed by the assurance that all was over before death could bring relief? I defy any one of you
to offer another explanation. It was one of those bizarre and exciting glimpses through the fog. It was an extraordinary disclosure. (71)

The passage as a whole is an "extraordinary disclosure," and I read it as one of the most important in the novel. The questions that Marlow directs at his listeners are meant for Conrad's readers as well; he is asking us whether we can conceive of the thought that would inform such an action. He is asking whether we can see the significance of Jim having to die with the pilgrims. He emphasizes that Jim's self-sacrifice must occur with his self-destruction. The passage is analogous to Bob's episode, where Bob identifies with the drowning girl, much in the same way that Marlow thinks all of Jim's thoughts are for the drowning pilgrims. Jim cannot die for himself, alone: it must be at the service of others.

Afterwards, Jim re-enacts a series of repetitions of the initial jump, each of which emphasizes the basic ambivalence of the original: dropping his employments, escaping from Sheriff Ali's camp, and the final judging before Doramin.\(^\text{30}\) Miller has recognized that the novel "represents human life as happening to fall into repetitive patterns, whether in the life of a single person, as Jim repeats variants of he same actions over and over, or from person to person, as Brierly's jump repeats Jim's jump" (450). Paul Kintzele has observed the same: "by creating a repetitive structure in the narrative, Conrad subtly suggests that Jim is trapped in a behavioral loop" (71). The idea of a behavioral loop is analogous to Freud's idea of organisms having a compulsion to repeat.\(^\text{31}\) For Freud, the compulsion to repeat is simply a conservative instinct through which an organism attempts to revert or regress back into a prior state. In Conrad's novel, the movement is ambivalent: it is not clear whether Jim is progressing or regressing. And

\(^{30}\) As Paul Kintzele observes, Jim's final and fatal meeting with Doramin can be read as "simply another form of jumping" (71-2).

\(^{31}\) In a footnote Daniel Ross argues that "the necessity of the storytelling act for Marlow indicates... what Freud called the compulsion to repeat" (65). Ross argues that Marlow repeats Jim's story in order to master it. In attempting to master Jim's story by repeatedly recounting it, Marlow is somewhat analogous to Jim trying to master his fate. Both Marlow and Jim are working through experiences in which they construct themselves as passive participants and are compelled to endure.
does progress mean moving closer towards death? Or does it imply that Jim is moving closer to his origins? And in which direction should Jim’s heroic ideal be placed? Does Jim progress forward towards it or regress back to it? Marlow explains that Jim passed through a series of jobs in quick succession prior to Stein sending him to Patusan in Chapters 18 and 19. Every time any mention is made of the *Patna* incident, Jim leaves his employer. The connection with Jim’s jump is made explicit in his conversation with Egström. After Egström tells Jim that “this business ain’t going to sink,” Jim “gave a big jump” (118). Jim departs to save himself from the disgrace of having the incident known. But like Brierly, Jim also leaves to save his employers from being disgraced, fearing that if anyone knew his identity his employers would suffer some form of guilt by association and lose business. These departures slowly undermine Jim’s life and his attempts to preserve his moral identity and conscience. He only succeeds in making his secret “perfectly known,” counteracting his own efforts (119). His attempts to preserve his moral identity are self-destructive. Jim’s attempts to move beyond the *Patna* incident only repeatedly recall the experience and make him repeat it over and over.

The jump from Sherif Ali’s compound is a more explicit repetition of the jump from the *Patna*. Taking Marlow on a tour of Patusan, Jim points out “this is where I leaped over on my third day in Patusan…. my second leap. I had a bit of a run and took this one flying, but fell short. Thought I would leave my skin there” (151).\(^{32}\) The cause for the jump is that “the true perception of his extreme peril dawned upon him” in realizing that Sherif Ali and his men were going to kill him (152). It is significant that before the jump Jim is repairing a clock. Conrad reminds his readers to attend to the problem of time in the passage, to suggest that Jim is in the process of repairing time itself. In repairing time Jim is to have another chance, a repetition, and

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\(^{32}\) It is Jim’s third jump literally (he first jumps over the fence, then over the creek), but metaphorically it is not if all the “jumps” from the employers are included as well. Of course, there is no forgetting the aborted jump that Jim fails to make off of the training ship at the end of the first chapter. Yet there is a distinction to be made in that Jim jumps away from the pilgrims on the *Patna* and towards the Bugis in Patusan.
a variation on his earlier life. As in his first jump, there is no deliberation, but rather an
instinctive action: "without any mental process as it were, without any stir of emotion, he set
about his escape as if executing a plan matured for a month... he never thought of anything at the
time" (152). Only afterwards, "he came to himself" (152). The self-preservative escape is
transformed at least momentarily into a death scene when, trying to climb up the muddy bank of
the river, Jim begins "burying himself alive" then falls asleep before experiencing the "violent
convulsive start of awakening" (153). The jump is a death and re-birth.

In making Jim's life and Lord Jim as a whole a series of repetitions and variations,
Conrad is anticipating yet another idea that later became central to Freud's theory. Freud argues
in The Ego and the Id that "in pursuing their respective goals both drives behave in a strictly
conservative manner, in that they seek the restoration of a state that was disrupted by the
emergence of life" (131). Here the focus is on the decisive origin of life; for Conrad, life is
already a given. Freud insists upon the impulse for an organism to return to an inanimate state.
but in Beyond the Pleasure Principle the problem is more open and relates more directly to
Conrad's inquiry. The whole passage is worth quoting because Freud displays a characteristic
tendency, fueled by his desire to be the successful detective, to be the first to discover and solve
an important question or case.

But what is the nature of the connection between the realm of the drives and the
compulsion to repeat? At this point we cannot help thinking that we have
managed to identify a universal attribute of drives - and perhaps of all organic
life - that has not hitherto been recognized, or at any rate not explicitly
emphasized. A drive might accordingly be seen as a powerful tendency inherent
in every living organism to restore a prior state, which prior state the organism
was compelled to relinquish due to the disruptive influence of external forces; we

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33 It is also significant that Jim, like Brown, cannot tolerate imprisonment.
see it as a kind of organic elasticity, or, if we prefer, as a manifestation of inertia in organic life. (76)

Freud is not the first to investigate and "identify" this "universal attribute." He may have some claim to being the first to have "explicitly emphasized" the idea, but that judgement would depend upon the degree of explicitness which is required. There is a danger in valuing explicitness and clarity above the kind of thought employed in a novel where ideas are developed through any number of analogies and variations to create a number of complications and qualifications. Sometimes there is a problem in trying to simplify an idea in order to represent it clearly. Some ideas are neither simple nor clear. But there is also the problem in explicitness in that the writer is extremely self-conscious, and the style registers this. The writer records the process of watching himself think, of watching himself develop the idea rather than simply thinking. Dickens includes a wonderful parody of this problem in Bleak House in describing Conversation Kenge's tendency "to enjoy beyond everything the sound of his own voice" (69). Like the self-gratification that marks Freud's prose, Kenge "listened to himself with obvious satisfaction" (69). It is the difference between thinking and thinking about thinking.

A major part of Conrad's inquiry anticipates Freud's idea in that Jim works to restore a prior state by raising the question of why Jim would do this. The narrative of Lord Jim explores the problem, but Conrad does not make his argument in a form analogous to the systematic theorization of the idea found in Freud's theoretical essays. As I discussed in the second chapter, Conrad is not interested in playing at being a detective; instead, Conrad is interested in problems rather than solutions, and asks how we might think about Jim's life as simultaneously a progression and regression, a self-preservation at the service of self-destruction. The challenge is to read Jim's life as a massive preparation for his death, or his self-preservation as a radical movement towards realizing his self-destruction. Conrad writes the narrative in such a way that coming upon this realization is exceptionally difficult. Conrad was thinking about the problem in
his novels long before the idea dawned upon Freud while also revealing how to recognize the argument within the trajectory of the plot of *Lord Jim*.

If Jim is working to restore a prior state (I am not declaring that this is the correct reading, only that it is one possibility that Conrad allows), it is necessary to recognize the conditions of his original state and how it is disrupted. The fact that "originally he came from a parsonage" is significant because the home of Jim’s father is described as an "abode of piety and peace" (8). Jim’s life began in piety and peace. The first test aboard the training ship represents a minor disruption of this peace which is, at least apparently, quickly restored in Jim’s mind. The second test Conrad creates provides a "glimpse of the earnestness in the anger of the sea" that betrays a "sinister violence of intention" in a "complication of accidents" "coming at him with purpose of malice, with a strength beyond control" (11). The storm "means to tear out of him his hope and fear, the pain of his fatigue and his longing for rest," destroying "all that is priceless and necessary" (11). Following the storm, Jim is "tormented as if at the bottom of an abyss of unrest" (11). While in this torment, Jim is indifferent towards death because his peace has been disrupted. The unrest brings an "anguish" that would "grip him bodily" and make him revolt against the "unintelligent brutality of an existence liable to the agony of such sensations [which] filled him with a despairing desire to escape at any cost" (12). The disturbance that Jim experiences is extreme. The "priceless and necessary" peace that exists before the storm is nothing short of a necessary condition for Jim’s existence. But then the question is why the condition is necessary.

Jim escapes the torments by incurring the relatively small cost of being left behind in a hospital when his ship departs. There Jim settles into a life of tranquility with the "gift of endless dreams" "resembling a holiday pageant" (12). The space of time on shore is the epitome of "eternal serenity" and "smiling peace" (12). Among the other men he stays with, there are two groups: the ones who "led mysterious lives" with the "temper of buccaneers" and the others who developed a "horror of the home service" and "shuddered at the thought of hard work" and
preferred "a soft thing" in the form of an "easy billet" (12-3). Jim develops a "fascination" for the latter group, and by renouncing an opportunity to return home, the original place of peace, he finds a compromise wherein he can remain a sailor and realize his "determination to lounge safely through existence" (13). Jim's position on the *Patna* is a form of work as close to peace as possible and far from the "killing work" Jim later endures as a "water-clerk" (121, 7). For both Jim and the pilgrims that board the *Patna*, the voyage is informed by "the hope of paradise" (13).

For Jim, his time on the *Patna* prior to the accident is characterized by "the assurance of everlasting serenity," as if the ship "had been part of the scheme of a safe universe" (15). Jim delights in the safety and peace of the moment: "Jim on the bridge was penetrated by the great certitude of unbounded safety and peace that could be read on the silent aspect of nature like the certitude of fostering love upon the placid tenderness of a mother's face" (15). It is the "very excess of wellbeing" marked by an "invincible aspect of... peace" (17). The disturbance in the motion of the ship that causes the engineer to tumble and the "vibration" to which the ship "quivered in response" are simultaneously a disturbance in the peace of Jim's life (21). Everything that Jim thought was invincible is broken "and suddenly the calm sea, the sky without a cloud, appeared formidabley insecure in their immobility, as if poised on the brow of yawning destruction" (21). Following the *Patna* incident, everything in Jim's life manifests a desire to restore the conditions of peace that have been destroyed. Once the comforting habitual condition is lacking, one part of Jim's being needs the restoration to satisfy the want. But then Conrad forces us to ask why Jim attempts to restore these conditions. To what end? Well, the significant complication is that the restoration also creates the condition for Jim to potentially achieve the ideal that has eluded him before. It makes an opportunity to realize his heroism, so in one sense, the movement is a progress because Jim is moving into a new time in his living; however, the heroic ideal that he moves towards is still an element of his childhood fantasies. Conrad simply will not allow the reader to judge with any degree of certainty whether Jim is progressing or regressing in his living.
Significantly, Jim is unable to establish the conditions for this restoration prior to his stay in Patusan. He cannot find peace, but once he arrives in Patusan Jim creates the conditions that have been lacking. By ending the war in the country Jim completes two complementary tasks: he brings peace to others (the Bugis) while making peace for himself. Marlow explains that “there was no doubt that it had come to him; and it had come through war, too, as is natural, since the power that came to him was the power to make peace. It is in this sense alone that might so often is right” (157). The “moral effect of his victory in war” is “in truth immense” for both Jim and the Bugis. The language describing the victory is important: “It had led him from strife to peace” (my italics, 161). So when Jim exults “that he often watched these tiny warm gleams go out one by one, that he loved to see people go to sleep under his eyes, confident in the security of tomorrow” (149), he fully shares in the satisfaction of the peace. The contentment resonates in his rhetorical question to Marlow: “Peaceful here, hey?” (149).\(^3\)\(^4\) Having created the conditions restoring the prior state it is understandable why in response to Marlow’s question about leaving Jim answers “it would have been harder than dying” (149). Death is preferable to leaving the peacefulness again. The idea should be recalled when Jim presents himself for judgement before Doramin. Jim’s inability to leave partly informs Marlow’s reflection concerning why Jim’s accomplishments “that made him master had made him a captive too” (149). When Jim looks with “an owner’s eye at the peace of the evening” and Marlow explains that the country had “possessed” Jim, it is because the conditions are necessary for himself (150). Conditions other than those Jim creates in Patusan are unendurable. It is significant that Jim explicitly identifies the condition of peace with himself; Marlow emphasizes that Jim “had made himself responsible” (158, 176).

\(^3\)\(^4\) Ross observes that Patusan is an “environment of constant hostility, danger, and intrigue” (56). In light of the assassination plots and the presence of Cornelius, Ross may be right. If so, then Jim’s idea that Patusan is peaceful is an illusion he maintains for himself. But the problem is unchanged, because whether the peace is real or not, Jim believes that it exists here for him and the Bugis, and his belief is what determines his behaviour.
When we recognize the connection between what Jim lost by jumping from the *Patna* and what he has regained in creating the peace in Patusan, Marlow’s earlier reflections\(^\text{35}\) about Jim’s readiness for death take on an added significance:

He might have been resigned to die, but I suspect he wanted to die without added terrors, quietly, in a sort of peaceful trance. A certain readiness to perish is not so very rare, but it is seldom that you meet men whose souls, steeled in the impenetrable armor of resolution, are ready to fight a losing battle to the last; the desire of peace waxes stronger as hope declines, till at last it conquers the very desire of life. Which of us here has not observed this, or maybe experienced something of that feeling in his own person – the extreme weariness of emotion, the vanity of effort, the yearning for rest? (56)

The conditions that Jim creates in Patusan are the most analogous to those at the hospital and on the *Patna* before the incidents that occur in the later part of novel. Both moments are a “sort of peaceful trance.” And both are a space of time in which Jim might have died “without added terrors.” The question Conrad raises is whether that desire for peace is self-destructive, which is related to Nietzsche’s argument that a person is degenerating if not growing into power. With Jim’s actions in Patusan in mind, the argument is difficult to see steadily and whole. Jim demands the conditions of peace that existed prior to the *Patna* incident (which in themselves make Jim’s existence resemble a kind of death in life). Jim arrives in Patusan and successfully creates and enjoys those peaceful conditions, at least until the arrival of Brown. The creation of those conditions is simultaneously self-preservation and self-sacrificial. He endangers his life to create the peace for himself and the Bugis; he risks death in order to survive. The account of Jim taking the potentially poisoned coffee when meeting with Tunku Allang is a concentrated example of this. Enduring the monthly ritual in which there is the “barest chance” that Jim will

\(^{35}\) Marlow makes these comments at the end of Chapter 7, in the middle of Jim’s recounting of the events on the *Patna*.
be poisoned is necessary if he is “to do any good here and preserve my position” (151). When Marlow charges Jim with having a “fierce egoism,” there is some relation to Marlow’s thought about Brierly’s narcissism. For Brierly, self-destruction meant self-sacrifice for the good of his ship and crew. The potential self-destruction Jim risks in taking the coffee is a necessary self-sacrifice for the Bugis, but it is also necessary for his own self-preservation. If the conditions were destroyed, Jim might not live, or he might return to the tortured existence he experienced before. But if Jim dies from the coffee, the death would occur in the peaceful conditions he created and without the added terrors that a war would bring. While Jim creates conditions that are necessary for him to live, these are also the conditions in which he can die.

One reading of Jim’s life in Patusan would argue that in creating the peace in Patusan, Jim has “mastered his fate,” or at least something approximating that condition (164, 193). Unfortunately for Jim, Conrad does not argue that any of us are wholly the authors of our own lives. In Freud’s thought, this kind of self-command or self-mastery remains a possibility, because he argues “the fact that remains is that the organism wants only to die in its own particular way.... Thus arises the paradox that the living organism resists in the most energetic way external influences (‘dangers’) that could help it to take a short cut to its life’s goal (to short circuit the system, as it were)” (BPP 79). Freud argues that an organism wants to die a death of its own choosing and will resist influences that divert the organism from that chosen end. Conrad anticipates this idea in his novel, but reveals the degree to which Jim is not the master of his own fate because he is not the master of his own warring instincts. Nor is he the master of the conditions in which he lives, as Brown’s unwelcome appearance demonstrates. In Conrad’s novel, the better truth is that Jim is mastered by his own instincts and cannot realize nor completely control his destiny.

Through the composite heroic ideal of his dreams, Jim’s choice for his death is created and repeated until it is rendered instinctual. The self-sacrificial death becomes inseparable from Jim’s nature. But Conrad shows that the idea of choosing a death is complicated. As Nietzsche
often argues, impulses or drives can completely overwhelm a person, making the ideas of freedom, will, and choice insignificant. Nietzsche is not consistent in his arguments about the value of the will, and I am not sure Conrad thinks that we entirely lack will and freedom. But the problem is that Jim's instincts are working against each other; Jim might have an instinct for a self-sacrificial death, but his self-preservative instincts do not simply resign themselves in order for him to be satisfied in this. Nor does Jim have total control over the moment of his death. Jim's self-sacrificial death is frustrated in some way by his self-preservative instinct or by chance allowing him to land in the lifeboat. In the later part of the novel, Conrad emphasizes that Jim does not have an unlimited freedom in defining the conditions for his death by having Brown upset the peace in Patusan. Jim might work towards creating conditions that reflect his instincts for self-preservation or self-destruction, but he can only do so much. The conditions of the novel and the trajectory of the plot are larger than Jim's life and the workings of his internal drives. Nevertheless, there is a moment in which Jim achieves something akin to "mastering his fate": his confrontation with the assassins, but even here Conrad depicts a complicated collision among different ideas that can produce different readings.

In Conrad's novel, Jim is tested repeatedly by external agents: the storm on the training ship, the derelict ship that the Patna strikes, the men with knowledge of the Patna affair, the assassins, and Brown. In none of the tests but one does Jim have any real control and he thinks the tests are unfair. For Jim, the tests that Conrad creates are all "too much for any man" (77). The one possible exception is Jim's confrontation with the assassins in which he appears to achieve as complete a control of the situation as humanly possible. But his measure of control is anything but assured. One of the significant differences between the test on the Patna and the test with the assassins is Jim's readiness. Jim is not ready for the assassination attempt, because "he was weary of these attempts on his life" (177). But the problem is the degree to which Jim's instinct for self-preservation is relaxed and/or Jim is actively courting death. Jewel keeps watch over Jim, who was "to be set upon while [he] slept" (177). If she had not, then it is likely that Jim
would have died. But then this is surely not the death that Jim desires. When Jim doubts whether
"I was not quite myself for whole weeks on end about that time," Marlow contradicts him: "Oh
yes. You were though" (177). The problem is discerning how Jim is fully himself is the scene
that follows.

Reading Jim's confrontation with the assassins is difficult and the more I think about the
very strange action that Conrad has created, the more complications I recognize. Initially, it
appears as though Jim is engaged in a simple act of self-preservation: it is either him or the
assassins. But Jim's thoughts reveal a more troubling set of problems. According to Freud's
theories in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Jim is identical to the child at play in that he is making
himself the master of the situation. In Freud's simple reading, Jim is revenging himself upon
these men for the passive cruelties that he has suffered before. This might explain Jim's
"vengeful elation" and his forcing the three remaining assassins to jump into the river (179-80).
Jim forces these men to relive his own passive experience. However, Freud's psychoanalytic
explanation would actually amount to a radical simplification of the scene because the
identification implied in the forced re-enactment of Jim's experience is more complicated.
Weinstein argues that

Jim relishes this death scene too intensely for it not to relate massively to his
own. His prolonged savoring of this moment in which a dangerous man is about
to be annihilated by his own greater power reverses satisfyingly his earlier
nightmare of impotence. "Relief... vengeful elation... appeased... atoned" – this
is the language of a man with a death inside him, and he is ready to inflict it upon
others, as he is "heroically" ready to inflict it upon himself. (466)

Weinstein suggests that Jim is doing unto others what he would have done to himself: his
annihilation of the assassin is also identification because Jim desires death for himself. Conrad
makes the act of mastery very strange. The act of self-preservation is mixed with a strange
expression of Jim's desire for death. Or, the act of self-preservation obscures the co-existing
instinct for self-destruction. Weinstein has recognized that in this passage, the instinct for self-destruction has only been displaced or projected momentarily. Jim has himself as much in mind as the assassin that he is killing. In Chapter 6, I remark that in the analogous scene from Stein's life, he acts in self-defence in killing the men who ambush him, and then destroys the butterfly. In Jim's scene, there is no butterfly to kill and capture. His attention is not immediately diverted by some beautiful specimen. If Jim believes that "the death of that man had atoned for everything," then this may also be true of his own death (179). In the immediate context, the referent for "that" appears to be immediately clear, but when we think about the novel as a whole, Conrad includes Jim in "that" as well. In the final scene of the novel, Jim occupies the dead man's position, and Conrad asks us to consider the degree to which his death "atoned for everything."

Although I have focused solely on Lord Jim, Conrad's preoccupation with the complicated relationship between the instincts for self-preservation and self-sacrifice/destruction persists throughout many of his major works. In Nostromo, Conrad explores the extremes of the instincts through several characters, such as Hirsch, Decoud, Nostromo, Dr. Monygham, and a strange variation on the problems in Gould's strange relationship with his mine. In The Secret Agent, the conflict informs nearly all the major characters to some degree, and in Under Western Eyes, Conrad returns to explore a pattern very close to his writing in Lord Jim. Conrad is strongly preoccupied with the kinds of questions I have raised here, and in the next chapter I will explore how Conrad explores the relation of the instincts to knowing. Conrad asks whether Nietzsche's own self-preservation depends upon the avoidance of feeling pity, or whether that denial is actually self-destructive.
Chapter Five: Conrad versus Dionysus versus the Crucified

Having spent a great deal of time wondering about how to characterize Conrad’s thought about Friedrich Nietzsche, I am convinced that it is best described as a profound ambivalence.¹ Conrad’s response to Nietzsche is analogous to Marlow’s response to Jim: a conflicted combination of sympathy and judgement. Although there is insufficient evidence in Conrad’s correspondence to demonstrate that he possessed a thoroughgoing knowledge of Nietzsche’s thought,² I will argue that Lord Jim and The Secret Agent prove that he did; and I will use passages from Victory as a means of identifying the significant problems in reading Conrad’s response to Nietzsche.³ The difficulty is that Conrad’s reading of Nietzsche produces contradictory responses, and, as George Butte argues, those responses “included unwilling sympathy and hostility, imitation and parody, as Conrad seems to argue with Nietzsche about the best human response to knowing the worst of our condition” (155). For Conrad, Nietzsche exemplifies the best and worst of our condition, and he struggles to acknowledge the best and

¹ In “What Silenus Knew: Conrad’s Uneasy Debt to Nietzsche,” George Butte arrives at a similar conclusion in describing “Conrad’s ambivalence towards Nietzsche” (167). In reading The Secret Agent, Butte recognizes that “the generally ambivalent, often self-dismantling ironies of this novel seem to communicate a divided response” (166). I side with Butte against Barbara deMille’s position that Conrad’s response was simply an “unfavourable opinion of Nietzsche” (699). Conrad’s ambivalence towards Nietzsche should be compared with Nietzsche’s ambivalence towards Richard Wagner, which is how René Girard defines the relationship in “Nietzsche and Contradiction” (61).

² In addition to the letters I have quoted below, Conrad alludes to Nietzsche several times in his correspondence. He discusses Nietzsche in relation to the problem of faith in a letter to Helen Sanderson on 22 July 1899 (CLJC 2, 188). In letters to Edward Garnett on 26 October 1899 and 9 November 1899, Conrad writes that “I had letters about your Nietzsche from all sorts of people,” referring to Garnett’s recently published article in Outlook (in the issue dated 8 July 1899), which Conrad undoubtedly read (CLJC 2, 209). In a letter to Ford Madox Ford on 23 July 1901, Conrad recalls a conversation he had about Nietzsche’s philosophy, specifically the overman (CLJC 2, 344). Conrad thanks J. G. Huneker on 16 April 1909 for including his name in the latter’s book of “Supermen” which also included Nietzsche (CLJC 4, 217). And there is the letter of thanks to André Ruyters on 30 March 1913 for a book in which the latter attempts to resolve the antipodal relation between Nietzsche and Christ (CLJC 5, 202-4).

³ In his introduction to The Secret Agent, Martin Seymour-Smith argues that “Conrad himself was clearly influenced by Nietzsche, although there is no direct evidence for this” (22). I agree with the first part of the statement, but not the second, and I will point towards Conrad’s novels as the very best kind of “direct evidence.”
worst in Nietzsche’s thought. But Conrad also struggles with his sympathy and antipathy towards Nietzsche’s ideas, some of which are uncomfortably close to Conrad’s own convictions.\footnote{I disagree with Leighton Pratt’s judgement in “The Sources of Conrad’s ‘Philosophy’,” that the presence of Nietzsche’s ideas in Conrad’s works can simply “be viewed here as an aspect of Schopenhauer writ large” (165). Nietzsche should be included in a discussion of Conrad’s ideas.} The conflicted response in the novels is an indication of Conrad’s difficulty in writing about Nietzsche’s ideas.

Conrad’s response to Nietzsche is encapsulated in the language which he employs in the “Author’s Note” to The Secret Agent, where, in a characteristic manner, a pair of oppositions are suspended on either side of a conjunction, making the relation between the antipodes difficult to discern. Conrad raises the question of the degree to which the two word-ideas are apposite and opposite. The impression of Nietzsche’s thought on Conrad’s style is immediately apparent, since Nietzsche is the great nineteenth-century master of antipodal thinking. Conrad defends “the whole treatment of the tale” by arguing that The Secret Agent is informed by an “inspiring indignation and underlying pity and contempt” (38). These three ideas are all interconnected through conjunctions which makes the passage difficult to read with sufficient care and attention. Conrad is not simply working with a pair of antipodes, but begins with an emotional judgement which is qualified by and qualifies the words that follow. Conrad raises the question of how indignation, pity and contempt are related. The conjunctions eliminate any movement of cause and effect, so it is unclear whether the responses are simultaneous or if one is the cause for the others. I will argue that Nietzsche’s ideas are one of the most important causes for the inspiration to write and the indignation written into The Secret Agent and that the indignation contains two simultaneous responses. Conrad pities Nietzsche for his lack of insight into, or willful not knowing of, himself which causes his self-destruction, and Conrad is contemptuous of Nietzsche’s attempt to be a great man through his attempts to destroy Christianity. Or to change the problem slightly by using the dominant language from Lord Jim, Conrad sympathizes with Nietzsche’s struggle through the pains of suffering and admires his accomplishments, but passes
judgement upon Nietzsche’s thought and concludes that it is inadequate.\(^5\) In Conrad’s view, the
great master of antipodes fails to know himself sufficiently through the very antithesis which he
constructs, and Conrad reveals how Nietzsche’s not knowing is an important cause of his self-
destruction. Like Nietzsche, Conrad too is a master of antipodes; however, he rarely thinks
simply in terms of opposition or apposition, but instead always performs both mental
comparisons simultaneously. As I have already demonstrated in the previous chapters, Conrad is
adept at synthesizing, confounding, and conflating what are usually viewed as radically distinct or
opposite ideas, positions, or arguments. He understands very well that the relationship between
pity and contempt is not simply antipodal, having written a sustained meditation on the
relationship between the two words in *Victory*. The lessons Heyst’s father makes concerning the
antithesis are important because they show how Conrad is responding to Nietzsche’s thought
about these ideas.\(^6\) But the other question that Conrad raises is the degree to which contempt
becomes a defence against pity, which directly points towards his criticism of Nietzsche.\(^7\) Conrad
asks us to consider how Nietzsche’s dominant intellectual movement towards contempt conceals
an equally strong movement towards pity when we read Stevie in *The Secret Agent*, who is a
caricature of certain aspects of Nietzsche’s thought.

In the “Author’s Note” for *Victory*, Conrad repeatedly returns to the notion of
“detachment” (48), especially in connection with Axel Heyst, who is the very embodiment of the

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\(^5\) That Conrad and Nietzsche shared a profound suffering from mental and physical ailments of all
kinds cannot be emphasized sufficiently. Both writers worked through terrible pain to produce
masterpieces of the highest order of thought. I doubt that Conrad would have disregarded this in
making a judgement of Nietzsche’s work.

\(^6\) In “*Conrad: The Later Moralist*,” J. E. Saveson argues that *Victory* is clearly influenced by
“Nietzsche’s philosophy” (111). He explores how *Victory* is “predominantly a Nietzschean work
with a Nietzschean psychology” (119). Like Saveson, I have some questions about Conrad’s
representation of Schomberg, whom Conrad claims has “indubitably the psychology of a Teuton”
in the “Note to the First Edition” (46). Saveson reads Schomberg as an example of the “German
temperament which provided much raw material” for Nietzsche’s thought; however, I cannot help
thinking that like the German captain in *Lord Jim*, Schomberg is one of Conrad’s ferocious jokes
at Nietzsche’s expense.

\(^7\) Saveson claims that Heyst’s father is close to Schopenhauer and claims that Conrad is
expressing a Nietzschean opposition to him (119).
idea in the novel. If Conrad “wouldn’t be suspected even remotely of making fun of Axel
Heyst,” in the “Author’s Note” (48), then the disagreeableness of the idea is partly informed by
Conrad himself playing a part at times very much like his difficult hero in the passage from which
I have been quoting in the “Author’s Note” to The Secret Agent, which ends on a note
exceedingly characteristic of Heyst. Conrad offers the “underlying pity and contempt” as proof
of his “detachment” in writing The Secret Agent (38). Of course, Heyst is the embodiment of
detachment, which Conrad shows to be an expression of his skepticism, and this points towards
the problem of the relation between Conrad and his skeptical hero.

In The Secret Agent and Lord Jim, Conrad responds to Nietzsche’s criticism of
Christianity, primarily through the central heroes or victims or scapegoats: Stevie and Jim. The
question of identification raised in the two novels is central to Conrad’s inquiry. The problem of
knowing which of the three terms best applies to the two characters is not resolved but carefully
suspended among the potential answers. In other words, Conrad works among the ideas, showing
how there is a degree of truth in identifying Stevie and Jim with all three words: the characters
are a complex combination, amalgamation, or conflation of heroes, victims, and scapegoats. By
including aspects of Nietzsche’s thought in both characters, Conrad shows how Nietzsche can
potentially be identified with all three ideas. Through the trajectories of the lives of the two
characters, Conrad reworks many important ideas central to Nietzsche’s thinking about
Christianity, which is to say his thought as a whole.

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8 The notes for both The Secret Agent and Victory were composed in 1920. I am not sure
whether Conrad reread all of his works as he wrote the notes but it is evident that he is thinking
across his works despite ostensibly writing a headnote for one or the other.
9 Garry Watson discusses Stevie as a scapegoat in relation to Girard’s arguments concerning the
“sacrificial crisis” at the center of Christianity (218). I would argue that Watson’s comparison of
The Secret Agent with Melville’s “Billy Budd” should be extended to include Lord Jim. All
three works by Melville and Conrad are explorations into the “sacrificial crisis” and Christianity
and raise questions about how to think about Christ’s example. Michiel Heyns identifies Jim as the
“scapegoat of the narrative” of Lord Jim (193).
10 I am of the same mind as Girard who holds that Nietzsche’s philosophy as a whole cannot be
separated in any way from his antipodal relationship with Christianity. See the opening of
“Dionysus versus the Crucified.” Walter Kaufmann also argues that Nietzsche’s position towards
When read together, *Lord Jim* and *The Secret Agent* constitute an elaborate and sophisticated reading of Nietzsche’s philosophy in which Conrad reveals the problems inherent within Nietzsche’s professed antipodal relationship to Christianity, famously expressed in the final line of *Ecce Homo*: “Have I been understood? – *Dionysus against the Crucified…*” (104). Through Stevie and Jim, Conrad collapses the opposition that Nietzsche constructs. For Conrad, there is much less of a difference than Nietzsche desires between Dionysus (or Zarathustra or Nietzsche) and Christ. And not only is Conrad’s response to Nietzsche marked by a profound pity and contempt for the great philosopher’s life and thought, but the very problem which Conrad identifies as crucial in Nietzsche’s thinking is the troubling preoccupation with repudiating pity, compassion, or sympathy and the characteristic tendency towards contempt, disgust, and repudiation found throughout Nietzsche’s works. Nietzsche is constantly burdened by the thought of whether to feel pity or contempt for the suffering that he recognizes in mankind. In Conrad’s view, this difficulty, when combined with Nietzsche’s near obsession with Christ and Christianity in the last year of his life, is one important cause for Nietzsche’s self-destruction and descent into madness.\(^\text{11}\) In part, Conrad reveals this insight through his representation of Stevie, who caricatures many significant aspects of Nietzsche’s life and thought. In Stevie, the initial tension between and then later collapse of, pity and resentment is one of the causes which lead to his explosion. But the problem of pity and contempt, closely related to but not exactly the same as the relation between sympathy and judgement, is also the underlying consideration in *Lord Jim*, where Conrad writes his own inquiry into the limitations of belief and skepticism. Perhaps the best way to indicate Conrad’s concern is to point to the problem which preoccupied Nietzsche

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\(^{11}\) Implicit in my argument is that Conrad anticipates Girard’s argument in “Nietzsche and Contradiction” that the “plunge into madness is the final confusion of the difference” between Dionysus and the Crucified” (64). In effect, Nietzsche’s madness is read as a mental rather than a primarily physical sickness and is centered upon the structure of differences he constructs between himself and Christ (and, Girard claims, Wagner).
in *The Anti-Christ*: the "psychological type of the redeemer" (152).\(^\text{12}\) Through Stevie and Jim, Conrad reveals the degree to which Nietzsche’s own thought is characteristic of the "type of the redeemer." In other words, Conrad measures Nietzsche against his own categories and asks whether Nietzsche is to some degree true to the "type." Conrad’s two redeemers are sustained meditations upon Nietzsche’s troubled philosophy. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that Conrad is one of the best of Nietzsche’s readers early in the twentieth century and remains one of his best readers today.\(^\text{13}\) And this matters because, like Freud’s psychoanalytic methods, Nietzsche’s ideas inform so many of our postmodern theories.

Although the passage in Conrad’s “Author’s Note” to *The Secret Agent* is often quoted because of Conrad’s description of the narration in that novel as “an ironic method,” I am more interested in Conrad’s explanation “that ironic treatment alone would enable me to say all I felt I would have to say in scorn as well as in pity” (41). This passage marks the second moment in the “Author’s Note” in which Conrad is reflecting upon the dual presence of scorn (rather than

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\(^\text{12}\) Section 29.

\(^\text{13}\) There is one potential objection that I will anticipate which might undermine the claims I am making for Conrad as a critical reader of Nietzsche. How could Conrad respond critically to Nietzsche’s ideas if he had not read his works? In *Nietzsche in England: 1890-1914*, David Thatcher carefully enumerates the different ways in which Nietzsche was available to readers in England including articles and reviews which discussed and quoted passages from his works, as well as full translations of a few of his works. He marshals compelling evidence establishing Nietzsche’s presence in the intellectual atmosphere of late Victorian and early Modern England by pointing to the numerous reviews and articles in which Nietzsche and his ideas were discussed and emphasizes that “Nietzsche’s impact was most strongly felt, not in academic circles, but in artistic ones” (121). Thatcher’s work is corroborated by Conrad’s own testimony in the letters of 26 October 1899 and 9 November 1899 in which Conrad alludes to Garnett’s article on Nietzsche and the many people who wrote to him about the article and Nietzsche specifically. While the whole book is well worth reading, I simply want to point towards Thatcher’s extremely illuminating chronological table that appears opposite to the table of contents (x). Thatcher summarizes the initial dates of publication for Nietzsche’s works in German, French, and English. Several of Nietzsche’s works were available in French translation at the end of the nineteenth century, but I was surprised to discover how many of Nietzsche’s works were available in English translations: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra, The Twilight of the Idols, Nietzsche Contra Wagner, and The Antichrist* were all available in 1896, and *The Genealogy of Morals* was available in 1899. So Conrad had ample opportunities to read Nietzsche in English or French. And it is also worth noting that Conrad read Garnett’s article on Nietzsche and alludes to correspondents writing with questions or comments about Nietzsche’s ideas during the period in which he was writing *Lord Jim*. Why would anyone write to Conrad with questions about Nietzsche’s philosophy without having some idea that Conrad must have some knowledge of the philosopher’s work?
contempt here) and pity in his thought. It is important because the idea of an “ironic treatment” is made analogous to Conrad’s earlier claim for “detachment” (41), which I have already called into question. Conrad insists that he must express both scorn and pity and as a consequence writes in a style that will allow him sufficient intellectual space so that neither one nor the other dominates. In neither of the passages I have quoted does Conrad’s grammar favour either one side or the other of the opposition. Conrad’s anxiety to have readers understand that “there was no perverse intention, no secret scorn for the natural sensibilities of mankind at the bottom of my impulses” makes him especially self-conscious about the question of whether his contempt will be read as “elaborating mere ugliness in order to shock” (38). The insistence that readers recognize that he is writing “in scorn as well as in pity” is also an insistence that Conrad’s style is not only capable of but actively practicing both kinds of judgements, which are emotional and intellectual. For Conrad, the question of style is part of his response to Nietzsche, whose “ironic treatment” of intellectual, cultural, and philosophical questions is often an expression of contempt rather than pity.

Conrad makes the problem of the relationship between pity and contempt one important focus in Victory, and given that this is a central problem for my inquiry, I will begin with two passages from that novel in which Conrad makes the relationship highly questionable. The primary concern is to recognize how Conrad transforms or translates the skeptical confounding of the distinction between pity and contempt often expressed in Nietzsche’s philosophy into the ideas and words of Heyst’s father.\(^{14}\) This is important because, like Nietzsche, Conrad is able to explore the degree to which the antithesis might be read as identical, but unlike Nietzsche, without accepting or advocating the idea. The elder Heyst’s thoughts are seriously qualified by

\(^{14}\) In “Conrad’s Victory and the English Tradition,” L. R. Leavis and Detlef Wagenaar argue that the philosophy of the elder Heyst is related to Schopenhauer (488). The problem with this view is that the elder Heyst views pity contemptuously, whereas my own reading of the centrality of pity for Schopenhauer’s philosophy is confirmed by Brian Leiter’s argument that “compassion is the true basis of morality” for Schopenhauer (57). Heyst’s father can hardly be like Schopenhauer in holding contempt and pity to close together.
how Heyst remembers and/or the narrator describes Heyst’s father, sitting “rigid in the high-backed chair,” as the “man who had spent his life in blowing blasts upon a terrible trumpet which had filled heaven and earth with ruins, while mankind went on its way unheeding” (194). At the opening of the third chapter of Part Two, he is described as a “thinker, stylist, and man of the world” who “had dragged on this painful earth of ours the most weary, the most uneasy soul that civilization had ever fashioned” (129). Rather grudgingly, the narrator observes that “one could not refuse him a measure of greatness, for he was unhappy in a way unknown to mediocre souls” (129). Like Nietzsche, Heyst’s father had been ignored in his lifetime, and the character shares with Nietzsche an “uneasy soul” and a greatness allied with trouble only known by superior men. There is a grandeur implied in the style used to describe the elder Heyst’s failure to convince others (194). And the trajectory of the novel as a whole questions the father’s role as a cause of which Heyst is a consequence. Heyst’s life is to some degree the lived practice of the education the father provided to the son.15 Heyst’s troubled life and his problems with human solidarity are shown to be a direct consequence of his inability to escape from his father’s teaching; his detachment is interconnected with his intellectual tendency towards contempt for others through which his sympathy is only intermittently revealed (for example, through his sympathy towards Morrison and Lena). If the elder Heyst includes aspects of Nietzsche’s thought, then this raises the question of the degree to which Heyst is somehow analogous to Conrad.16

The question I am raising informs my second concern, which is to recognize how the pity and contempt in Heyst’s feelings towards his father can be read as, in some ways, analogous to Conrad’s response to Nietzsche. Conrad’s thought about the ideas in Heyst’s and Heyst’s father’s

15 Leavis and Wagenaar make the important observation that the “relationship of Heyst with his father shows more of a marked similarity with that of John Stuart Mill and his father” and also invoke the obvious analogy to Gradgrind and his children in Dickens’s Hard Times (494, 493). I entirely agree; however, there are also aspects of or elements analogous to Nietzsche’s thought in the elder Heyst’s thought.

16 See Douglas Park’s argument that Heyst “evidently dramatizes a part of Conrad’s own personality,” specifically, in relation to his skepticism (150).
minds is also an inquiry into his own. Heyst’s father is described as “that bitter condemnor of life.” This description resembles Nietzsche’s criticism of lives informed by resentment and Christian/slave morality, but differs from Nietzsche’s acceptance of life as a whole. Some aspects of the elder Heyst’s lessons to his son sound strikingly Nietzschean, undoubtedly because the man is represented as “the silenced destroyer of systems, of hopes, of beliefs” (194). I would argue that Conrad’s identification of Nietzsche as one of “the great minds” in a letter to André Ruyters on 30 March 1913 be kept in mind when reading Heyst’s recollections of his father (CLJC 5, 204). If Conrad was reading Ruyters’ work about Christ and Nietzsche and writing about Nietzsche in his letters in the time before composing Victory, then it is very likely that he had Nietzsche in mind when writing the novel.

The aspects of Nietzsche’s thought present in the elder Heyst’s language will be easier to recognize when we have a sample of Nietzsche’s repudiation of pity in mind. On the Genealogy of Morals is a sustained meditation on pity, which Nietzsche identifies as the central problem provoking his study as it relates to resentment and the slave morality that he associates with Christianity. However, I want to point to an extremely troubling passage from Beyond Good and Evil which brings the problem in Nietzsche’s thought into focus. For Nietzsche, in nineteenth-century Europe, “no other religion is any longer preached now” except for “pity and fellow suffering” (BGE 151). He marks this as part of the “darkening and uglification of Europe” (151). Nietzsche’s rejection of pity reveals how pity can be a form of contempt, and his play with words shows his contempt for pity. Nietzsche argues that anyone with

17 Again, see Park’s argument that the skepticism of Heyst’s father is related to Conrad’s own, and that “the connection between [the “Author’s Note] and the narrative suggests that Conrad wrote Victory, at least in part, to examine the nature and significance of one of his most common postures” (157).
18 In a footnote, Frederick Karl explains that Ruyters “had undertaken the formidable task of reconciling Christ and Nietzsche” (CLJC 5, 203). Of course, the fact that Conrad had read Ruyter’s Le Mauvais Riche before writing Victory reinforces my conjectures about the degree to which Heyst and or his father are written with Nietzsche’s ideas in mind.
19 See Nietzsche’s “Preface” to On the Genealogy of Morals, especially sections 5 and 6.
20 Section 222.
an artist’s conscience will look down on [certain modes of thought] with derision, though not without pity. Pity for you! That, to be sure, is not pity for social “distress,” for “society” and its sick and unfortunate, for the vicious and broken from the start who lie all around us; even less is it pity for the grumbling, oppressed, rebellious slave classes who aspire after domination – they call it “freedom.” Our pity is a more elevated, more farsighted pity – we see how man is diminishing himself – how you are diminishing him!... And your pity is for the “creature in man,” for that which has to be formed, broken, forged, torn, burned, annealed, refined – that which has to suffer and should suffer? And our pity – do you not grasp whom our opposite pity is for when it defends itself against your pity as the worst of all pampering and weakening? – Pity against pity, then! – But to repeat, there are higher problems than the problems of pleasure and pain and pity; and every philosophy that treats only of them is a piece of naïvety. – (BGE 155-6)\(^{21}\)

Nietzsche’s pity is scornful of the Christian pity which sympathizes and defends the weak and suffering. He revalues pity and makes his own form of scorn for pity something elevated. Nietzsche’s revaluation collapses or confounds the distinctions between pity and scorn in order to transform an apparently Christian value for his own service. The problem is whether Nietzsche still recognizes the need for the distinction or simply replaces the former rejected meaning with his new “elevated” definition.

Conrad takes up this problem in the third part of *Victory* by showing us the elder Heyst’s ideas through Heyst’s recollections of his father. Conrad gives us reason to pause over the first passage in which the elder Heyst’s ideas appear by depicting a scene reminiscent of *Heart of Darkness*, wherein death creeps among “the London houses [which] began to look like the tombs of an unvisited, unhonoured, cemetery of hopes” (194). The father’s “unexpectedly soft mood”

\(^{21}\) Section 255.
signals that this dialogue is an exceptional moment in the great destroyer's life, and it is significant that the father is answering Heyst's question "Is there no guidance?," which questions the existence of God or providence (194). When contemplating this question, Nietzsche responded in the absolute negative. The elder Heyst answers:

"You still believe in something, then?" he said in a clear voice, which had been growing feeble of late. "You believe in flesh and blood, perhaps? A full and equable contempt would soon do away with that, too. But since you have not attained to it, I advise you to cultivate that form of contempt which is called pity. It is perhaps the least difficult – always remembering that you, too, if you are anything, are as pitiful as the rest, yet never expecting any pity for yourself."

(194)

The thought in the passage begins with the problem of belief, which in Nietzsche's criticism is intimately related to the origins of Christian culture and the pity towards suffering. The negation of all belief is ultimately the belief in God and Christian morality. (Of course, Nietzsche rejects a contempt for the body, marking some distance between him and Heyst's father.) But the first use of contempt in this passage is interconnected with the practice of skepticism insofar as it questions the foundations of belief. The first use of contempt is an expression of complete negation, and the word "nihilism" comes to mind. The second form of contempt masquerades as pity, and here Conrad reproduces the intellectual maneuver which Nietzsche accomplishes in the passage quoted above. Conrad challenges readers to question whether there is a "form of contempt which is called pity." If so, does pity always include something inherently contemptuous in its expression? There is a suggestion of two levels of contempt, one elevated and possessed by the intellectual, and the other, debased and possessed by the masses. The first corresponds closely to Nietzsche's revaluation of pity, and the second is the pity upon which he heaps his scorn. While the first kind raises the thinker above everything, the second kind lowers
the thinker into a position alongside everything else which is pitiable, weak, and resentful. The second is the lesser achievement in the valuation offered here, a lesser form of morality.22

Conrad gives us yet another view of the father’s thought when Heyst is reading one of his father’s books in the fifth chapter of Part Three.23 Nothing in the first of the two passages of the father’s prose that Conrad writes suggests anything especially Nietzschean in the thinking; however, the second and longer of the two passages can be read as an oblique commentary upon Nietzsche’s intellectual position and thought. Heyst’s father makes an inadvertent confession of himself through his psychological musings which suggests that he is one of the “men of tormented conscience, or of a criminal imagination” who are “aware of much that minds of a peaceful, resigned cast do not even suspect” (230). This sounds suspiciously like Nietzsche’s claim that suffering is the primary source of the great human accomplishments: “This discipline of suffering, of great suffering – do you not know that it is this discipline alone which has created every elevation of mankind hitherto?” (BGE 155).24 And the allusion to the criminal recalls Nietzsche’s intermittent admiration for criminals as great men reduced to being victims of Christian society.25 However, the last two lines of the passage from the elder Heyst’s book are especially compelling because of the idea that “man alone can give one the disgust of pity; yet I find it easier to believe in the misfortune of mankind than in its wickedness” (231). The use of the word “believe” is surprising because the elder Heyst repudiates belief as an idea. The fact that it enters into his thought here must be important. Disgust is different than contempt, yet the

22 One of the great problems in the novel, which I will not explore here, is whether Heyst’s actions towards Morrison and Lena are simultaneously a form of contempt and a form a pity, not to mention some expression of Heyst’s disgust towards life. This would also involve the problem of whether the contempt and pity is directed towards himself and/or the two people who identify Heyst as the “incarnate proof of the efficacy of prayer” (214).
23 Specifically, pages 230-231 in Victory.
24 Section 225.
25 For example, in his argument concerning Dostoevsky’s insight in The House of the Dead, Nietzsche reveals that the Siberian convicts in whose midst he lived for a long time, nothing but the worst criminals for whom no return to society was possible, very different from what he himself had expected – he found them to be carved out of about the best, hardest and most valuable timber growing anywhere on Russian soil. (T 110)
word is still connected with pity. What is really surprising is that the elder Heyst moves, if only for a moment, towards something we might recognize as real Christian pity. Of course, it is a mixed pity and disgust because the elder Heyst's intellectual instinct precludes any separation of the two; however, the father is able to acknowledge some misfortune and not simply blame mankind for its weakness or failures. It is what we least expect from the elder Heyst, which is also what we least expect from Nietzsche. But Conrad has good reason to suspect that the man of great scorn is also the man of great pity. In short, an impulse or instinct towards disgust can act as a defence against the instinct towards pity. Or, by emphasizing Conrad's preoccupation with the troubling relation between knowing and not knowing, Nietzsche's contempt is a form of not knowing his own pity or his capacity for pity. 26

Conrad's ideas are a kind of gloss on two important passages in Beyond Good and Evil in which Nietzsche reveals himself very much like the elder Heyst. In the same section from which I have been quoting previously, Nietzsche uncharacteristically reveals that "there are times when we behold your pity with an indescribable anxiety, when we defend ourselves against this pity" (BGE 155). 27 Is there a note of genuine fear and trembling in those words? In the context of the passage as a whole it is easy to pass over these words as yet another of Nietzsche's counter movements against Christian pity, as if to say "I have more to fear from you than you have to fear from me." Nevertheless, the idea that the anxiety is "indescribable" suggests that Nietzsche does not have complete control over the fear of which he is speaking. He cannot or will not know it. The unknown or unknowable quality of the pity provokes Nietzsche to want to defend himself against it, a reaction suggesting his instinct for self-preservation.

My suggestion that Conrad is writing a critique of some important passages in Beyond Good and Evil is strengthened when we recognize that later in Nietzsche's book there are two consecutive sections in which Nietzsche first thinks about the problem of pity and then

26 Douglas Park reads Axel Heyst's detachment from life as a "mode of defence and evasion" (152). I would argue that this is largely the influence of the elder Heyst.
27 Section 225.
immediately turns to the problem of disgust. Nietzsche prides himself on his abilities as “a born, an unavoidable psychologist and reader of souls” (BGE 206). But a genuine sense of unease enters into his style in his confessions that when the psychologist

turns his attention to the more select cases and human beings, the greater grows the danger of his suffocating from pity: he needs hardness and cheerfulness more than other men. For the corruption, the ruination of higher human beings, of more strangely constituted souls, is the rule: it is dreadful to have such a rule always before one’s eyes. (BGE 207)

The danger of “suffocating from pity” is a very real threat for Nietzsche. Pity is the terrible problem which he must steel himself against for fear of being overwhelmed by it, and he goes on to describe how the psychologist requires a “cure” to defend himself against being overwhelmed by pity (BGE 207). Notice the last sentence in the passage above. The question of whether Nietzsche considers himself one of the “higher human beings” is a problem here. To what degree does Nietzsche fear the ruination of himself? And will it be pity or hardness with contributes most to this ruination? Just as the elder Heyst proposes that attaining a great level of contempt elevates and separates a thinker from others, Nietzsche remarks in the very next passage after the one just quoted that “profound suffering ennobles, it separates” and that “spiritual haughtiness and disgust” is the consequence of suffering (BGE 209). In The Anti-Christ Nietzsche makes an explicit confession which is unmistakably the counterpart to his fear of suffocating from pity; that is, his fear of choking from contempt:

At this point I shall not suppress a sigh. There are days when I am haunted by a feeling blacker than the blackest melancholy – contempt of man. And so as to leave no doubt as to what I despise, whom I despise: it is the man of today, the man with whom I am contemporary. The man of today – I suffocate of his

28 Section 269.
29 Section 269.
30 Section 270.
impure breath.... What was formerly merely morbid has today become indecent
– it is indecent to be a Christian today. And here is where my disgust
commences. (161)\(^31\)

In passages such as this, Conrad recognized in Nietzsche the kind of psychological problem
which he reveals in the brief glimpses he provides of the elder Heyst’s language. In Nietzsche’s
thought there is a profound conflict between, and collision of, pity and contempt or scorn, or
disgust. Through the representation of Stevie, Conrad explores the psychological causes
informing the suffering this conflict caused for Nietzsche, and also the consequences which
informed Nietzsche’s mental collapse. Conrad’s concern with pity and contempt in the “Author’s
Note” to The Secret Agent reveals Conrad’s self-consciousness about the problem which he
recognizes in Nietzsche’s thought. If Conrad recognized that the conflict helped cause
Nietzsche’s mental collapse, then this also informs his ambivalence towards Nietzsche.

The final passages from Victory especially relevant to my argument are Heyst’s
descriptions of his father, which are quite moving because of Heyst’s style. Although I am not
deliberately exploring the question of influence, the problem of the degree to which Nietzsche
might be counted “responsible” for Conrad’s intellectual “existence” is implicit here (212). But
whether or not Conrad consciously counted Nietzsche among his intellectual “fathers” (I certainly
do), the question of whether Conrad is writing directly about Nietzsche is less important than
recognizing the style in which Heyst attempts to judge his father. Taken out of context, the
passage might lead a reader familiar with Nietzsche to mistake it for Conrad’s own reflections on
the philosopher’s works that might have been quoted from a letter:

It wasn’t a new discovery, but he brought his capacity for scorn to bear on it. It
was immense. It ought to have withered the globe. I don’t know how many minds he convinced. But my mind was very young then, and youth I suppose
can be easily seduced – even by a negation. He was very ruthless, and yet he was

\(^{31}\) Section 38.
not without pity. He dominated me without difficulty. A heartless man could not have done so. Even to fools he was not utterly merciless. He could be indignant, but he was too great for flouts and jeers. What he said was not meant for the crowd; and it could not be; and I was flattered to find myself among the elect. They read his books, but I have heard his living word. It was irresistible. It was as if that mind were taking me into its confidence, giving me a special insight into its mastery of despair. (213)

There is some emotional responsiveness in the style of the passage, but the effect of the whole remains ambivalent, the valuation equivocal. It opens with some skepticism towards the "capacity for scorn" which was relatively impotent and may or may not have convinced many minds, but ends with some sense of genuine wonder at and awe of the man who made the "special insight" possible. The valuation is also difficult to read because it is presented as the recollections of an older man looking back upon his thoughts as a youth. This is analogous to Conrad's own position, since in 1915 his early encounters with Nietzsche's thought are well behind him. What is especially important for me is that the "capacity for scorn" is qualified by the admission that "yet he was not without pity." Conrad is willing to acknowledge both co-existing in the same mind. The ruthlessness is not simply heartlessness. This style that Conrad employs has some capacity for praise and blame and for contempt and pity.

If only to reinforce the strong ambivalence in Conrad's criticism of Nietzsche, I want to demonstrate how the two thinkers share some fundamental elements of contempt in their thinking before continuing my discussion. In a way analogous to the strange identification between Conrad and Dostoevsky that can be read in Razumov's character, a similar reading can be offered for Vladimir and the Professor in The Secret Agent. Both Vladimir and the Professor are great condemners of the cultural conditions and the society in which they live. Many critics have noted the doubling between the two characters: the former being the reactionary source of the idea and the latter being the revolutionary source of the dynamite which enables the explosion which kills
Stevie. In this, both of them resemble Conrad and Nietzsche to some degree. Of course, some critics connect the Professor with Nietzsche's philosophy. The connection between Vladimir and Nietzsche is made explicit in the text when Verloc objects to Vladimir's "Hyperborean manners" and later refers to him as a "Hyperborean swine" (61, 198); these are allusions to Nietzsche's self-identification in the opening paragraph of The Anti-Christ. Conrad and Nietzsche share doubts, sometime quite fearful, about the possibility of unsettling the middle classes intellectually; both authors are determined to shake the complacency of nineteenth-century middle-class consciousness, yet both are well aware that "the sensibilities of the class you are attacking are soon blunted" (TSA 66). Both writers were engaged in a kind of "bomb-throwing" meant to question and undermine and revalue nineteenth-century values. In the "Author's Note" to The Secret Agent, Conrad confesses to having been an "extreme revolutionist" at times when writing the novel, a role that Nietzsche sometimes plays with great enjoyment in his writings (42). In Nostromo, Charles Gould characterizes his stock of dynamite as an "argument," an analogy both Conrad and Nietzsche would accept for their own writings (N 206). The two writers were very conscious that they could not "count upon their [readers'] emotions of pity or fear for very long" because anarchy and revolution had been institutionalized; hence Nietzsche's contempt for professors and Conrad's reflection that "all the damned professors are radicals at heart" (TSA 67). The disgust with the "intellectual idiots" among

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32 For instance, see U. C. Knoepflmacher's argument that explores the similarities and differences in Vladimir's and the Professor's characters (262-6).
33 For instance, see Martin Seymour-Smith's introduction to The Secret Agent (22).
34 Nietzsche declares in Section 1 that "we are Hyperboreans" and then repeats the claim at the end of Section 7 (127, 131).
35 I read Conrad's claim that there was "no secret scorn for the sensibilities of mankind at the bottom of my impulses" as an unconvincing denial that The Secret Agent was intended as a kind of bomb which Conrad was throwing into middle-class "inferior" values (TSA 38).
36 In his essay on The Secret Agent included in The Cambridge Companion, Berthoud discusses Conrad's unease over his attempt to "call into question the whole value system" in his letters to friends (106). Is this unease related in any way to the position it puts him in relation to Nietzsche?
professors and journalists\textsuperscript{37} leads them both to the belief that their attack on values “must have all the shocking senselessness of gratuitous blasphemy” (67). This helps explain why Conrad destroys Stevie and Nietzsche declares that God is dead. (The relation between these two occurrences will become clear later in my discussion.) But Conrad marks his distance from Vladimir’s, and by analogy, Nietzsche’s kind of thinking, which develops ideas “from on high, with scorn and condescension” and displays “an amount of ignorance” (64).\textsuperscript{38} Conrad reverses Nietzsche’s own criticism regarding the importance of not confusing cause and effect\textsuperscript{39} in revealing Verloc’s “inward consternation” when Vladimir “confounded causes with effects more than was excusable” (65).

The Professor has aspects of both Conrad’s and Nietzsche’s thought informing his character. With the Professor, the moment of contact between Conrad’s and Nietzsche’s thought is in the shared hostility towards nineteenth-century European culture. Nietzsche’s hostility is evident throughout his works, and Conrad declares his antipathy in *Heart of Darkness* and in the tone of the narrator’s voice in *The Secret Agent*. Seymour-Smith is right to argue that Conrad “like the Professor, was given to moments of desperate nihilism… and he would have seen how easily Nietzsche’s thinking could lead one to such moods” (22). The resentfulness Conrad and Nietzsche share towards the “established social order” informs the Professor’s “vengeful bitterness” (TSA 102). Like the Professor, both authors hope that “next time, or the time after next, a telling stroke would be delivered – something really startling – 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” (TSA 101-2). And like the Professor and Jim, both authors have

\textsuperscript{37} Conrad jeers at the “ingenuity of journalists” repeatedly in *The Secret Agent* (68). Nietzsche often denounces scholars; for instance, see Essay 3, Section 25 of *On the Genealogy of Morals* (589-92).

\textsuperscript{38} See Section 3 of *Ecce Homo* where Nietzsche explains that “he who knows how to breathe the air of my writings knows that it is an air of the heights, a robust air” where the “solitude is terrible” because “how much one feels beneath one” (4).

\textsuperscript{39} See Nietzsche’s remarkable discussion of confusing causes and consequences in *Twilight of the Idols* in the section entitled “Four Great Errors” (58-65).
dogmatically Christian fathers who were "rousing preacher[s]... supremely confident in the privileges of [their] righteousness" (TSA 102). These two Christian sons both carefully observe "the true nature of the world, whose morality was artificial, corrupt and blasphemous" and work to revalue the values of the Christian morality which enables nineteenth-century Christian culture (TSA 102). But again, Conrad marks some distance from Nietzsche in identifying the elements in the Professor's character wherein his "indignation found in itself a final cause that absolved him from the sin of turning to destruction as the agent of his ambition" (102). In Conrad's view, only Nietzsche's "mad individualism" could remove God as a "final cause" and replace him with the individual (CLJC 2, 188). Nietzsche would never identify himself as a "moral agent," so there is undoubtedly some contempt and open jeering on Conrad's part in describing the Professor as "the unwholesome-looking little moral agent of destruction" (TSA 102, 104). And if Conrad perceives Nietzsche as a kind of anarchist, then his resistance can be measured by reading the passage from the "Author's Note" to The Secret Agent in which Conrad objects to the "philosophical pretenses" behind "anarchist activities" (39). The measure of Conrad's sympathy with these characters and Nietzsche cannot be underestimated.

Having marked some of the shared intellectual preoccupations that inform Conrad's ambivalence towards Nietzsche, I will now focus on the question of how Conrad includes aspects of Nietzsche's thought concerning Christianity in the representations of Jim and Stevie. Conrad explores many of the same questions surrounding heroism, greatness, self-sacrifice, self-destruction, and martyrdom in both of the characters; therefore, to avoid making the same observations about the two books, I will merely suggest that many of the ideas are relevant for Lord Jim and The Secret Agent with variations on the questions. In choosing my evidence, I will select a few passages from Lord Jim and a few from The Secret Agent. Conrad engages in a remarkably difficult exploration of the causes and consequences of Nietzsche's thought and how it affected Nietzsche's being. He engages in an inquiry into the consequences of Nietzsche's thought for the possibilities of belief and faith by representing Jim as the potential answer for two
questions: Is a Christ-like man possible at the end of the nineteenth century? Is a hero or great man possible at the end of the nineteenth-century? And in both Stevie and Jim, Conrad explores Nietzsche’s antipodal relationship with Christianity in general and Christ in particular. The quality of Conrad’s exploration reveals his own ambivalent relationship with Christianity, which is informed and complicated by his ambivalent response to Nietzsche. The difficulty is that Conrad collapses the antithesis Nietzsche constructs between Dionysus and the Crucified, making it difficult, if not impossible, to separate the aspects of Stevie’s and Jim’s characters which point towards Nietzsche or point towards Christ. As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, Conrad is confounding conventional antipodes and thereby causes innumerable problems in reading and understanding his thinking. Undoubtedly, readers have difficulty keeping pace with the complications which accumulate, but this is one of Conrad’s important insights into Nietzsche’s thought: the antipodal structure at the foundation of Nietzsche’s thought is as much identification as it is repudiation. Reading Conrad has taught me how to read Nietzsche with much more deliberation and care.

One of the reasons why Conrad is a great reader of Nietzsche is that he recognizes the fundamental nature of Nietzsche’s antipodal relationship with Christ, and confounds that antithesis in his representations of Jim and Stevie. In Conrad’s view, despite Nietzsche’s own warnings against antipodal arguments and relationships, Nietzsche does not question or comprehend his own antipodal relationship with Christ sufficiently. In an earlier or at least an alternate draft of the passage I have quoted from Ecce Homo, which is included in the collection of workbook materials The Will to Power, Nietzsche includes two different versions of his famous declaration: “The two types: Dionysus and the Crucified” and “Dionysus versus the

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40 See Girard’s dramatic and detective-like production of the “smoking gun” proof of Nietzsche’s sympathy towards Wagner and, as a consequence, Christianity in “Nietzsche and Contradiction” (58-9). In Girard’s view, his discovery of a passage in which Nietzsche expresses some admiration for Wagner debunks all of Nietzsche’s claims towards existing as an antipode for Christianity.
The change from "and" in the first to "versus" in the second does not mark a change one way or another in Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche explains "there you have the antithesis. It is not a difference in regard to their martyrdom, it is a difference in the meaning of it" (WP 543). The problem is that Nietzsche might have thought further about this common ground which he had established, perhaps to find more of the troubling similarities, but instead he emphasizes the absolute differences. Christ is counted as "the innocent one" whose death is "an objection to life" because the "Christian meaning" of suffering "is supposed to be the path to a holy existence" (WP 543). On the other hand Dionysus is the "tragic meaning" of life wherein "being is counted as holy enough to justify even a monstrous amount of suffering" because the "tragic man affirms even the harshest suffering" (WP 543). Nietzsche concludes that "the god on the cross is a curse on life, a signpost to seek redemption from life; Dionysus cut to pieces is a promise of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction" (WP 543). But the problem is that when Nietzsche actually engages with Christ's teachings and life his tone and style are very different than when he writes about the Christian type.

In *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche provides his own reading of Christ in which Christ becomes an oblique version or reflection of himself. There is a strong element of identification in the passages in which Nietzsche explores the psychology of the redeemer that suggests Nietzsche is revealing something of his own psychology. There are moments when Nietzsche's style is free of contempt and full of admiration for Christ's practice. In describing Zarathustra in *Ecce Homo* as a thinly veiled version of himself, Nietzsche writes that "he contradicts with every word, this most affirmative of all spirits; all opposites are in him bound into a new unity" (EH 76). This element of himself is projected onto Christ whose "glad tidings' are precisely that there are no more opposites" (A 156). Nietzsche explains that "one could, with some freedom of expression, call Jesus a 'free spirit'," an expression reserved for very few men in his philosophy, including

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41 Section 1052.
42 The chapter on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Section 6.
43 Section 32.
himself (A 156). He reads Christ as a kind of anarchist who launched a “revolt against the Jewish Church,” making him an early example for Nietzsche’s own revolt against the Christian Church (A 151). Because “denial” is lacking in Christ, he is a reflection of Nietzsche’s valuation of affirmation (A 157). But most importantly, Christ’s “life of the redeemer” was a “practice” which “abolished” the “concepts of ‘sin’, ‘forgiveness of sin’, ‘faith’, ‘redemption of faith’ – the whole of Jewish ecclesiastical teaching was denied in the ‘glad tidings’” (158). Here Nietzsche reads into Christ his own project of abolishing the Christian teachings he opposes. Many more examples could be given, but I think my point that Nietzsche identified to some degree with Christ and shared the psychology of the redeemer is clear. Conrad recognized this problem and included it in his representations of Stevie and Jim.

Conrad reads Nietzsche, at least in part, as the great man who has come to redeem Christianity from its mistakes, from the harm that Christianity has done to humanity. In making Stevie and Jim into both victims and self-sacrifices, Conrad is able to make a strange yet effective account of Nietzsche’s thought. In Conrad’s view, Nietzsche emulates Christ’s example: he is the victim of Christian pity, yet also a self-sacrifice. As I have discussed in previous chapters, in Conrad’s works, it is difficult to know who is heroic and who is not heroic, just as it is difficult to tell self-preservation from self-destruction. In the previous chapter I noted Nietzsche’s concern with self-preservation and self-destruction in discussing the problem in relation to Jim’s character. One of Conrad’s basic insights into Nietzsche’s thought is revealed through the connection with Jim: it is difficult to tell whether Nietzsche’s self-preservative attacks against pity and Christianity are not also self-destructive: in effect, whether his defence is to destroy himself. Conrad asks us to consider whether, like Jim’s heroism, Nietzsche’s heroism or greatness is self-sacrificial, making it difficult to tell whether he was killed or committed a form of self-destruction. As I will discuss later, the problem is even more pronounced when we

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44 Section 32.
45 Section 27.
46 Section 33.
examine Stevie because Conrad raises the question of whether Stevie’s death is a form of heroic self-sacrifice. Conrad’s ambivalence towards Nietzsche’s achievement as a thinker, whether to judge him as heroic or not, a great man or not, is captured in the combination of pity and contempt with which both characters are treated, the double movement wherein Stevie and Jim are potentially great men and idiots. This double movement informs Conrad’s two tales of two idiots.

Conrad’s use of the word “idiot” in both The Secret Agent and Lord Jim is important in this part of my discussion. Stevie and Jim are both identified as idiots: Verloc entertains some doubt that “perhaps his brother-in-law was not such an idiot as he looked” (TSA 179) and the chief engineer identifies Jim as “the greatest idiot that ever was” (LJ 72). Understanding the importance of the word “idiot” is difficult because both Conrad and Nietzsche are assimilating and rewriting Dostoevsky’s idea from the novel The Idiot. In The Anti-Christ, the use of Dostoevsky’s idea informs Nietzsche’s criticism of Christ. For Conrad, making Stevie and Jim idiots informs his rethinking of the relation between Nietzsche and Christianity; however, he introduces a complication to Dostoevsky’s idea by conflating it with Carlyle’s ideal of the hero (a relationship that Dostoevsky would repudiate). In effect, Conrad actually has three different thinkers in mind in representing Stevie and Jim and constructing the trajectory of their lives, but I will keep my focus on Nietzsche here.

In The Anti-Christ, Nietzsche’s discussion of the “psychological type of the redeemer” relies upon the opposition that Nietzsche constructs between his own Dostoevskian-influenced version of Christ as an “idiot”47 and “childlike” or “childish” and Renan’s version of Christ as a

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47 Nietzsche makes “idiot” a key word in his discussion by reading the Gospels as “that strange and sick world... like that of a Russian novel” (A 154). For Nietzsche, “one has to regret that no Dostoevsky lived in the neighborhood of this most interesting décadent; I mean someone who could feel the thrilling fascination of such a combination of the sublime, the sick, and the childish” (A 155). The influence of Dostoevsky is clear: in The Idiot Prince Myshkin is childish (especially in the scenes with the children), sick with epilepsy, and experiences moments of unimaginable beauty during the onset of his epileptic attacks, which are sublime.
“genius” or “hero”⁴⁸ (A 154-55, 152-53).⁴⁹ For Nietzsche, Christ represents the anti-type of the hero because he is “precisely the opposite of all contending” and is the manifestation of “the incapacity for resistance” (A 153). Christ is no hero because “true life, eternal life is found – it is not promised, it is here, it is within you: as life lived in love, in love without deduction or exclusion, without distance. Everyone is a child of God – Jesus definitely claims nothing for himself alone – as a child of God everyone is equal to everyone else....” (A 153). Nietzsche reads Christ as an egalitarian and a democrat whose practice results from a kind of arrested emotional and intellectual development. For Nietzsche, Christ’s message of love is a leveling message. For Nietzsche, greatness requires separation and distance. Nietzsche is a hierarchical thinker determined to recognize the gap between the great men and the herd. Therefore, Christ’s message of equality is the antipode for Nietzsche’s philosophy. But Nietzsche undermines his own argument in the passage which I have already quoted in which he identifies with Christ. To deny Christ’s greatness, Nietzsche would have to deny himself the greatness implicit in the identification of himself as the antichrist: only Nietzsche could confront and supplant the greatest figure in Christian culture. Therefore, Nietzsche’s greatness depends upon his negative relation to Christ, his antipodal relation to perhaps the greatest man of his culture.

Conrad makes Jim “the greatest idiot that ever was” specifically through his impulse or will towards greatness or heroism. Recognizing that Conrad is alluding to Christ’s self-sacrifice only requires that we attend to the overwhelming number of allusions included in Lord Jim. The second half of the novel represents Jim as Christ, as a kind of God in Patusan. The religious faith lacking in Jim’s existence while still among Europeans is the very life blood of existence in Patusan. The title “Lord” connects Jim with Christ, who is identified as “our Lord and Saviour

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⁴⁸ It is important to note that Nietzsche knows Carlyle’s ideas very well and repeatedly attacks Carlyle in Twilight of the Idols (Section 1, 78; Section 12, 85-6; Section 44, 108-9) and The Anti-Christ (Section 54, 184-5). In the former Nietzsche repudiates Carlyle’s version of the great man or hero because of Carlyle’s “religious way” “of coming to terms with the genius and ‘great man’” (Section 44, 109).

⁴⁹ Sections 29 and 31.
Jesus Christ." The fact that Jim rises from the dead as it were on his "third day in Patusan" is an allusion to the Christian belief concerning Christ's resurrection (151). The Patusan people transform Jim's story into a "legend" which attributes "supernatural powers" to Jim (159). His word, like a god's, "decided everything" (161). Structurally, Stein's decision to send Jim into Patusan is analogous to God the father's decision to send Christ to earth, where in both cases the son sacrifices himself. (Of course, if my idea that Stein is in some ways analogous to Nietzsche is correct, this is a very strange father-and-son relationship indeed.) And for Jim, the world is marked by the absence of his real father, which is a significant analogy to the absence of God in the later half of the nineteenth-century.

The trajectory of Jim's life revisits Christ's example insofar as Jim's heroism is informed by a significant double movement. Christ was both a self-sacrifice and a scapegoat. He sacrificed himself for the good of mankind, dying to atone for the guilt of all sins, yet he was also a victim of the justice or retribution of the state, of his community. In effect, Christ used the vengeance of the community and the scapegoat impulse of his culture to achieve his self-sacrifice. He could not kill himself, so he allowed others to kill him. Or, seen in another way, he created the conditions in which he could die. By now, the connections with my argument in the last chapter should be apparent. Jim's life follows a similar trajectory. Both times that Jim is judged, first by the European court and later by Doramin, his self-sacrifice is enabled. First he is made an exile and accepts the punishment of all the officers on the boat. He is made a scapegoat. But his heroism or greatness remain unfulfilled, because he has not sacrificed himself and consummated his self-destruction. Therefore, he creates the conditions in Patusan which enable his self-sacrifice. Through the representation of Jim, Conrad reveals how, in choosing to be the Anti-Christ, Nietzsche makes himself a rewriting of Christ's example.
The analogy between Jim and Nietzsche can be understood if we recall Walter Kaufmann’s observation that Nietzsche is “one of the great scapegoats of all time.” If this is true, then Nietzsche himself must be held responsible for doing much to create the conditions which made this possible: like Jim, Nietzsche brought himself to his death in a kind of self-destruction. In writing a modern skeptical Bible and creating a new example to replace Christianity for man in *Thus Speake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche can hardly be misunderstood. Merely attending to the joking seriousness of the title of Nietzsche’s strange autobiography reveals a great deal about his thinking. In setting himself up as the antipode to Christ, Nietzsche is offering himself as a redeemer: “On one occasion Zarathustra strictly defines his task – it is also mine – the meaning of which cannot be misunderstood: he is affirmative to the point of justifying, of redeeming even the entire past” (EH 80). Despite Nietzsche’s claims that “here there speaks no ‘prophet,’ none of those gruesome hybrids of sickness and will to power called founders of religions,” Conrad reads Nietzsche’s thought as the counterpart to his antipodes. For Conrad, Nietzsche gives himself away in claiming that he is “precisely the opposite of” the “‘sage,’ ‘saint,’ ‘world-redeemer’” (EH 5). Despite his repudiation of Christianity, there is a seriousness and truthfulness in Nietzsche’s humourous comment that “Now I bid you to lose me and find yourselves; and only when you have all denied me will I return to you...,” a clear allusion to Christ’s conversation with the disciples in the Gospels (EH 6). Conrad’s reading of Nietzsche’s tendency towards the “psychology of the redeemer” reveals how as Nietzsche brought himself closer to a decisive encounter with Christ, he was in danger of coming into contact with the

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50 See Kaufmann’s discussion in the “Editor’s Introduction” included in Peter Gay’s edition of *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (445-6). Also, it is important to remember that Nietzsche was made a scapegoat by Max Nordau in his book *Degeneration*, published in 1895. See Thatcher’s discussion of the immense influence of Nordau’s book (27-9).

51 As Michael Tanner notes in the introduction to *Ecce Homo*, the “oddness begins with the title, which is a clear reference to St John’s Gospel, where it is narrated that Pilate brought Jesus out with his crown of thorns for the Jews to see, and said to them: ‘Behold the man!’” So Nietzsche is evidently comparing himself to Christ, and whether seriously or in jest, the comparison remains equally blasphemous” (vii).

52 Section 8 of “Thus Spoke Zarathustra.”

53 Section 4 of the “Forward.”
opposing element that would result in an explosion. As I will discuss later, that antipodal element was Christian pity, the one thing that Nietzsche set himself against with fear and loathing.

Conrad has a specific aspect of Nietzsche's life in mind when representing Jim's character, and raises a question regarding Nietzsche's impulses. It is necessary to recognize the importance given to the fact that Jim's father, like Nietzsche's, is a Protestant minister. Both Jim and Nietzsche "came from a parsonage," a place "of piety and peace," and had fathers who possessed "certain knowledge of the Unknowable" (LJ 8). As R. J. Hollingdale argues in "The Hero as Outsider," Nietzsche's "origin in Protestantism must seem unquestionable" and he "is manifestly an outcome" of Protestant Christianity and "the inevitable end of the course inaugurated by Luther" (82). The question that Conrad raises with Jim, and which applies to Nietzsche, is the degree to which Jim's father and the morality he teaches are the cause of all the difficulties that Jim experiences. The place of Christianity as a conditioning factor of Jim's existence is emphasized by the report of the letter Jim once received from his father. Conrad places the date of the letter that Jim received from his father, in which he warned against "temptation" which might lead to "total depravity and everlasting ruin" and commanded Jim never "do anything which you believe to be wrong," just days before Jim left on the Parna (LJ 203). That is, Conrad puts the father's last lesson immediately before Jim has an opportunity to become a hero through self-sacrifice. If we read the father as the voice of Christian morality, then in relation to Nietzsche, Conrad is asking us to consider the degree to which Nietzsche's career is a development from or repudiation of the demands of Christian morality with which he was intimately familiar, especially as the son of a minister, and moreover, as the man determined to bring it to an end.54 Just as Marlow's treatment of Jim alternates between a contempt for his ideals and a pity towards the tragedy of his life, Conrad recognizes Nietzsche's life as a profound failure which nevertheless has qualities of greatness and even heroism.

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54 Chamberlain emphasizes this detail in her discussion of Nietzsche's relationship to Christian doctrine and practice. See pages 117-20.
Conrad offers another reading of Nietzsche's life and philosophy through Stevie. In knowing very well that there can be no easy distinction made between the man and his philosophy, Conrad makes some remarks similar to Nietzsche's argument that there are no philosophies, only philosophers and "every great philosophy" is "a confession on the part of its author" (BGE 37)\(^{55}\) in writing that "prophetic phantasies" "can only interpret the mind of the prophet" and "the way of even the most justifiable revolutions is prepared by personal impulses disguised into creeds" (TSA 73, 102). Again, the distinctions between Nietzsche and Christ are confounded in Stevie. In Stevie, Conrad directs his inquiry into the psychology of the redeemer towards Nietzsche's life, as recorded and manifested in his thought, thereby raising questions concerning the self-sacrifice and self-destruction involved in the martyrdom of Christ and Dionysus. Stevie is very much the center of The Secret Agent as the hero of a "humanitarian enterprise," which is one way of describing Nietzsche's attempts to deliver mankind from the suffering he identified in Christianity (236).

Identifying the aspects of Nietzsche's life and thought in Stevie is relatively easy, and Conrad includes many signals to make the connections obvious. Many readers have recognized that Conrad is drawing upon the story of Nietzsche's mental breakdown in telling Stevie's encounter with the horse and driver.\(^{56}\) By the time Conrad was writing The Secret Agent,

\(^{55}\) "On the Prejudices of Philosophers," Section 6.

\(^{56}\) For a brief account of Nietzsche's incident with the horse, see Lesley Chamberlain (208-9). As Jeffery Meyers explains, "Conrad probably knew that Nietzsche's permanent breakdown in Turin in 1890 occurred after he had seen a horse being whipped, had thrown his arms around the pathetic beast and had collapsed in the street" (237). Meyers continues by observing that "Conrad certainly remembered Raskolnikov's dream, in Crime and Punishment (1866), of seeing when he was a child an owner cruelly beating his old mare" (237). Conrad is conflating at least two stories in his depiction of Stevie, making his thinking in the passage exceptionally difficult to unpack. However, there are further complications. Conrad surely realizes that Dostoevsky's representation of Raskolnikov's dream is very personal, not only through his reading of Crime and Punishment but also in reading A Writer's Diary which he evidently knew very well (he quotes lines from it in Under Western Eyes). As Joseph Frank has pointed out in Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849, Dostoevsky, as a young child, witnessed an incident wherein a government courier beat a young peasant driver of a troika, who responded to the courier's demands by furiously beating the horse in order to make the greatest speed possible. Frank notes that Dostoevsky recollects the incident in the January 1876 edition of A Writer's Diary in the
knowledge of the story was common enough among Nietzsche's readers. Conrad makes the incident the centerpiece of his psychological inquiry into Nietzsche's thought about pity and contempt. But Stevie's status as a hero and scapegoat is not a critical commonplace. Conrad's reaction to Nietzsche is exceedingly complex, so once again I will impose an artificial clarity on my discussion of The Secret Agent. Understanding Conrad's thought about the psychological character of Nietzsche's thought will help illuminate Conrad's struggle with Nietzsche's philosophical arguments.

In writing the account of Stevie's encounter with the horse and driver in Chapter 8 of The Secret Agent, Conrad provides readers with a kind of epigraph for the entire chapter and his thought about Nietzsche as a whole. When describing the reactions of Winnie and her mother to seeing the horse and driver for the first time, Conrad writes that "the conveyance awaiting them would have illustrated the proverb that truth can be more cruel than caricature, if such a proverb existed" (157). In the world of Conrad's novel, the proverb is implied to exist, at least as a serious consideration for readers. As I suggested earlier, Conrad is anxious for readers to recognize that pity and not merely scorn is included in the telling of the story. By creating this third chapter. (In the Lantz translation that I am using, Dostoevsky's account is found on pages 326-329.) Dostoevsky writes that "this disgusting scene stayed in my memory all my life" as an "emblem, so to say; something that very graphically demonstrated the link between a cause and an effect. Every blow that rained down on the animal was the direct result of every blow that fell on the man" (328-9). In the notebooks for Crime and Punishment, Dostoevsky wrote "my first personal insult, the horse, the courier" (quoted from Frank 71). The problem of disentangling the sources of the horse incident in The Secret Agent is compounded in realizing that Nietzsche read Dostoevsky, calling him "the only psychologist, by the way, from whom I had anything to learn" (T 110). Nietzsche was reading Dostoevsky in the years just before his breakdown in Turin. Lesley Chamberlain speculates that Nietzsche's embrace of the horse was an autobiographical gesture which fulfilled a dream about the action which he had written about in a letter (209). Chamberlain claims that Nietzsche was "willing his life to the last conscious moment" by modeling the scene after his dream informed by his reading of Dostoevsky (209). And there is yet another complication: Conrad's wife Jessie claims that in London in November 1904 she witnessed Conrad embrace a horse (see Meyers 237). Is this an autobiographical move yet again? A sympathetic identification repeated after Nietzsche had done the same? All of these problems are involved in my discussion of Stevie, but are outside of my present focus.

57 See Thatcher's accounts of how Nietzsche's life and thought was popularized in England.
58 As far as I can tell, Garry Watson is the only critic to make an argument about Stevie as a scapegoat or martyr.
proverb, Conrad is making a strange appeal to readers to realize that his caricature of Nietzsche's final collapse in Stevie's encounter with the horse and driver is not to be read simply as an expression of contempt. The caricature is not as cruel as the truth, but something more pitiable and yet still related to the truth of the story. When we read passages such as "the stiff tail" attached to the horse "seemed to have been fitted in for a heartless joke," it is important to recognize the importance of the conditional verb "seemed" (164). The joke may very well not be heartless. It is important to recognize that Conrad makes Stevie a pitiable caricature of aspects of Nietzsche's character. Obviously, depicting Nietzsche as an idiot might be read as an expression of Conrad's contempt, but Conrad makes Stevie's life very difficult to read with any assurance.

Conrad includes several details in representing Stevie that serve, in addition to the use of Nietzsche's embrace of the horse, to emphasize Stevie's relation to the great philosopher. As George Butte argues, the most important "Nietzschean trace in The Secret Agent" is Conrad's invocation of "the mythological figure Silenus" (155). Butte convincingly connects Conrad's repeated allusions to Silenus to the importance given by Nietzsche to Silenus in The Birth of Tragedy.59 He notes the significance of Silenus being "Dionysus's tutor and companion in his travels and revels" (156). The repeated use of the name he connects with the significant conversations between Ossipon and the Professor which take place in chapters four and thirteen: the location of their meetings is "the renowned Silenus restaurant" (92). But the most important allusion occurs during Stevie's meeting with the driver and horse. Butte argues that "this is Silenus modernized with a vengeance" (163); however, he has not unpacked the full significance of the passage. The allusion to Silenus and Dionysus is curiously out of place when used to characterize the driver's conversation with Stevie:

His jovial purple cheeks bristled with white hairs; and like Virgil's Silenus, who, his face, smeared with the juice of berries, discoursed of Olympian Gods to the innocent shepherds of Sicily, he talked to Stevie of domestic matters and the

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59 Nietzsche's account of the Silenus myth is Section 3 of The Birth of Tragedy (22-3).
affairs of men whose sufferings are great and immortality by no means assured.

(164-65)

In one sense, Stevie is an innocent shepherd receiving lessons on the Gods and, more importantly, men who suffer greatly, recalling Nietzsche. But if the cab driver is playing the role of Silenus, that means his student and travelling companion, Stevie, is playing the role of Dionysus. It is hardly necessary to note Nietzsche's infatuation with Dionysus, which began in *The Birth of Tragedy* and returns especially in the later writings: *Twilight of the Idols* and *Ecce Homo*. In the latter Nietzsche identifies himself explicitly with Dionysus, and of course soon after his collapse began signing letters with the name instead of his own.\(^{60}\) Conrad uses the classical allusion to invoke Dionysus, and thereby invokes Nietzsche's presence in Stevie.

Like Nietzsche, who thought of himself as the one thinker willing to question all prior valuations and even the existence of God and truth itself, Stevie is the one character in *The Secret Agent* who is unceasing in his demand to know: unlike everyone else, "he wished to go to the bottom of the matter" (169). Despite his limitations with language, Stevie is described as having an "intellectual enterprise," an idea which is reinforced when Conrad tells us that "his intelligence was very alert" (169, 170). The question which preoccupies Stevie in his "intellectual enterprise" is the same problem which preoccupied Nietzsche from the time in which he wrote *The Birth of Tragedy*: how to make sense of the enormous amount of human suffering. In his introduction to *The Birth of Tragedy*, Michael Tanner explains that "at every stage in his career Nietzsche was more concerned with what to do about the omnipresence of pain than about any other issue" (xxiii). Stevie's intellectual effort is caused by an encounter with the poor driver and the emaciated horse. His intellectual inquiry begins with the problem of suffering in the world. So Stevie's intellectual inquiry begins where Nietzsche's long and sustained intellectual inquiry into suffering terminated. For Nietzsche, embracing the horse was the physical expression of the pity

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\(^{60}\) See pages 684-7 of Walter Kaufmann's *The Portable Nietzsche* in which he quotes one of the letters to Overbeck of 6 January 1899 that Nietzsche signs "Dionysus."
which he constantly defended himself against. It was the final expression of his overwhelming concern with the suffering of this world. Chamberlain discusses Nietzsche's "loathing of suffering" which caused him to turn to the Dionysian to "explain the suffering he witnessed" (38, 39). Tanner argues that "the more [Nietzsche] suffered himself, the more he became obsessed not with self-pity, of which he was conspicuously free, but with pity for others, obviously something to which he was forever in danger of submitting" (xxii). This too is analogous to Stevie, who never directs his pity or compassion towards himself, but is wholly preoccupied with the immense suffering of others.

There are several interconnected passages in which Conrad explores Stevie's uncontrolled pity for suffering and carefully draws the analogy with Nietzsche. Unlike Winnie, who "did not investigate her brother's psychology," Conrad is determined to investigate the causes behind Stevie's and Nietzsche's thought (167). In the penultimate paragraph of Chapter 1, Conrad includes the first extended explanation of Stevie's psychology. Stevie's destiny is revealed in the passage. He becomes part of the "comedies of the streets" as Conrad parodies Nietzsche's collapse in Stevie's fascination with "the dramas of fallen horses, whose pathos and violence induced him sometimes to shriek piercingly in a crowd, which disliked to be disturbed by sounds of distress in its quiet enjoyment of the national spectacle" (49). And I cannot emphasize enough the importance of Conrad's allusion to Nietzsche's anxiety about suffocating from pity, which I quoted earlier, in writing that "a brusque question caused [Stevie] to stutter to the point of suffocation" (49). In the passage Conrad brilliantly conflates Nietzsche's collapse with his great fear of suffocating from pity which he expressed in Beyond Good and Evil. His emotional judgements are directly connected to his compassion and pity, and at the end of the passage Conrad links this with Stevie's adventure involving the fireworks. Compared with Nietzsche, Stevie has no control over the expression of his pity. The whole description of the fireworks incident is again parodic, recalling Nietzsche's self-satisfied idea of himself as an explosive at the center of Western culture, but the comedy is qualified when we learn that
It seems that two other office-boys in the building had worked upon [Stevie’s] feelings by tales of injustice and oppression till they had wrought his compassion to the pitch of that frenzy. But his father’s friend, of course, dismissed him summarily as likely to ruin his business. After that altruistic exploit Stevie was put to help wash the dishes in the basement kitchen, and to black the boots of the gentlemen patronizing the Belgravian mansion. There was obviously no future in such work. (50)

There is genuine pathos in Stevie being made the scapegoat in the affair by receiving all the blame and punishment. (And of course, this incident anticipates Stevie’s later “altruistic exploit” with Verloc.)

The structure of *The Secret Agent* can cause readers to misread the importance of the trajectory of Stevie’s character for the action of the novel as a whole. Because Conrad shows us Verloc’s meeting with Vladimir first in the sequence of events in the novel, that scene appears to be the cause or origin of the explosion which follows. In other words, Vladimir and Verloc (and perhaps the Professor in providing the materials) are to blame. But in Chapter 8, Conrad undermines or at least qualifies the notion that the cause of the explosion originates in the second chapter, by developing at length a scene involving Stevie and a horse, already alluded to in Chapter 1. Conrad points towards Stevie’s overwhelming pity as another, at least equally important cause of the explosion. Stevie’s encounter with the horse, which is the provocation for Stevie’s immense pity, informs the explosion of Stevie. By making Stevie’s actions a primary cause in determining the trajectory of the action in the novel, Conrad raises questions concerning the degree to which Stevie is also the cause of his own death. For Conrad, Stevie is both a victim and a self-sacrifice. Like Nietzsche in his final collapse, Stevie’s encounter shows him being overwhelmed from pity as

The contemplation of the infirm and lonely steed overcame him. Jostled but obstinate, he would remain there, trying to express the view newly opened to his
sympathies of the human and equine misery in close association. But it was very
difficult. “Poor brute, poor people!” was all he could repeat. It did not seem
forcible enough, and he came to a stop with an angry splutter: ‘Shame!’ Stevie
was no master of phrases, and perhaps for that very reason his thoughts lacked
clearness and precision. But he felt with great completeness and some
profundity. That little word contained all his sense of indignation and horror at
one sort of wretchedness having to feed upon the anguish of the other – as the
poor cabman beating the poor horse in the name, as it were of his poor kids at
home. And Stevie knew what it was to be beaten. He knew it from experience.
It was a bad world. Bad! Bad! (168)

Unlike Nietzsche, Stevie is no master of literary style. (He is closer to the inarticulate Jo in Bleak
House.) Intellectually, he cannot imagine a Dionysian philosophy to account for the suffering he
witnesses. His rational inadequacies work against his emotional capacity for sympathy; here
Conrad reverses Nietzsche’s condition wherein an immense capacity for rational, deliberate
thinking conceals the presence of profound feelings of pity. Stevie and Nietzsche understand
suffering intimately, having experienced its cruelties first hand. Unavoidably, there is an element
of identification in the sympathy for the suffering they witness in the world, but it is not simply a
self-regarding pity. As Conrad comments earlier, “experience” is the “mother of wisdom” (165).
Stevie and Nietzsche’s suffering informs their sensitivity towards the overwhelming amount of
suffering in the world.

The revelation that Conrad makes concerning Nietzsche’s thought is the basic two-fold
character of Nietzsche’s response: the conflict between two related and antipodal ideas in Stevie’s
response to suffering. Conrad places Stevie “beside the private lamp-post of the Charity” because
this is the one location which is anathema to Nietzsche’s philosophy (166): charity, Christian or
otherwise, is only for the weak and resentful in Nietzsche’s view. The causes for Stevie’s
“convulsive sympathy” are made plain in this remarkable passage which cannot be read too
carefully: Conrad’s style, once again, brilliantly synthesizes Nietzsche’s thought in a highly compressed way:

At the bottom of his pockets his incapable, weak hands were clenched hard into a pair of angry fists. In the face of anything which affected directly or indirectly his morbid dread of pain, Stevie ended by turning vicious. A magnanimous indignation swelled his frail chest to bursting, and caused his eyes to squint. Supremely wise in knowing his own powerlessness, Stevie was not wise enough to restrain his passions. The tenderness of his universal charity had two phases as indissolubly joined and connected as the reverse and obverse sides of a medal. The anguish of immoderate compassion was succeeded by the pain of an innocent but pitiless rage. Those two states expressing themselves outwardly by the same signs of futile bodily agitation, his sister Winnie soothed his excitement without ever fathoming its twofold character. (166-67)

The first sentence points towards Nietzsche’s arguments about resentment in observing Stevie’s physical reaction: incapacity and anger are both elements of resentment. So Stevie is resentful, like Nietzsche, at the state of his culture and ends up “turning vicious” towards it. And like Nietzsche, he experiences a “morbid dread of pain” at the center of his reaction. The problem that Conrad raises concerns what is concealed and revealed at this moment. Stevie’s psychology is revealed as having “two phases.” In Nietzsche’s writings one phase dominates, and, like Winnie, readers do not fathom that Nietzsche’s reaction has a “twofold character.” Nietzsche reveals his “pitiless rage” towards things Christian and German, but that contempt conceals the “anguish of immoderate compassion.” Unlike Stevie, Nietzsche is wise enough to “restrain” at least some of his “passions,” and pity is one of them. Conrad reveals that there is a fundamental interconnection between pity and resentment, so that the two cannot be readily separated. Conrad offers a brilliant gloss on Nietzsche’s philosophy here by fusing these two primary elements. So Conrad is essentially correct in his judgement that “being no sceptic, but a moral creature,
[Stevie] was in a manner at the mercy of his righteous passions" (169). Nietzsche too, for all his claims to the contrary, is a moral creature, being at the mercy of his morbid dread of pain and suffering and not able to completely control his passions. However well he controlled these passions for many years, in the end they overwhelmed him.

Conrad’s choice to make Stevie an idiot, whose characteristic activity is drawing circles (which is at least partly a parody of Nietzsche’s idea of the eternal recurrence of all things), reads as a caricature of Nietzsche’s exceptional intellectual effort. In Conrad’s novel, Stevie is exceptional, but in the same sense as Nietzsche describes Christ: for his childishness, innocence, and unsophisticated mind. Conrad collapses Nietzsche and Christ into Stevie in order to explore the similarities in their self-sacrifice.\(^61\)

While Stevie’s conflicted response to the cab driver and the horse is drawn from aspects of Nietzsche’s life and thought, the means by which Stevie’s actions are enabled are drawn from aspects of Christ’s example. Dionysus’s and Christ’s self-sacrifice are mixed in Stevie. It is important to recognize that Stevie is doubled with Michaelis,\(^62\) the potential scapegoat whom Inspector Heat attempts to blame for the explosion in the park.\(^63\) Like Stevie, Michaelis has “no more self-consciousness than a very small child, and with something of a child’s charm – the appealing charm of trustfulness” (121). Some aspects of Stevie’s Christ-like qualities are displaced onto Michaelis. Conrad’s representation of Michaelis echoes Nietzsche’s treatment of Christ. Michaelis is noted for

the innocence of his heart and the simplicity of his mind. Nothing that happened to him individually had any importance. He was like those saintly men whose personality is lost in the contemplation of their faith. His ideas were not in the

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\(^{61}\) In “Dionysus versus the Crucified,” Girard also discusses the identification of Dionysus’ and Christ’s martyrdom in Section 1052 of The Will to Power.

\(^{62}\) As Knoepflmacher argues, “it is no coincidence that [Michaelis] should be the friend of the humanitarian madman, Stevie” (261). See Tracey Jordan’s argument concerning Conrad’s doubling of Stevie and Michaelis, especially pages 63 and 73.

\(^{63}\) Watson explores this problem is discussing how “Michaelis, like Stevie, might even have come to seem like a kind of saviour” (235).
nature of convictions. They were inaccessible to reasoning. They formed in all their contradictions and obscurities and invincible and humanitarian creed, which he confessed rather than preached, with an obstinate gentleness, a smile of pacific assurance on his lips... (121)

Of course, the trouble is that at the beginning of Chapter 4 Michaelis is heard preaching ideas straight of out Nietzsche’s philosophy: “all idealization makes life poorer. To beautify it is to take away its character of complexity – it is to destroy it” (73). So Conrad also makes Stevie’s double a mix of elements from Nietzsche and Christ. It is important that Conrad has Verloc place Stevie with Michaelis in his cottage in the days leading up to the explosion where he enjoyed “a damp villegiature in the Kentish lanes under the care of Mr. Michaelis” (185). If Michaelis continued to preach his faith to Stevie along the lines of the examples that Conrad shows readers in the novel, then Stevie’s lessons with Verloc must have been supplemented by Michaelis’ faith, which is at least partly Nietzsche’s faith.

In relation to Stevie’s martyrdom, the most important aspect of his character is his relation to Verloc. Winnie idealizes the relation between Verloc and Stevie in thinking that they “might be father and son” (179). Conrad develops an analogy to invoke the father-and-son relation between God and Christ. Of course, Conrad’s version is a parody, but he is careful to include some important elements. For Stevie, “Verloc is good” because

His mother and sister had established that ethical fact on an unshakable foundation. They had established, erected, and consecrated it behind Mr. Verloc’s back, for reasons that had nothing to do with abstract morality. And Mr. Verloc was not aware of it. It is but bare justice to him to say that he had no notion of appearing good to Stevie. Yet so it was. (171)

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64 In “Form, Ideology, and The Secret Agent,” Terry Eagleton identifies Michaelis as “close to a Marxist” (158). I do not think that this precludes the possibility that Michaelis’s ideas might not also have their origins in Nietzsche’s thought as well.
Stevie has nothing but "reverential compassion" and "reverence and awe" for Verloc as he feels himself "in such close communion with the mystery of that man's goodness" (172, 176, 172). Conrad includes hints on how to read this parody of Christ's life throughout the novel, but the two most telling are the Catholic jokes in identifying Verloc in the embassy documents by the symbol of a triangle, which is an allusion to the holy trinity, and my favorite, the fact that Stevie "sat at the right" hand of Verloc at the table, just as Jesus sits at the right hand of the father (177). The dark humour Conrad uses in representing Verloc and Stevie as God the father and Christ the son extends to Verloc providing the explosive which enables Stevie to destroy himself. Just as God sent his son to die, in effect arranging and enabling Christ's self-sacrifice, Verloc puts the explosive in Stevie's hands, enabling Stevie's self-destruction. The explosion which consumes Stevie must be read in this double way: he is a victim of the different plots put into motion by Vladimir, Verloc, Winnie, and his mother, but he causes the explosion himself. The latter is very important for Conrad's reading of Nietzsche.

Nietzsche considered himself the thinker who explodes ideals *par excellence*, and repeatedly returns to the analogy wherein his criticism is like war. In the "Forward" to *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche explains that the "idle hours of a psychologist" are the cause of a "new war," and that consequently "this little book is a *grand declaration of war*" (T 32). Nietzsche intends to explode the ideals or idols of his century. In a much more dramatic maneuver, in the final part of *Ecce Homo* entitled "Why I Am A Destiny," Nietzsche declares "I am not a man, I am dynamite" (EH 96). As "the most terrible human being there has ever been," Nietzsche knows a "joy in destruction" equal to his "strength for destruction"; this joy makes him the "*destroyer par excellence*" (EH 97). Conrad creates a large number of interconnected passages in *The Secret Agent* which repeatedly return to ideas connected with explosions. For Conrad, Nietzsche's analogy becomes the source for Vladimir's "philosophy of bomb throwing" and the Professor's search for a "perfect detonator," which act as oblique commentaries upon Stevie's

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65 Section 1.
self-destruction at the center of the novel (66, 94). Like Brierly and Bob Stanton in *Lord Jim*, these two characters act as commentaries, revealing an important element of Stevie’s psychology. However, these two men only talk of destruction and never act upon their desire themselves; they are merely advocates for destruction. Stevie is the only one in the book who explodes anything and his action implies some tendency towards destruction, or to be more specific, self-destruction.

This fact is a central component of Conrad’s criticism of Nietzsche. By deliberately concealing from readers exactly how Stevie destroys himself and providing only the officer’s speculation that he “stumbled against the root of a tree and fell,” Conrad forces readers to look for the cause of Stevie’s self-destruction not in the physical act but in the psychological cause (108). Conrad was probably aware of the speculation that Nietzsche’s illness and collapse was caused by the physical affects of syphilis; however, he is more interested in the psychological causes. Ossipon’s report on Stevie’s death is crucial and the grammatical signal Conrad gives readers must be recognized: “The fragments of only one man, you note, *Ergo*: blew himself up” (95). Conrad even italicizes the last phrase in order to emphasize its importance. Stevie blew himself up. The act was self-destructive. But in Chapter 4 when this revelation occurs all Conrad has given us is the consequences of a relatively anonymous act. Through the inverted chronological structure Conrad is able to force readers to attend to the “motives” and “explanations” which he insists that we think about in the “Author’s Note” to the novel (38). For Conrad, the cause of Nietzsche’s collapse is found in the conflict between pity and contempt and in the conflict between Dionysus and the Crucified.

In making Stevie the embodiment of Nietzsche’s idea of the man as dynamite, Conrad is rethinking Nietzsche’s claim that “great men” are “explosive material” (T 108). Nietzsche argues that

\[
\text{the great human being is a terminus... the genius – in his works, in his deeds – is necessarily a prodigal: his greatness lies in the fact that he expends himself.}
\]

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66 Section 44.
The instinct of self-preservation is as it were suspended; the overwhelming pressure of the energies which emanate from him forbids him any such care and prudence. One calls this "sacrifice"; one praises his "heroism" therein, his indifference to his own interests, his devotion to an idea, a great cause, a fatherland: all misunderstandings.... He flows out, he overflows, he uses himself up, he does not spare himself – with inevitability, fatefully, involuntarily, as a river’s bursting its banks is involuntary. But because one owes a great deal to such explosive beings one has bestowed a species of higher morality.... For that is the nature of human gratitude: it misunderstands its benefactors. – (T 109)\(^67\)

Nietzsche’s argument implicitly identifies himself as a great man (he is more explicit in identifying himself as dynamite in Ecce Homo). Once again, Nietzsche rejects the notion of the great man being identified as a hero, but Conrad is not so certain. In The Secret Agent, the idea of “heroism” is displaced onto Stevie’s mother, whose self-sacrifice is repeatedly identified, with joking seriousness, in those terms (156, 161). Conrad raises the question regarding Stevie’s action: is this heroic or idiotic self-sacrifice? As with Jim, Conrad does not answer the question. In effect, there may be an equal amount of truth in both readings.

If we attend to the structure of the novel and Conrad’s lessons in the “Author’s Note” about the importance of causes, then it is clear that Stevie’s fragmentation is the consequence of his overwhelming compassion and his morbid dread of pain. If we read the novel with Verloc at the center then Stevie is to a large degree a passive element in Verloc’s plot and therefore a victim of a barbaric and brutal act. If we read the novel as about Winnie (and her mother), then Stevie is also a victim of Winnie and his mother’s quasi-religious teachings about Verloc as the embodiment of good. However, if we focus on the evidence that Conrad provides concerning Stevie’s state of mind and the frustration that he experiences in his intellectual enterprise, then Stevie’s inability to counter his sympathy for suffering makes him destroy himself. Conrad

\(^67\) Section 44.
insists upon the double reading, just as he insists upon the collapsing of Dionysus and the Cru cified. Stevie moves from compassion to rage; hence Conrad’s telling description that

at odd times he clenched his fists without apparent cause, and when discovered in solitude would be scowling at the wall, with the sheet of paper and the pencil given him for drawing circles lying blank and idle on the kitchen table. (179)

That Stevie stops drawing circles is Conrad’s brilliant hint towards Nietzsche’s idea of eternal recurrence yet again. Nietzsche’s idea is that a person must will all things exactly the same, without change, which means willing all the suffering in mankind yet again. Though coming from different intellectual directions, Stevie and Nietzsche arrive at the same place. At the end they both stop drawing circles. Conrad shows that Nietzsche could no longer affirm the idea of eternal recurrence and the joyful repetition of all suffering. He could no longer hold himself simply to the Dionysian antipode. In effect, Nietzsche finally came into contact with his antithesis, and could not longer hold himself off against the very Christian compassion for suffering which he had repudiated all his life. Although moving towards a humanitarian goal, Stevie’s work with Verloc is an expression of his rage against the conditions in the world which make suffering possible. He attempts to explode values, and only explodes himself. Conrad’s contempt and pity for Nietzsche is apparent: he recognizes that in Nietzsche’s great campaign against Christian morality the only certain consequence was that Nietzsche destroyed himself.

With the insights of Conrad’s reading of Nietzsche in mind, the two accounts Nietzsche writes concerning the death of God become very troubling. Both are difficult to read with any certainty because of the question of how much identification and projection occurs. How many roles is Nietzsche playing? How much in the description of the death or murder of God applies to Nietzsche’s own death or murder? The earlier, and undoubtedly more famous, of the two passages is in The Gay Science, in Section 125. It is the story of the madman who “ran around the marketplace crying incessantly, ‘I’m looking for God!’” and meets only those “who did not believe in God” (G 119). To the question of “where is God,” the madman answers “we have
killed him — you and I! We are all his murderers” (119-20). The madman’s connection with Nietzsche is revealed when he realizes that “I come too early” and “my time is not yet” because “this tremendous event is still on its way” (120). That is, the unbelievers that the madman meets have not thought sufficiently about the problem, nor have they realized the implications of God being dead. The importance of the passage is in Nietzsche’s insight that God was killed collectively, that he was a victim. But then what of Nietzsche’s identification with Christ? Was Nietzsche collectively murdered? The later account written in Zarathustra should be read as a rethinking of the first, and not as a separate or alternate account. The murderer of God, the ugliest man, thinks himself a victim of pity. In Part 2, Section 25, Zarathustra recalls a story about how the “devil spoke to me” that “God is dead: of his pity for mankind God has died” (112). When Zarathustra meets the ugliest man the emphasis on pity returns yet again. The ugliest man demands to Zarathustra “say then: who am I” and Nietzsche tells us “when however Zarathustra had heard these words — what do you think then took place in his soul? Pity overcame him; and he sank down all at once” (279). Meeting God’s murderer overwhelms Zarathustra with the thing that Nietzsche feared. Is it a moment of identification? The ugliest man, like the madman, is and is not Nietzsche, who has two roles in the passage, divided between Zarathustra and the ugliest man, and this is why the two men cannot part. Like Marlow and Jim, the two men are mutually necessary. And like Marlow’s response to Jim, Zarathustra’s response is divided: “Even this man has loved himself, as he has despised himself — a great lover I think he is, and a great despiser” (Z 282). The ugliest man’s repudiation of pity echoes Nietzsche’s own, and he complains of enduring not persecution, but suffering from everyone’s “pity” (Z 280). He murders God because “His pity knew no modesty; he crept into the dirtiest corners” (Z 281). Thinking as Conrad might for a moment, it is important to recognize how Nietzsche identifies the reason for God’s death as pity. God died from pity, or because of his pity. And Nietzsche too? Conrad gives us compelling reasons to see pity and contempt at the center of Nietzsche’s antipodal relationship with Christ.
Chapter Six: Conrad’s Criticism of Freud’s Suspicious Omniscience

Freud is the great prophet of our secret lives and psychoanalysis is his art of revealing unconscious wishes, untold secrets, and unconfessed transgressions. More than anyone except perhaps Nietzsche, Freud worked to expose a latent reality concealed behind the manifest illusions of our actions, thoughts, ideals, and dreams.1 His method of reading for concealed secrets was formulated in The Interpretation of Dreams, but Freud wanted to show the world “how dream-interpretation is woven into the history of a treatment and how it can become the means of filling in amnesias and elucidating symptoms” (D 39). So he wrote a case history entitled Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria, better known as “Dora,” to demonstrate how the “collection of picklocks” contained in his reading methods worked in practice (from Freud’s letter to Fleiss dated 14 October 1900; quoted in FCP 48). While Freud was writing these two books, Joseph Conrad was also thinking about questions surrounding wishes, secrets, and transgressions, and he embodied his inquiry in Lord Jim.2 Like “Dora,” Conrad’s novel is about confidences and confessions, and concealing and revealing secrets. Jim feels compelled to confess and justify his transgressions to Marlow, and like Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner, Marlow

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1 For Freud’s most explicit statement of his reading method see Chapter 6: The Dream Work in The Interpretation of Dreams.
2 Conrad’s and Freud’s creative and intellectual breakthroughs occurred almost simultaneously. They were both engaged in their apprentice work in the mid 1890s; Conrad was writing his early novels while Freud was writing his early essays as well as the first set of case studies with Breuer in Studies on Hysteria. The first major works by the two authors were written in a concentrated period the at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. According to Peter Gay, Freud worked on The Interpretation of Dreams in 1898 and 1899 and published the book on 4 November 1899, despite the imprint bearing the date 1900 (xxxvi-xxxvii). As Thomas Moser details in his notes on the composition of Lord Jim, by November 1899 Conrad had been “planning and working sporadically on Lord Jim: A Sketch for eighteen months,” which dates the origins of the novel around April of 1898 (277). Lord Jim was serialized in Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine from October 1899 to November 1900, and published as a book in October 1900. “Dora,” was completed in January 1901 after a three-month course of treatment that began on 14 October 1900, but was not published until 1905. It is worth noting that Freud was born 6 May 1856 and Conrad was born 3 December 1857, making them almost exact contemporaries.
feels compelled to remember Jim’s story and share it with others. Both Jim and Marlow make an “extraordinary disclosure” (LJ 71). Conrad raises the question of what it means for Jim or Marlow or anyone in his novel to be “as it were, in the secret of its nature, and of its intentions – the confidant of a threatening mystery – armed with its power perhaps” (LJ 183). In Lord Jim, confidences and secrets are threatening mysteries that have the power to simultaneously arm and injure their possessor. For Conrad, concealing and revealing comprise a single movement: the attempt at one includes the other. Jim’s confession conceals him as much as it reveals him; Marlow’s tale obscures as much as it explains Jim. And Marlow reveals himself in his tale about Jim as Jim’s actions reveal more about himself than he knows. All of these complications bear upon Freud’s narrative in “Dora” in which he claims to reveal his patient’s secret life, wishes, and transgressions but also conceals her and reveals himself more than he realizes. As Frederick Crews argues, “Freud was given to reading his own ‘case’ into his objects of study” (145). Reading Conrad against Freud helps demonstrate why.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, Conrad seriously doubts the human ability to know one’s self or to know the other and in exploring the relationship between knowing and not knowing reveals how a will to know can be a will to negate or an avoidance of knowing. Like Inspector Bucket, Freud claims an ability to know others that reaches close to omniscience, but like Inspector Heat, Freud’s knowing is a fear of knowing the other, the strange, or the unfamiliar. The narrative of “Dora” is based upon a narrative trajectory Freud borrows from nineteenth-century detective fiction, one of his favorite genres.³ As an analyst Freud assumes the power to reveal his patient’s life and wishes, having armed himself with the instruments of his psychoanalytic theory. Ideally, the patient is revealed while the analyst is concealed, but the movement is doubled in both cases. Conrad’s novel works against the narrative trajectory that Freud employs. In Freud’s thought the trajectory of the action and the movement of the

³ Although probably not the first critic to do so, Stanley Fish makes this argument in “The Primal Scene of Persuasion,” and I will quote a passage from his essay later in this chapter.
intelligence are from not knowing to knowing. In true scientific (and enlightenment) fashion, Freud designs his arguments and stories as a change from concealment to exposure, from darkness to light. In Conrad, the movement is not so simple. At the beginning of the novel, in the first four chapters, Conrad has a relatively omniscient narrator recounting Jim’s life, giving readers their most direct and intimate view. But as the novel continues Conrad increases the distance between the reader and Jim, obscuring our knowing by inserting layers of perspectives. First, there is Marlow, but then later Marlow tells the narrative by recounting stories provided by Brown, Jewel, and Tamb’ Itam. And this is written in a letter to the privileged man. Conrad moves us farther away from Jim, making it much more difficult to judge or sympathize with him. Freud works towards closure by disclosing his patient methodically by exposing the patient’s mind. Conrad does not provide the same closure; it is difficult to know whether Jim is ultimately revealed or concealed at the time of his death.

Another way to read the differences in the narrative trajectories is to recognize that Freud plays roles “like a detective and a prosecuting lawyer” in simultaneously investigating and making a case against Dora’s transgressions, whereas Marlow is ambivalent about revealing and prosecuting Jim’s transgressions; instead, as Mahoney demonstrates, Jim actively reveals and prosecutes himself (100). Lord Jim is a criticism of the kind of claims that Freud makes about knowing and his abilities to expose others. Conrad focuses on how knowing another can be harrowing and threatening, so that in Lord Jim sharing confidences is dangerous for both the speaker and the listener. Freud attempts to avoid this problem by reducing the humanity of the analyst and the patient into a mechanical relation “as a telephone receiver is adjusted to the transmitting microphone” (“Recommendations” 360). Of course Freud cannot attain this ideal, but imagining the analyst as a passive receiver limits Freud’s ability to criticize himself.

In relation to the structure of Lord Jim, Michael Greaney discusses the “surprising affinities between practical joking and experimental science” (77). In considering Conrad’s tendency to make jokes in his writing, Greaney argues that “like the scientific investigator, the
practical joker constructs an artificial situation in which the object of his curiosity — the folly of human self-deception — is fully knowable and controllable" (78). The experiment is meant simply to reveal the anticipated outcome. The problem is that Conrad's jokes in Lord Jim are at the expense of the scientific investigator who thinks that human nature is absolutely knowable and controllable. Such hubris is exemplified by Freud's thinking that psychoanalysis has identified the origins of hysteria in childhood sexual transgressions, and therefore that he can readily explain Dora's behaviour. At the expense of the assumptions underlying Freudian analysis, Conrad raises the question of what happens when a man undergoes "the trial of a fiendish and appalling joke" (LJ 75). The potential answer is that the victim will focus on the makers of the trial "his hatred of the whole thing" and would "like to take a signal revenge for the abhorrent opportunity they had put in his way" (LJ 75). The test comes in the form of an opportunity. When the opportunity is missed, Jim and Freud avenge themselves for being given that chance and failing. Both "Dora" and Lord Jim are narratives about how failed dreams and unsatisfied desires cause resentment and fantasies of revenge. Reading Conrad against Freud helps demonstrate this problem in Freud's case history.

Here, more than in the previous chapters, I am comparing Conrad with a writer whose work is analogous in terms of form. Conrad's and Freud's styles share a remarkable number of similarities in terms of their assumptions about dialogues, temporal structures, and frame narratives; however, in terms of their thought about the major problems inherent in the designs of their works, these two thinkers could not be more different. Conrad's thought is more like Dickens's in the kinds of questions he raises about the relationship between knowing and not knowing. Conrad is a superior thinker because his insights into the preoccupations that he shares with Freud are more subtle and complex. He is a better thinker not so much because he is a novelist, but instead because he is a more profound thinker in terms of the language and structures that he employs. The remarkable deftness with which Conrad can explore ideas that are characteristic elements of Freud's psychoanalytic thinking through a number of characters in
Lord Jim points towards Conrad’s remarkable use of the novel form to make a criticism of a certain mode of thought.

Conrad’s life and works have long been subjected to readings driven by Freudian psychoanalytic theories. The assumption is that when Freud’s analytic methodology is used to read art, psychoanalysis has the power to reveal concealed meanings. This is an old story that Freud worked hard to make popular. I agree with John Saveson that “critics have been much too inclined to apply modern psychological theories to Conrad’s fiction without regard to Conrad’s own psychological vocabulary” (“Vocabulary” 457). Readers employing psychoanalytic techniques were quick to capture Conrad and the dissection began just a few years after Conrad’s death. In 1930 Gustav Morf declared that Lord Jim is a “confession” of Conrad’s “doubts and nightmarish fears” (149). Morf’s conclusions had “sprung from a psychological analysis of the novel,” a reading which is “based on the psychology of Freud and Jung” (149). For Morf, Conrad and Lord Jim presented a “case where no other method would do” (149). And with little further ado, “using psychoanalytic terminology,” Morf proceeded to reduce Lord Jim to “the projection of Conrad’s unconscious wishes for compensation” and the “projection of Conrad’s repressed fears” (161). His attempt to reveal Conrad explains away all the complexity of the novel as Freud’s simpler ideas are allowed to master Conrad’s thought. But Conrad’s thought envelops Freudian theory, exposing the problems in the methods of the master detective.

A steady stream of psychoanalytic readings has followed since Morf’s work was published. Perhaps the most influential and famous work is Joseph Conrad: A Psychoanalytic Biography, written by Bernard C. Meyer, M.D. Meyer regards Conrad’s famous declaration from the “Preface” to The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’ that “my task... is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is, before all, to make you see!” (NN xlii) as an “unconscious desire for the self-revelation of the author himself, for perhaps like few other creative artists Conrad asks to be revealed” (4). In this construction, Meyer employs the relation found in “Dora,” wherein Freud represents Dora as the patient with an unconscious desire to
confess (despite her conscious resistance) and himself as the doctor who generously enables that revelation. Content in thinking that Conrad is begging to be psychoanalyzed, Meyer indulges in his desire to analyze Conrad safely knowing that "few critics or biographers have failed to respond to [Conrad's] wish" (4). Meyer's analysis proceeds upon the assumption that "it is indeed doubtful whether a truly definitive biography of an individual of such complexity as Conrad can be written today without the skilled use of the tools of contemporary psychoanalytic knowledge" (5). For Meyer, psychoanalysis is not just one way of reading but the necessary "instrument of particular sharpness and precision" (5). The question then is what the measure of "particular" may be, because the adjective is relative and does not explain whether the instrument is delicate or blunt. Meyer uses Freud's analytic tools liberally in dissecting Conrad's literary remains, but the operation may be a mutilation and Conrad's art and thought may be no better understood by the wealth of psychoanalytic readings that Morf initiated.\footnote{Barbara Johnson's and Marjorie Garber's discussion of Conrad in "Secret Sharing: Reading Conrad Psychoanalytically" uses Conrad's work as "an ideal -- indeed, almost too ideal -- text on which to base an introduction to the varieties or psychoanalytic criticism" (628). They think that Conrad's work, specifically "The Secret Sharer," "seems to have been written expressly to confirm the literary prejudices of the age" and consider "Conrad's story as the story of an analysis" (629, 636). But Conrad's work is transformed into a psychoanalytic text and hardly resembles a short story at all by the end of their paper.}

The last two paragraphs in Morf's chapter on Lord Jim deserve careful attention because he inadvertently points towards the problem of assuming that Conrad's "deepest conflicts" can be revealed and solved by psychoanalysis (166). Morf argues that

Lord Jim is more than a psychological novel, it is a psychoanalytic novel written before psychoanalysis was founded. It appeared in 1900, the very year when Freud published his first book Interpretation of Dreams [sic], which indirectly helps us to explain the novel. Both books, one in a subjective, the other in an objective form, threw light upon "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." (166)
Morf tells us that Conrad and Freud were simultaneously making inquiries of a similar kind, yet whereas Freud "helps us to explain" Conrad there is no indication that he recognizes the possibility of the opposite being true. In *Conrad: The Novelist*, Albert Guerard makes a similar observation in acknowledging that Conrad and Freud were thinking about similar problems; however, he is willing to give Conrad more credit. Guerard values Conrad only behind Dostoevsky, who is "the first Freudian novelist and still the greatest dramatist of half-conscious and unconscious processes" (404). Guerard thinks that this fact has "long eluded" readers of *Lord Jim*, which is "perhaps the first major novel solidly built on a true intuitive understanding of sympathetic identification as a psychic process, and as a process which may operate both consciously and less than consciously" (404). But Guerard qualifies his praise by limiting Conrad's thought to an "intuitive understanding." And note that Dostoevsky and Conrad are held to be *Freudian* novelists, though Dostoevsky was writing long before Freud and Conrad was writing at the same time. The description is itself a valuation. Freud is able to "explain conceptually," whereas Conrad's understanding is "intuitive" (404). This kind of valuation remains all too current today. Despite Meyer's assurances to the contrary, Conrad did not invite readers to indulge in psychoanalytic readings of his life or writings. On the contrary, Conrad was exposing the problems in Freudian psychoanalytic ideas at the very time that Freud was constructing his system and practices.

In the last paragraph of his chapter on *Lord Jim*, Morf undermines his own conclusions by making an important observation about the relation between Conrad and Freud: "It was only in the nature of things that Conrad should dislike Freud intensely, as he disliked Dostoievski. Freud was in possession of the same truths as himself, but he appeared to him too crude, a too explicit double of himself" (166). Drawing together Dostoevsky and Freud is important because both writers are strange doubles in relation to Conrad. Conrad read Dostoevsky's works very closely.

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5 Redmond O'Hanlon argues that Conrad and Freud "thought about the problem of man's behaviour within his society in terms of the same contemporary scientific ideas" (47).
and knew them extremely well. With Freud, the relation is different. As far as we know, Conrad refused to read Freud, but undoubtedly had some knowledge of his ideas. Morf explains in a footnote to the passage I have just quoted that Conrad avoided speaking about Freud: "In the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, December, 1924, M. Lenormand relates how he started once to speak to Conrad of Freud, but Conrad changed the conversation at once" (166). Because it agrees with his own conclusions regarding Conrad’s work, Morf readily supports Lenormand’s idea that "Conrad did not want to know the objective truth about his own works" (166). In *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle*, Zdzislaw Nadjer also discusses Lenormand’s conversation with Conrad about Freud and explains that "Lenormand was shocked by Conrad’s refusal to read Freud" (460). But Nadjer is skeptical of Lenormand’s account of the conversation and he arrives at a conclusion different from Morf’s in explaining that

> evidently Lenormand failed to understand that by rejecting the temptation of psychoanalytic speculations, Conrad remained faithful to his artistic principles: he conceived his own role and duty as a writer to lie in depicting reality, not in seeking mysterious clues, in recording facts, not in imposing interpretive schemes upon them. (460)

Nadjer basically sees Conrad’s rejection of Freud in terms of an art-versus-science dichotomy. Part of the problem is that Freud would claim that he too is “depicting reality” and “recording facts” and he would object vehemently to the suggestion that he was “seeking mysterious clues” or “imposing interpretive schemes.” Another problem is that Freud’s works have “artistic principles” of their own that make his case histories read like a parody or imitation of a

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6 According to Zdzislaw Nadjer in *Joseph Conrad: A Chronicle*, the conversation occurred in January or February 1921 while Conrad and his family were staying in a hotel in Ajaccio on Corsica (460).

7 In the “Preface to the Second Edition” of *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud declares that “I have never put forward inconclusive opinions as though they were established facts” (47). Judging by the number of times Freud uses some variation on the phrase “unquestionable fact” his book is a veritable catalogue of them (385).
Conradian novel or at least a modernist short story. Nadjer misses the creative proximity or
intellectual space shared by Conrad and Freud that Morf identifies in calling them doubles.

I agree with John Tessitore that in discussing the relation between Conrad and Freud the
question of "mutual recognition is totally unnecessary for an examination" into the similarities
and differences in their thought (31). But Tessitore pushes the resemblances between the two
writers too far in arguing that "it is enough simply to observe that two great minds found
themselves arriving at identical conclusions and expressed those conclusions through the modes
of their individual disciplines" (31). The two writers were preoccupied by similar ideas and
questions, but do not arrive at "identical conclusions." While John Saveson is right to argue that
it is "most unlikely that Conrad could have remained ignorant of contemporary psychological
theory," his desire to find sources for Conrad's "psychological vocabulary" in the "writings of
English psychologists" ignores Conrad's capacity for thinking about these psychological
problems independently (457). Although their essay does not substantiate the claim, Johnson and
Garber offer a more just estimate in concluding that Conrad is "investigating that which
psychoanalysis, too, investigates" (636).

The idea that there is some significant relation between Conrad's and Freud's thought is
reinforced by reading early reviewers of Lord Jim. Since the publication of Lord Jim, readers of
the novel have characterized Conrad's thought in terms that are fit to describe Freud's writings,
pushing the novel towards the category of the psychological case history. The anonymous
reviewer from the Spectator credited Conrad with the "subtlety of psychological analysis" (396).
Hugh Clifford said that Conrad's "extraordinary psychological insight" is able to "analyze human
nature" and produce an "elaborate psychological study" (396). Later writers such as Guerard
describe Lord Jim as a "psycho-moral drama" (397). All of these phrases are apt descriptions of
Freud's work.

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8 All three reviews are included in Norman Sherry's Conrad: The Critical Heritage.
Recent critics of Freud’s thought in general, and “Dora” in particular, have emphasized Freud’s relation with other writers in and around the beginning of the twentieth century. In The Western Canon, Harold Bloom discusses Freud as “as a writer, and psychoanalysis as literature” and argues that “Freud’s greatness as a writer is his actual achievement” (349). In Bloom’s canon, Freud is included as a “great essayist like Montaigne or Emerson, not as the founder of a therapy already discredited (or elevated) as another episode in the long history of shamanism” (2). Rather than treat Freud as a theoretician and psychoanalysis as a special category of literary theory, Bloom argues that Freud’s thought must be examined as “imaginative literature,” alongside other modernist writers such as Proust, Joyce and Kafka (349). Of particular importance is Bloom’s argument that Freud “is essentially prosified Shakespeare: Freud’s vision of human psychology is derived, not altogether unconsciously, from his reading of the plays” (345). Like Freud, Conrad also carefully studied Shakespeare’s plays.⁹ As two students of Shakespeare, Conrad and Freud are engaged in something of a competition or a rivalry between differing and opposing kinds of thought.¹⁰

In Freud and the Culture of Psychoanalysis, Steven Marcus makes a persuasive argument that many elements of “Dora” bear “suggestive resemblances to a modern experimental novel” (52). His explanation of the resemblances describes Lord Jim as well as they do “Dora”:

Its narrative and expository course, for example, is neither linear nor rectilinear; instead, its organization is plastic, involuted, and heterogeneous, and follows spontaneously an inner logic that seems frequently to be at odds with itself; it often loops back around itself and is multi-dimensional in its representation of

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⁹ This is not the place for my own examination of Shakespeare’s influence on Conrad’s thought and style. Adam Gillon and Thomas Schultheiss have already drawn attention to the importance of Shakespeare in Conrad’s thought. For the best account that I have read on Freud’s indebtedness as Shakespeare’s student see “Freud: A Shakespearean Reading” in Bloom’s The Western Canon (345-66).

¹⁰ In Chapter 4 I have already discussed some of the important differences between Conrad’s and Freud’s thought, especially in their very different perspectives on the relationships between antipodes.
both its material and itself. Its continuous innovations in formal structure seem unavoidably to be dictated by its substance.... (52-53)

Marcus argues that the case history “is a great work of literature... both an outstanding creative and imaginative performance and an intellectual and cognitive achievement of the highest order” (42). The praise is exaggerated and Marcus is determined to represent Freud as an “unquestionable genius” (67); however, he does give us many good reasons for thinking that Freud’s “case history, a kind of genre of writing – a particular way of conceiving and constructing human experience in written language – ... in Freud’s hands became something that it never was before” (53). In short, the case history became a novel.  

Dorrit Cohn objects to the kinds of arguments that Bloom and Marcus make because the critics “ignore distinctions between different textual categories” (2). Cohn claims to make a clear distinction between Freud’s case history and a novel such as Lord Jim by applying to the latter – which belongs in the category of “fiction” – “the criterium [sic] of non-referentiality” (4). Cohn wants to construct a “binary opposition” by arguing that Freud’s writings are “referential” and “non-fictional” and that his texts are “verifiable and incomplete” and “subject to judgements of truth,” whereas novels such as Lord Jim are “fictional” texts which are “unverifiable and complete” and “immune to such judgements” (4). He is willing to allow that Freud’s work is a narrative text, but insists that the work is essentially different because it refers to the world outside the text. The argument is that the person Freud describes as Dora was a real person. Like Freud, Cohn relies too much upon antithetical constructions, and the response to Cohn’s

11 Peter Brooks’s Reading for the Plot and Michel de Certeau’s “The Freudian Novel: History and Literature” also contain arguments about Freud as a novelist or writer of narratives. For a detailed examination of Freud’s “Dora” as a modernist novel, see Steven Marcus’s essay “Freud and Dora: Story, History, Case History” in Freud and the Culture of Psychoanalysis. Besides Marcus’s unqualified admiration of Freud, another criticism that I have of his work is that he is too narrowly focused on modernist literature and does not consider how Freud’s style and structure grows out of the nineteenth-century novels that Freud loved to read. Marcus does not consider how elements of Freud’s story are very similar to Victorian novels, such as the unearthing of family secrets within the structure of a troubled domestic romance (i.e. Lady Audley’s Secret or The Eustace Diamonds) or Freud’s tendency to speak like the omniscient narrator of a George Eliot or Anthony Trollope novel.
oversimplified categories is that *Lord Jim* is a fictional text which is also referential. That is, Conrad’s sources have been well documented by critics such as Norman Sherry who have proven that Conrad was writing about events and people that existed outside the text. Conrad actually saw the man who informs some aspects of Jim’s character and read about the ship called the *Jeddah*. Conrad and Freud are engaged in what must be representations, whether they are classified as artistic or scientific. The degree of accuracy and precision in Conrad’s representation of the *Jeddah* affair and Freud’s representation of Dora’s history is less important than the question of the kind of knowing manifested in the representations.

There are many obvious elements that *Lord Jim* and “Dora” share. I do not want to merely repeat Marcus’s excellent observations about Freud’s text as a modernist story. Instead I will note some of the analogies between Conrad’s and Freud’s work to emphasize some degree of similarity in how the two thinkers work; that is, how they work through and write out their inquiries into the psychological causes motivating the thoughts and actions of Jim’s and Dora’s lives. With due allowance for my oversimplifications, some of the shared elements are first-person narrators re-telling the life of another person, a strong emphasis on memories and remembrances, questions concerning the operations of the imagination in creating wishes and phantasies that are frustrated, questions concerning confessions as justifications or vindications, fragmented chronological structures, doubling and identification among the characters, and an emphasis on the problem of resentment and revenge. A lengthy discussion of these rudimentary similarities would be the least interesting argument to be made about the relation between the two writers, so I will focus on the points of contact where Conrad complicates and criticizes aspects of Freud’s thought. A major part of my argument will focus on how Conrad invokes different aspects of the ideas that enable Freud’s thought in different passages and characters. I will begin

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12 For a treatment of Freud’s “Dora” akin to Sherry’s arguments about Conrad’s novels, see Hannah Decker’s *Freud, Dora, and Vienna 1900*. 
by showing how Conrad invokes a presence analogous to Freud's thought and character in Lord Jim.

In suggesting that Conrad's novel invokes Freud's ideas or aspects of Freud's psychoanalytic method I am not arguing that Freud's presence in Lord Jim is analogous to Carlyle's in Heart of Darkness or Dostoevsky's in Under Western Eyes. Conrad did not read Freud and rewrite or reproduce passages of his works in Lord Jim. But elements characteristic of Freudian thought are present in the words and ideas of several characters such as Chester, the French Lieutenant, and Stein. If Conrad was unfamiliar with Freud's ideas and his work, it does not mean that he was incapable of imagining characteristically Freudian thoughts or methods of reading, nor does it mean that Conrad was incapable of imagining the possibility of such thought in order to criticize it accordingly. Considering the strange and troubled souls that haunt Conrad's novels, creating characters analogous to Freud is really not very extraordinary. I will discuss Chester and the French Lieutenant briefly because they introduce problems in Freud's thought that are implicit in my later discussion; however, despite having demonstrated some important analogies in Chapter 4, I will discuss Stein at length because he is a remarkable portrait of a Freudian thinker or analyst.

For the longest time I was inclined to think that Conrad's jokes in Chapter 13 of Lord Jim were directed solely towards Matthew Arnold. Conrad paraphrases one of Arnold's most famous dicta, that critics "must see things exactly as they are," and places it in the mouth of Chester (99). Chester is not true to his own advice because immediately after Marlow admits to Chester that "you see things as they are," Chester replies with a sentence beginning "I wish" (99). Knowing and wishing are brought into collision here. Seeing things as they are is compromised or corrupted by seeing things as the observer wishes them to be. The humour of the chapter is that Chester is trying to convince Marlow into thinking that a "guano island" is a "gold mine" (98).

13 See Matthew Arnold's "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time." Arnold argues that criticism endeavours "to see the object as in itself it really is" (258).
Quite simply Chester does not want Marlow to see the island exactly as it is but to see it for what it represents or, in other words, what Chester wishes it to be, the valuation he places upon it. The guano island has an alternate meaning hidden behind the obvious. And then I realized that Chester is a joke about assumptions that characterize Freudian interpretation. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud argues that “every dream has a meaning, though a hidden one” and “we have only to undo the substitution correctly in order to arrive at this hidden meaning”; the real is always concealed (169). Freud advises us to replace the “manifest content of dreams” with the “latent content of dreams” (215). The obvious meaning is never the real meaning but merely a substitution or cover for a hidden meaning. For Freud, “interpretation” is synonymous with “substitution” (ID 169), replacement, and translation (D 44). And Freud did not stop with dreams. In *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* Freud extended his interpretation and substitution theory of reading to include the waking world as well. By exposing the tension between knowing and wishing in Chester’s statements, Conrad questions these kinds of conclusions about what the manifest content of dreams really means and asks how much of our knowing is influenced by what we wish or want to see. Reading Freud’s account is troubling because it is difficult to tell how active or passive Freud is: “The more one is concerned with the solution of dreams, the more one is driven to recognize that the majority of the dreams of adults deal with sexual material and give expression to erotic wishes” (ID 520). Do the dreams drive Freud to this conclusion, or does Freud drive the meaning of the dreams as he desires? Conrad raises the question of what Freud’s interest or concern is in the matter.\(^{14}\) This has implications for “Dora” as well. There is a constant tension between what Dora is and what Freud wishes her to be in his story.\(^{15}\) As Marcus observes, Dora counters Freud by “refusing to allow him to bring

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\(^{14}\) See Allen Esterson’s “Delusion and Dream in Freud’s ‘Dora’” for an account of the liberties Freud takes with facts and logic in his arguments.

\(^{15}\) Part of the difficulty is, as many of Freud’s critics have noted, that we have only Freud’s limited record of Dora’s objections and the few direct quotations of her speech (that sound suspiciously like Freud) to judge any distinctions between her thoughts of herself and Freud’s version of her.
her story to an end in the way he saw fit" (FCP 78). She will not allow herself to be subjected to Freud’s wishes. When Chester assures Marlow that there is “no superior nonsense about us,” Conrad means otherwise. It is necessary to read Freud’s superior nonsense with some skepticism as well.16

Marlow’s conversation with the French Lieutenant is a criticism of a characteristic Freudian style. Following a discussion about the Patna affair, Conrad represents the latter part of the scene as a kind of consultation. Marlow “felt as though [he] were taking professional opinion on the case. [The Frenchman’s] imperturbable and mature calmness was that of an expert in possession of the facts, and to whom one’s perplexities are mere child’s play” (89). Conrad captures a characteristically Freudian pose in this sentence. Freud is the self-characterized specialist and scientist in possession of the facts of his science, the workings of the mind, and his patient’s cases. Freud’s tendency to treat problems as if readily solved is pervasive in his writings. In The Interpretation of Dreams Freud is constantly making “satisfactory solutions for the conundrums and contradictions” that he encounters (247). Every question raised by a dream or a symptom is “completely interpreted…without difficulty” (311). Freud repeatedly tells us that “it was therefore easy for me construct the correct interpretation” (236). The writing of “Dora” is informed by the distinction that it is “the only one which I have hitherto succeeded in forcing through” (37). Conrad deflates the French Lieutenant’s self-assurance through Marlow’s reflection that “he had delivered himself of all this as immovably as though he had been the mouthpiece of abstract wisdom” (90). Freud sometimes represents himself as the voice of wisdom, but specifically psychoanalytic wisdom, and writes in a style reminiscent of Dr. Johnson’s balanced grammar.17

16 Frederick Crews has assembled a selection of skeptical essays in Unauthorized Freud: Doubters Confront a Legend. The scholars and critics present various arguments that Crews describes as a demonstration of how and why psychoanalysis is “a mistake that grew into an imposture” (ix).
17 See Walter Jackson Bate’s arguments in The Achievement of Samuel Johnson (93-4) and the biography Samuel Johnson (300, 306, 316) concerning how Johnson anticipates some of Freud’s important insights concerning the human imagination.
The nature of the relation between dream-content and dream-thoughts thus becomes visible. Not only are the elements of a dream determined by the dream-thoughts many times over, but the individual dream-thoughts are represented in the dream by several elements. Associative paths lead from one element of the dream to several dream-thoughts, and from one dream-thought to several elements of the dream. (Interpretation, 389)

In the French Lieutenant, Conrad captures a characteristic Freudian style, representing the "steady deliberation of the act" (90). Marlow's admiration of "the discrimination of the man" is questionable, and if the "simple statement of the matter sounded funny in French" it is because Conrad's novel makes the matter extremely complex (89). The Frenchman's solution that Jim was afraid is only a partial answer and reduces the complexity of Jim's life.\(^\text{18}\) Part of the problem is that the Frenchman has never met Jim and has never had the opportunity for knowing him intimately. He does have Marlow's explanation, but it is also attempting to discern a cause through only a knowledge of the effects; that is, he witnessed the effects of Jim's actions during his stay on the abandoned ship. Freud makes a similar mistake in "Dora" by making judgements about causes, having only seen the effects. Dora's masturbation and fantasies of revenge are created when Freud makes judgements about effects of which he does not and cannot know the cause. For Freud, Dora's perplexities are reconstructed as child's play, quite literally, because psychoanalysis explains wishes as products "from the period of childhood" (107). Freud's explanations are produced almost mechanically from predetermined formulations, much as the Frenchman's "pronouncement" is "uttered" in the "definite phraseology a machine would use" (97).

\(^{18}\) However partial, the conclusion that Jim is afraid is accepted by some critics. Giles Mitchell also concludes that Jim is afraid, but constructs an elaborate psychoanalytic explanation of what he terms as Jim's "death fear" (165). Like the French Lieutenant, Giles shows no measure of doubt in pronouncing fear as the "exact cause" (165).
After Jim and Marlow, Stein has received by far the largest amount of attention in the
critical literature on Lord Jim. Critics have been fascinated by the challenge of trying to provide
an interpretation of Stein’s infamous “A man that is born falls into a dream” speech (129). Critics treat Stein as a kind of special entity in the novel. Tony Tanner admires Stein’s “uncanny knowledge of the qualitative extremes of humanity” (447). Dorothy Van Ghent praises Stein’s “broad and enlightened sensitivity” and describes him as a “hero of the intellect, and, in his way, a psychologist, a philosopher, and an artist” (“Lord” 378, 388). The critical consensus is perhaps best captured by John Peters when he declares that “although a minor character in terms of the narrative space Conrad devotes to him, Stein’s presence in the Lord Jim has an enormous impact on the world of the novel” (49). Critics are enamored of Stein.

No critic has elevated Stein’s importance more than Frederick Karl, whose ideas in “Conrad’s Stein: The Destructive Element” have more or less defined the tone of admiration in discussions about Stein’s character. Seeing Jim as an insufficient character to carry the weight of meaning in Lord Jim, Karl declares that Stein is “by far the most pregnant figure in the novel, a man whose awareness of both the imaginative and the real and their relative place in the modern world stamps him as one of that renaissance type which our own age has split into parts” (165). Karl’s praise is a form of identification, since Stein is the character in the novel that most closely approximates the figure of a critic. So it is no surprise that Karl argues that “in his combination of the active and the scholarly, Stein, more than any other Conradian character, becomes not only a model of what the twentieth century wants, but also a wistful reminder of what the complete man could be” (166). Karl’s idea that Stein is a “model” is important; one of the most popular models for twentieth-century criticism was provided by Freud, who perhaps more than anyone else is the ideal or model of a thinker of the twentieth century.

19 Major critics such as Edward Crankshaw, Robert F. Haugh, Dorothy Van Ghent, Morton Dauwen Zabel, Albert Guerard, Ian Watt, and Frederick Karl, just to name a few, have all offered solutions to the puzzle of Stein’s complicated grammar.
But Conrad anticipates the kind of critical praise lavished upon Stein by literary critics through Marlow’s admiration. In *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad gives us reasons for thinking that Marlow’s respect for the Company’s chief accountant and defence of Kurtz is excessive. In *Lord Jim* the problem is the same. Marlow might believe that “it is impossible to suspect Stein” but this does not mean that Conrad shares the idea (133). Marlow’s unqualified praise in itself is reason enough to raise questions about why he is so dependent upon Stein. He describes Stein as “one of the most trustworthy men I had ever known,” with an “intelligent good-nature” (122). Anticipating later critics, Marlow is enamored of Stein’s “learned appearance” (122). Unknowingly, he is also the first critic of Stein who helped to “spread his fame far over the earth” (122). Marlow’s desire to confide in Stein makes him idealize the man. The desire to represent Stein as “an eminently suitable person to receive my confidences about Jim’s difficulties as well as my own” is an idealization that Conrad provides good reasons to doubt (123). Marlow’s unqualified valuation is interconnected with his reliance upon Stein’s categorization of Jim; he is indebted to Stein because “he had diagnosed the case for me” in identifying Jim as a “romantic” (128). Like so many critics who appropriate one of Freud’s categorical distinctions and then apply it to explain human behaviour,20 Marlow takes Stein’s category of “romantic” and uses it to explain Jim. The idea is present throughout Marlow’s story because Stein’s influence is pervasive in Marlow’s memories of Jim. From early in the story Marlow describes Jim and his “impossible world of romantic achievements” (53), and continues to recall Stein’s categorization in the last moments before leaving Jim for the last time in Patusan (198). In this Marlow treats Jim as critics have treated Conrad.

That Stein should be read as an approximation or representation of a Freudian analyst might seem strange; however, I am not the first critic to suggest this. Paul Kintzele reads Marlow’s interview with Stein with the same idea in mind: “Conrad was remarkably adept in

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20 I hardly need to supply examples of this practice since it is pervasive in literary criticism at the present time; nevertheless, see Giles Mitchell’s application of Freud’s type or category of “narcissist” to Jim.
creating the atmosphere of a consultation in this chapter, in which the thickly-accented Stein plays a role not unlike that of Freud” (72). The atmosphere of a consultation is apparent in Marlow’s remarks that Stein “had diagnosed the case for me” and that “our conference resembled so much a medical consultation” (128). Kintzele focuses upon Stein’s life as a collector: “Stein’s pursuit of entomology requires the meticulousness and mercilessness that are also essential in the Freudian analyst; his butterfly display cases, rather like Freud’s prominent display of ancient artifacts in his own consulting room, offer proof of his own formidable analytical skills” (72). Reinforcing the observations I made in Chapter 4, John Peters’s description of Stein applies equally well to Freud: “He is a collector, a scientist” and “a classifier and organizer. He sees everything in terms of order and classification” (48). His drive to classify everything “is indicative of Stein’s attitude towards nature” and Freud’s attitude towards human psychology (49). Linda Shires observes that Stein’s perspective is indifferent about whether he is observing insects or humans because he “needs to pinpoint Jim as a genus and box him” (27). The connection of Stein’s talents as an entomologist with Freud’s talent as an analyst is very important.

Conrad defines Freudian psychoanalysis through the analogy and reveals the destructiveness of this drive to classify and to create or find order when Stein captures the butterfly he has long sought to own. Like Freud when he completes an interpretation that gratifies his desire for solutions, Stein is excited in telling Marlow “You don’t know what it is for a collector to capture such a rare specimen. You can’t know” (126). When Stein captures his specimen, he had “nothing to desire” (127). But the manner in which Conrad constructs the scene is troubling. Stein discovers the butterfly while he is in the process of killing three men. Granted, the killings are in self-defence, but Conrad is careful to construct the passage so that we read the capture of the butterfly as part of a series of killings. And capturing the butterfly is certainly not self-defence, but instead the satisfaction of a desire. When Stein holds a revolver in one hand and his “soft felt hat” in the other, Conrad is connecting the instrument to kill with the instrument to capture (127). Stein’s deliberation in killing the men is repeated in his deliberation
in capturing the butterfly. For Stein each situation is the same and only "wants a little management" (126). And of course, for the butterfly to be included in Stein's collection it must be killed before it is placed into his display case. Conrad shows us that to capture a specimen means to kill it. Stein's drive to categorize and order puts an end to life. Conrad makes this terrible truth clear when Marlow watches as Stein "sighed and turned again to the glass case. The frail and beautiful wings quivered faintly, as if his breath had for an instant called back to life that gorgeous object of his dreams" (127-8). Conrad reveals the indifference to life in Stein's practices and the methods that characterize Freudian psychoanalytic treatments. Freud is fond of comparing himself with archaeologists, 21 "those discoverers whose good fortune it is to bring to the light of day after their long burial the priceless though mutilated relics of antiquity" (D 41). In this analogy, Freud's patients and/or their memories play the role of relics and he does not consider the degree to which his own archaeological practices may contribute to the mutilation. So I disagree with Peters's conclusion that "all of this classification is based on the assumption that there is order" because it neglects to consider the destructiveness of the desire to create order that operates in Stein's character and that, by extension, Conrad shows us operating in Freudian treatments (49). Reading Freud's thought about his patient Dora is troubling once we have read the passage in which Stein captures the butterfly. He argues that "it need make no difference to him whether he has to overcome any particular impulse of the patient's in connection with himself or with someone else" (159). From the perspective of Freud's patient or Stein's butterfly, this indifference to the impulses of another life does make a difference, potentially as a matter of life and death.

There is one more important analogy between Freud and Stein in that both of them play at being detectives. Their methods or procedures emphasize the desire for completion and satisfaction in discovery, recovery, or revelation. Their stories are constructed in analogous

21 In "The Aetiology of Hysteria" Freud develops another analogy between explorers and his form of analysis (176-177). Freud makes an extended use of the metaphor in representing Rome in Civilization and Its Discontents (16-18).
trajectories: both men track down something elusive in order to know it and order it.\footnote{Conrad’s representation of Stein’s account of capturing the butterfly is detailed so I will not quote it here. Freud’s version of the narrative is repeated everywhere in his writings as one of the basic plots that informs his storytelling.} The end each of them wants to satisfy is different: in Stein’s case the object of his desire is the butterfly; in Freud’s case the object of his desire is an explanation of Dora’s symptoms. Of course, an argument could be made that the gratification of the desire in the abstract is the real end, but both Stein and Freud are engaged in a process of discovery. In this Stein and Freud are descendents of Dickens’s Inspector Bucket from \textit{Bleak House} or Conrad’s Assistant Commissioner from \textit{The Secret Agent}. As I argued in Chapter 2, Dickens and Conrad are both preoccupied with the underlying assumptions of detective narratives. Dickens describes Bucket as the man who “mounts the high tower of his mind” to know all the happenings of London (BH 824). Stein and Freud are the same in their classifying and arranging of specimens and symptoms: Stein in looking over his cupboards and display cases and Freud in surveying the human mind in general and Dora’s life in particular. Bucket is the man who has the ability to “dip down to the bottom of [another’s] mind” and tell them exactly “that’s what you are” (BH 362). Bucket’s “confidential manner [is] impossible to be evaded or declined,” making others believe that they are a “party to some dangerous secret without knowing what it is” (BH 409). And “the velocity and certainty of Mr. Bucket’s interpretation… is little short of miraculous” (BH 820). The speed and certainty with which Stein reveals Jim as a romantic and Freud uncovers Dora as a childhood masturbator with fantasies of revenge demonstrate how these men display talents that are remarkably similar to Bucket’s.

Freud not only plays the detective in uncovering the secrets and transgressions in Dora’s life, but also writes his case history in the form of a detective novel. Stanley Fish argues that Freud’s “characterization of his narrative insists precisely on… completeness, exhaustiveness.
authority, and above all, closure” (190). Fish points to Freud’s assertion that “it is a strict law of
dream-interpretation that an explanation must be found for every detail,” just as a detective
desires to completely solve his case (quoted from Fish 190). Fish argues that Freud’s rhetoric is
the vocabulary not of any “post-modernist narrative” or “structure of
indeterminacy” but of a more traditional and familiar genre – one of which we
know Freud to have been very fond – the classic story of detection; a genre in
which an absolutely omniscient author distributes clues to a master meaning of
which he is fully cognizant and toward which the reader moves uncertainly, but
always under the direction of a guide who builds the structure of the narrative
and the structure of understanding at the same time. (190)
The argument is important because Fish suggests that in playing “an absolutely omniscient
author” who constructs a “master meaning of which he is fully cognizant,” Freud is analogous to
a detective who has decided upon his suspect and judged him guilty before he has investigated or
solved the crime. And the detective not only has a suspect in mind, but plants the evidence to
make the charges stick to the person. And there is something of this corruption in Freud, who
already knows what transgressions to suspect in his patients before he has listened to their stories.
But there is another significant difference between the conclusions of Stein’s and Freud’s
narratives in that the former satisfies his dream of capturing the butterfly but the latter fails to
solve the mysteries behind Dora’s symptoms. In effect, Freud is a failed detective. But any
failure should not be mistaken for an admission on Freud’s part that he did not produce a different
kind of “master meaning” for Dora’s case. Freud’s pride as a detective is at issue because he

23 One way of reading The Interpretation of Dreams is as a catalogue of the “satisfactory
solutions” that Freud has collected in his research (247). “Solution” is one of the most important
words in the book as the object of Freud’s desire. It is important to note that Freud’s
interpretations of his own dreams are left incomplete when “I should have to reveal to the public
gaze more of the intimacies of my mental life than I liked, or than is normally necessary for any
writer who is a man of science and not a poet” (45). Freud confesses that “I have been unable to
resist the temptation of taking the edge off some of my indiscretions by omissions and
substitutions” (45). This raises the question of why Freud has doubts about revealing his own
secrets but not those of another.
declares that “I have seen an abundance of cases of hysteria” and “in not a single one of them have I failed to discover the psychological determinants” (D 54). To fail would be shameful, so Freud cannot fail; or he must at least conceal a failure when it occurs.

So Freud’s narrative of the discovery and revelation of Dora’s symptoms is analogous to a detective’s investigation. Freud interrogates Dora and her father, searching for clues. He casts Dora in the drama as the typical suspect unwilling to participate in the investigation. She repeatedly declares that “I don’t know” or “I know nothing about myself,” echoing, but with different implications, Dickens’s Jo in Bleak House, unwilling to confess to the transgressions that Freud charges her with (104, 108). In Marcus’s words, “Dora stonewalled Freud from the beginning to the very end” (FCP 78). Dora’s resistance fuels what Crews and Mahoney recognize as Freud’s hostility and spite towards Dora (Crews 149, Mahoney 147). But Freud is a “relentless investigator” (FCP 22). In the end, Freud represents Dora as the suspect who tries to get away, but though he admits to failing to complete the treatment, he gets some satisfaction by interpreting her dreams and explaining why she terminated the treatment.

As I demonstrated in my discussion of The Secret Agent in Chapter 2, Conrad makes all of this impossible and rejects the structure of the detective narrative that Freud favors. In Lord Jim, he simply does not give Marlow the opportunity to investigate or interrogate anyone. When Marlow begins what could turn into an investigation of the Patna affair by visiting the delusional drunk engineer in the hospital all he can produce is a “delicate question,” nothing like Freud’s forceful and pointed interrogation (35). The drunk engineer quickly takes command of the situation by tricking Marlow into looking under the bed and circumventing Marlow’s questions by “pulling at [Marlow] downwards in his eagerness to relieve himself by a confidential communication” (36). Later, Jim does the same in his eagerness to explain and confess himself. Marlow is almost passive, a “receptacle of confidences” (25). There is no need to interrogate Jim; he works very hard in confessing and justifying himself because he “would like somebody to understand,” unlike Dora, who would rather be left to herself (52). And Marlow simply is not
detective material. He even depends upon the French Lieutenant’s and Stein’s observations about Jim as afraid and a romantic, and when they make these judgements they have never met Jim. Marlow is basically unlike Stein and Freud. He confesses wanting to see Jim “overwhelmed, confounded, pierced through and through, squirming like an impaled beetle” (recalling Stein’s procedures with the beetles and butterflies) but immediately qualifies that by saying “I was half-afraid to see it too” (30). Unlike Freud and Bucket, who want to reveal a man’s transgressions and secrets, Marlow finds it unbearable to know another’s weakness. He says that there is “nothing more awful than to watch a man who has been found out, not in crime but in a more than criminal weakness” (30). Marlow simply does not have the instinct to be a detective. Nor does he ever succeed in “solving” Jim or in discovering a “satisfactory solution” to the puzzle of Jim’s life.

Although Freud and Marlow occupy similar structural positions as narrators within the narratives that they tell, they do not share much in common. Admittedly, both of them do readily allow that their stories are incomplete and fragmentary: Marlow says that “my information was fragmentary, but I’ve fitted the pieces together, and there is enough to them to make an intelligible picture” (203); Freud tells readers several times that his “results remain incomplete” (40), but he blames Dora for not providing sufficient evidence during the treatment. Nevertheless, a lack of knowledge proves to be no impediment for Freud. Wherever evidence in Dora’s case is lacking he simply begins “filling in deficiencies” by “filling in the gaps... based upon other cases which have been more thoroughly analyzed” (122). For Conrad, however much Jim is “one of us,” his life is not interchangeable with other lives. While Freud is an active interrogator, Marlow is an unwilling confessor. Freud has a detective’s instinct in his forceful questioning. He desires to uncover and know Dora’s secrets. He is a collector of confidences and confessions. Freud’s recounting of the story is a publication of his discovery. He wants to be known as the successful detective who solved the case. Marlow could not be more uncomfortable with knowing. One of the first things Marlow says is that “I am not particularly fit to be a
receptacle of confessions” (25). It is sufficient for Marlow that he has “enough confidential information about myself to harrow my own soul” without adding Jim’s confidences to that store (25). As Michael Greaney argues, Marlow is “overwhelmed by the power of other people’s words” (86). Marlow cannot endure knowing Jim’s tale alone. He must share the story with others, as if telling the story over and over lessens his burden. There is his immediate audience, but he also relates Jim’s story to the French Lieutenant and to Stein, and then writes directly to the privileged man in the last part of the novel. And at the end of Chapter 4 we read that “later on, many times, in distant parts of the world, Marlow showed himself willing to remember Jim” (24), so we cannot be sure how many times Marlow has retold the tale. He really is like Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner. Freud manifests a powerful desire to know, while Marlow’s knowing is ambivalent at best.

The difficulty of understanding Freud’s quality of knowing is in having to resist equating Freud’s position as a first-person narrator in “Dora” with the idea that he is an unreliable narrator. Marlow and Freud do occupy analogous spaces in the structures of Lord Jim and “Dora,” but the kind of knowing that they claim for themselves is radically different. Marcus argues that Freud turns himself into the proverbial “unreliable narrator” of modernist fiction” (55). Cohn thinks that Freud “deliberately renounced from the start the principal privilege of the creative writer: to present the psyche of his subjects ‘omnisciently,’ in the manner of the narrator of the third person novel” (13). And Greaney sees Marlow as an “itinerant psychoanalyst” (86). I disagree with these critics. Although Freud is a first-person narrator, he displays an omniscience like Bucket or Stein in telling Dora “that’s what you are.” Marlow does not. Lehman observes that Freud has “many of the properties and powers we routinely grant to the narrator in fiction: an ability to read minds, to foretell the future, to be omnipresent, to reproduce speech verbatim, and the like” (2). The best examples of Freud’s supposed omniscience, of his ability to know Dora’s mind much better than she is able to know herself, are in his reconstructions of her past experiences. Despite Dora’s repeated assertions that “I don’t know,” Freud is certain that Dora felt Herr K’s erection
when he embraced her (57-63), and that she masturbated as a child (110-113). In both cases Freud claims that Dora has confessed, but there is no confession. Freud admits that she "denied flatly that she could remember any such thing," but he is undeterred (112). In possessing a power to explain Dora's existence, Freud's clairvoyant readings of Dora's mind are much closer to George Eliot's insights into Bulstrode's thoughts and history than to Marlow's broken glimpses into Jim's mind.

In "Lord Jim: Repetition and Subversion of Organic Form," J. Hillis Miller argues that Conrad undermines any movement towards an omniscient narrator because "no point of view is entirely trustworthy" (447). Marlow makes a radically different claim concerning his ability to know Jim. Throughout Marlow's narrative, Conrad emphasizes the difficulties involved when one person tries to understand another. Marlow confesses that

I don't pretend I understood him. The views he let me have of himself were like those glimpses through the shifting rents in a thick fog - bits of vivid and vanishing detail, giving no connected idea of the general aspect of a country. They fed one's curiosity without satisfying it; they were no good for orientation.

Upon the whole he was misleading. (49)

Marlow admits that there are limits to his knowing, boundaries that he cannot pass in trying to recount his experiences with Jim. Marlow is limited in knowing Jim by the views that Jim makes available, not like Freud who simply steps over the boundary of Dora's revelation to claim to know further. The characteristic utterance for Marlow is "I wanted to know - and to this day I don't know, I can only guess" (51). When we think of Dickens's Bleak House and the analogy between Freud and Bucket, Marlow's position is somewhat closer to the street sweeper Jo, whose characteristic phrase is "I don't know nothink" (274). Knowing and not-knowing are inextricably interconnected. If Marlow does not know, it is not simply because Jim is difficult to understand. Jim is certainly difficult to read, which is proven by the dearth of published articles attempting to explain his actions, but there are things that Marlow does not want to know. One way for Marlow
to limit his knowing of Jim is to hold Stein’s decisive label of “romantic” between himself and Jim. The problem for Marlow is that, if Jim is “one of us,” then whatever Marlow comes to know as his weaknesses can be true for himself and everyone else as well (30). Brierly’s suicide is caused by his incapacity to endure the knowledge of the possibility that what Jim represents is contained in him as well. In Conrad’s novel knowing is dangerous and potentially leads to death.

One way of understanding the difference between Conrad and Freud when it comes to the question of knowing another person is to appeal to Shakespeare. As students of Shakespeare, Conrad and Freud could not be more different. For example, consider a passage from The Winter’s Tale in which Shakespeare is preoccupied with the problem of suspicion and trust in knowing. The words are spoken by Leontes, whose powerfully suspicious imagination leads him to think that his wife has been impregnated by his best friend, causing him to seek revenge for the infidelity that he imagines. I think of the passage as Shakespeare’s parable of the spider in the cup: 24

There may be in the cup
A spider steeped, and one may drink, depart,
And yet partake no venom, for his knowledge
Is not infected; but if one present
Th’ abhorred ingredient to his eye, make known
How he hath drunk, he cracks his gorge, his sides
With violent hefts. I have drunk, and seen the spider. (2.1.39-45)

Leontes feels “blest” (2.1.36) in his “just censure” (2.1.37) and “true opinion” (2.1.37) that “all’s true that is mistrusted” (2.1.48). Leontes believes that everything and anything he imagines or suspects is true. The horror of Leontes’s condition is that he cannot stop himself from imagining the spider in the cup. Freud is close to Leontes in that he has drunk and seen the spider:

24 I cannot help but wonder whether Nietzsche’s thoughts about “the spider skepticism” are influenced by his reading of Shakespeare in general and even The Winter’s Tale specifically (BGE 139).
everything he suspects of Dora is “proven” true. Or, everything that Freud “proves” to be true is fueled by his suspicions. His mind is poisoned like Leontes’s. Conrad is deeply troubled by the thought of seeing or not seeing the spider in the cup. Marlow is suspended between trust and suspicion in his relation to Jim. He “would have trusted the deck” to Jim “on the strength of a single glance” and “it wouldn’t have been safe,” yet Marlow sees the “depths of horror in that thought” (31). There is danger in relying upon a trust that proves unfounded, but nevertheless, Marlow does not make suspicion the basis of his knowing.

Freud’s powerful desire for knowledge feeds his troubling suspicion of others. In his interrogations of Dora, Freud treats her as a suspect. She is a suspicious person hiding secrets that Freud wants exposed. He reveals this characteristic of his thinking in his own version of Shakespeare’s spider in the cup by explaining that

> When I set myself the task of bringing to light what human beings keep hidden within them, not by the compelling power of hypnosis, but by observing what they say and what they show, I thought the task was a harder one that it really is. He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger-tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore. And thus the task of making conscious the most hidden recesses of the mind is one which is quite possible to accomplish. (D 114)

For Freud, other people cannot be trusted; he assumes that everyone has something hidden within them that they are unwilling to confess. There is a spider in every cup. And as I suggested above, what he cannot know he reconstructs using “the best models known to me from other analyses” (D 41). What Dora claims she does not remember or does not know is registered by Freud as a kind of resistance that must be overcome. Like Leontes’s knowledge, Freud’s is infected by his imagination, so that he mistakes all of his suspicions about Dora’s life as the truth. All too often for Freud “a suspicion of mine became a certainty” (D 139). Suspicion and
certainty come close to being synonyms in Freud’s thought and help define the characteristics of his prose.

Conrad captures this characteristic aspect of Freud’s state of mind in Marlow’s reflection that “it is not my words that I mistrust, but your minds” (136). Suspicion and trust plays everywhere across Lord Jim. Robert Ducharme’s idea that one need only place the novel “under a hermeneutic of suspicion” fails to recognize Conrad’s criticism of such an idea (4). Conrad is critical of unqualified suspicion and offers a version of Shakespeare’s spider in the cup in a long passage in which Marlow sees Jim for the first time. The passage is too long to reproduce, so I will quote only the core:

it is from weakness unknown, but perhaps suspected, as in some parts of the world you suspect a deadly snake in every bush, – from weakness that may lie hidden, watched or unwatched, prayed against or manfully scorned, repressed or maybe ignored more than half a lifetime, not one of us is safe. We are snared into doing things…. And there are things… by which some of us are totally and completely undone. (30)

The elementary difference between Freud and Marlow is the former’s hunger for suspicion and the latter’s fear of knowing. Marlow confesses to having “waited to see [Jim] overwhelmed, confounded… and I as half afraid to see it too” (30). The disturbing and frightening anticipation causes Marlow to reflect that there is “nothing more awful than to watch a man who has been found out, not in a crime but in a more than criminal weakness” (30). It is terrible to see another exposed as a suspect. The suspicion of the other implicates the self because the weaknesses recognized in the other potentially endanger everyone. In effect, we are all criminals and weak and suspect; no one escapes this condition. Conrad questions whether it is possible to live while suspecting snakes in every bush and criminals around every corner. Or, whether it is possible to live suspecting any moment that we possess (or are possessed by?) a weakness by which we will be completely undone. Brierly’s confidence in himself is completely undone in seeing Jim’s
weakness and he kills himself. Marlow's moral identity is threatened by the idea that Jim is "one of us" and he struggles to maintain his belief in Jim by confiding in and trying to convert others to his view of Jim, such as in his exhortations to the privileged man.

Conrad also represents the extreme of suspicion that Freud displays in the character of Jewel. Where Marlow thinks that we are all weak and must be forgiven for that weakness to some degree, Jewel is only capable of "mistrust," despite her love for Jim (187, 208). She suspects the weakness that Jim and Marlow keep as a secret from her. When told that Jim "is not good enough" she refuses to know that as the truth and continues to suspect another reason (189).

The problem is that Jewel's suspicion fuels her terrible imaginings so that she can only believe the worst. In Jewel's mind, Jim is guilty and she is resentful of that weakness though she has no knowledge or proof of what he has done. Jewel can only blame Jim for his weakness: "there seemed to be no forgiveness for such a transgression" (202). Her suspicion is absolutely unforgiving. Jim too is suspicious of others, but his suspicion is manifested differently than Freud's. Freud's suspicion compels him to try to know others. Jim's suspicion fuels his retreats. Whenever Jim suspects that someone near him knows about the Patna incident, he runs away.

Freud's suspicions are directed with a terrible intensity on others, so it is no surprise that he is not troubled by the thought that he too might be suspicious. Marcus notes Freud's lack of self-questioning because "although there is none of his writings in which Freud is more vigorously active than he is here [in "Dora"], it is precisely this activity that he subjects to the least self-conscious scrutiny, that he appears almost to fend off" (FCP 70). Freud claims for himself a trustworthiness that he denies to others:

The case history itself was only committed to writing from memory after the treatment was at an end, but while my recollection of the case was still fresh and was heightened by my interest in its publication. Thus the record is not absolutely – phonographically – exact, but it can claim to possess a high degree

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25 See Marlow's conversation with Jewel in Chapter 33.
of trustworthiness. Nothing of any importance has been altered in it except in
some places the order in which the explanations are given; and this has been done
for the sake of presenting the case in a more connected form. (D 38)

Here Freud plays like a character in Herman Melville’s The Confidence Man by suspecting
everyone else while simultaneously asking for everyone’s trust. Freud tries to make himself
immune to the suspicion he directs towards others; his penetration into other minds does not
equate to a similar level of understanding about himself. Freud’s claim to trustworthiness is
interconnected with the idea of confidence. His claim is meant to assure readers that his story can
be trusted, but Conrad demonstrates why this is not true.

Until now I have focused on how Conrad reveals and criticizes characteristic Freudian
elements in Stein and opposes Freud’s self-construction in the case history in Marlow. However,
one of Conrad’s talents is in reproducing variations on an idea through several characters, testing
how the idea changes or is shaped differently in shifting conditions. It is Conrad’s way of testing
the various perspectives in which an idea can be known or thought or lived, thereby making a
remarkably comprehensive critique. There are several ways in which Freud is more like Jim
despite the structural analogy to Marlow or the characteristic elements he shares with Stein.
Marlow describes Jim as a “finished artist,” which is the kind of recognition that Bloom and
Marcus bring to Freud (61). Marlow repeatedly emphasizes that Jim’s artistry is in the strength
of his imagination: “He imagined what would happen perfectly; he went through it all motionless
by the hatchway with the lamp in his hand, – he went through it to the very last harrowing detail.
I think he went through it again while he was telling me these things he could not tell the court”
(55). Marlow focuses on the double movement that Jim’s imagination makes in constantly
anticipating the future and reliving the past. Conrad connects Jim’s active imagination with his
ideal that “it is all in being ready” (52). Here Jim is identical with Stein and Freud in his desire to
organize experience; Stein attempts to construct a perfect order to classify beetles and butterflies.
just as Freud attempts to construct a comprehensive theory of symptoms and illnesses ready to
diagnose any case. Here readiness is analogous to organization in that it is an attempt to have power and control over a set of conditions through anticipation: a pre-arranged knowing or intellectual habit is created and made ready to apply in any given circumstance. Jim is not ready when the emergency comes, just as Freud is not ready when Dora terminates her treatment. Freud cannot satisfy his aspirations, and if Jim does in the conclusion of *Lord Jim*, Conrad is not clear about the problem of what, if anything, Jim has satisfied. But at least until then, Jim is dissatisfied with his life. In this Jim and Freud are different from Stein who satisfies his desire in capturing his butterfly. Jim and Stein are connected in both being romantics, but only Jim suffers the discovery of knowing that “it is not good for you to find you cannot make your dream come true” (129). Freud and Jim share this problem. Although I am not sure that “romantic” is the word that best describes the condition, I agree with John Saveson that Jim has a “desire to shape the world according to his own image and idea” in the sense that he wants the story of his life to play out according to his ideal (“Vocabulary” 469). In this Freud is the same, in that he wants the case history of Dora to play out according to the detective narrative he idealizes.

Conrad makes a devastating criticism of the thought that characterizes Freud’s writings through the analogy with Jim, and Jim’s connection with Brown. One of the most important similarities is in the shared preoccupation with the problem of formulating a moral identity. Listening to Jim as he justifies his jump off the ship, Marlow reflects on how “it was solemn, and a little ridiculous too, as they always are, those struggles of an individual trying to save from the fire his idea of what his moral identity should be, this precious notion of a convention” (52). Like Jim, Freud is engaged in an attempt to preserve or define or save his “idea of what his moral identity should be.” For Freud, that identity is in being a psychoanalyst and a scientist, not a creative writer of fiction. Freud’s relation with novelists is akin to Jim’s relation to the rest of the crew of the *Patna*. Jim and Freud share a tendency towards “contemplating [their] own superiority” (LJ 18). Like Jim, Freud is determined in his “desire that [we] should not confound him with his partners,” only not “in crime,” but in fiction (LJ 51). When reading Freud’s
attempts to distance himself from novelists and other creative writers it is best to remember
Conrad's warning that "no man ever understands quite his own artful dodges to escape from the
grim shadow of self-knowledge" (51). Freud will not allow himself to be known as a novelist and
does everything to convince himself and his readers that he is not one.

Freud's "precious notion of a convention" appears in a passage in "Dora" in which he
claims a superiority over creative writers or men of letters:

I must now turn to consider a further complication to which I should certainly
give no space if I were a man of letters engaged upon the creation of a mental
state like this for a short story, instead of being a medical man engaged upon its
dissection. The element to which I must now allude can only serve to obscure
and efface the outlines of the fine poetic conflict which we have been able to
ascribe to Dora. This element would rightly fall a sacrifice to the censorship of a
writer, for he, after all, simplifies and abstracts when he appears in the character
of a psychologist. But in the world of reality, which I am trying to depict here, a
complication of motives, an accumulation and conjunction of mental activities –
in a word, overdetermination – is the rule. (95)

So novelists are the mere men of letters who simplify in playing at being psychologists. But
Freud never questions whether the psychologist ever appears in the character of a novelist.26 In
his self-assured superiority he cannot consider the possibility that it is the psychologist who
"simplifies and abstracts." Here we have the very beginnings of the categorical distinctions
between psychoanalytic case histories and fiction, a distinction that Freud worked very hard to
make current, and later criticism has largely endorsed until recently. Freud claims the status of a
medical and scientific man writing about reality with its complication of motives. The simple
foundation of the claim is that he is writing about an actual clinical experience.

26 Nor does Freud consider that the psychologist might just be a character in the story. He denies
ever playing a part (D 150-1).
In *Studies on Hysteria*, the book he co-authored with Josef Breuer in 1895, Freud’s discussion of the case of an Elisabeth von R. raises further questions that undermine Freud’s distinction between his work and the work of novelists:

I have not always been a psychotherapist. Like other neuropathologists, I was trained to employ local diagnosis and electro-prognosis, and it still strikes me myself as strange that the case histories I write should read like short stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science. I must console myself with the reflection that the nature of the subject is evidently responsible for this, rather than any preference of my own. The fact is that local diagnosis and electrical reactions lead nowhere in the study of hysteria, whereas a detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers enables me, with the use of a few psychological formulas, to obtain at least some kind of insight into the course of that affliction. (quoted from FCP 83).

Rather than accept responsibility for the form of his writing, Freud blames the subject matter. He is being forced to write like a novelist, just as Jim was forced to jump by conditions of the moment or the rest of the crew. He indirectly confesses to his cases being like short stories with a “few psychological formulas” grafted on. Or, reading the last few clauses again, Freud is confessing that it is the detailed descriptions found in imaginative writing that are primary, and the psychological formulas which are secondary. The story-like detailed descriptions make Freud’s case histories possible. Inadvertently, Freud tells us that he is a short story writer first, and a psychologist second. The importance of this passage is that it reveals Freud’s blindness. He is aware that his case histories resemble short stories, but unwilling to accept the consequences of that realization. He is unwilling to be known as an imaginative writer. That would undermine his attempts to win “the serious stamp of science” which eluded
psychoanalysis. In trying to fight off the suspicion that he is something like a short story writer, Freud only makes the idea more apparent. Jim does the same in running away from a job every time someone discovers his relation to the Patna affair. In doing so, Freud and Jim make their secrets "perfectly known" (119).

Cohn rejects the kind of reading that I am suggesting. He finds it "not at all surprising" that Freud "should have been acutely aware that his narrative presentation of mental life broke the code of scientific discourse" (9). He argues that the passage I have just quoted from Freud is not an admission that Freud "was in fact infringing the fictional preserve" (9). Cohn claims that Freud is asking his readers to "convert" to "a different scientific code, a code in which texts that read like novellas... are not read as novellas but as bona fide scientific contributions" (9). But how far has Cohn's objection brought us? His assertion amounts to an admission that Freud is writing novellas that he convinces people to read as scientific studies. But making a claim that one thing is something else does not actually make it into something else. If we have Melville in mind again, it is a confidence trick. Dressing up a novella as a scientific study does not magically transform one thing into another. In "The Spirit of Place" D. H. Lawrence reminds us to be suspicious of authors who "adorn a tale" (91). Freud might want us to believe that his stories are scientific case histories, but Lawrence reminds us of the "two blankly opposing morals, the artist's and the tale's. Never trust the artist. Trust the tale" (91).

Freud means "Dora" to be an exemplification of his method and the definitive proof that psychoanalysis and the interpretation of dreams could produce a "complete solution" for a case of hysteria (40). In effect, Freud is like Jim in having aspirations he meant to satisfy. Conrad's criticism is that Freud's characteristics are analogous to Jim in that "had no leisure to regret what

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27 See Frank Cioffi's essay "Claims Without Commitments" in Unauthorized Freud: Doubters Confront a Legend for a reasonable case about psychoanalysis as a pseudoscience. It is hard to avoid Freud's claims that psychoanalysis be taken seriously as a science because he is constantly answering the reproaches of his critics in order to assert the respectability of his techniques. His works are nearly always a simultaneous demonstration and justification or vindication of his techniques. The entire first part of The Interpretation of Dreams is a justification for his claims.
he had lost, he was so wholly and naturally concerned for what he had failed to obtain” (53). What both of them fail to obtain is a gratification of their desire. Herein lies the beginning of Freud’s and Jim’s resentment. But Jim’s resentment pales in comparison with the quality of the anger and vengeance manifested in Brown, who is commonly recognized as Jim’s double. In thinking about the course of the revenge that follows upon this resentment, Conrad raises the question of the degree to which “there is a superiority as of a man who carries right – the abstract thing – within the envelope of his common desires” (239). That is, right is confounded with desire, and the two become interconnected and inseparable. Freud believes that he has a right to prove himself a successful analyst or detective and solve the case. Jim imagines that he should prove himself a hero, but never elevates his dreams into a right. However, Brown elevates his “ruthlessness of purpose” into a “blind belief in the righteousness of his will against all mankind” (219). Of course Nietzsche is the great nineteenth-century prophet of resentment, and it is important to recall his argument that “the ressentiment of natures denied the true reaction, that of deeds... compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge” (GM 36). But what if the revenge is not simply imaginary, but acted upon and carried out? Jim, Brown, and Freud “compensate themselves,” but the revenge is anything but imaginary. Marcus disagrees with the kind of analogy I am constructing in thinking that “Dora had taken her revenge on Freud, who in turn chose not to behave in kind. At the same time, however, Freud’s settling of his account with Dora took on the proportions of a heroic inner and intellectual enterprise” (50). Jim’s enterprise is in some degree heroic as well, but it is nevertheless infected with resentment and revenge, and I cannot see a way to excuse Freud as Marcus does. Freud’s revenge is in revealing to the world Dora’s secret life and projecting his own fantasies on her.

It is no exaggeration to say that Freud’s writings are saturated with revenge. The idea exerts a continual presence in his thought as if Freud was haunted by his own shadow, but Freud behaves as if the shadow did not belong to him. Revenge enters into all of his most important interpretations as a motive, cause, or explanation. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle Freud argues
that revenge is a primary motivation for the games and play of children. Calling “the play of children” one of the “earliest forms of normal activity” Freud tells the famous story of watching his grandchild at play (52-55). He explains the child’s motivation as “an instinctive urge to assert control” and “the gratification of an impulse on the child’s part – which in the ordinary way of things remains suppressed – to take revenge” (54). By becoming the “master of the situation” the child is “exchanging his passive role in the actual experience for an active role within the game [and] inflicts on his playmate whatever nasty things were inflicted on him, and thus takes his revenge by proxy” (55).

In the infamous “Irma” dream that is the focus of the first self-interpretation in The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud links revenge to several aspects of the dream. I do not want to review Freud’s interpretation at length, but simply to observe the number of times Freud produces revenge as an explanation: “but it struck me now almost like an act of retribution” (187); “I had already revenged myself in this dream on two people” (191); “the dream gave me my revenge by throwing the reproach back on to him” (196); “Not only did I revenge myself on Otto… but I also revenged myself on [another]” (196); “I pursued my revenge further” (196); “I took my revenge as well on my disobedient patient” (196). The Interpretation of Dreams is a catalogue of thoughts motivated by the desire for revenge concealed beneath the manifest content of dreams but recovered or revealed into consciousness. The idea recurs everywhere in the book, as even cursory readings of the following passages will confirm: the dream in a kitchen (294-299); the dream of the “Western Station” (299-313); the dream of traveling on the railway (589-93); the dream Freud finds disgusting (605-7); and two dreams with a variation on the idea of revenge in delivering “just punishments” (616-26). And these are only the dreams in which Freud actually invokes revenge as an explanation. This does not eliminate the possibility that the others share this element as well.

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28 See Chapter 2 of Beyond the Pleasure Principle (50-55).
29 For the dream and its interpretation, see The Interpretation of Dreams (180-199).
In “Dora,” Freud makes revenge the most important factor in Dora’s actions beginning with his interpretation of the second dream and continuing until the end of his case history. Freud interprets Dora’s second dream as a “phantasy of revenge directed against her father” (137) and advises that “we will make a note of Dora’s craving for revenge as a new element to be taken into account in any subsequent synthesis of her dream thoughts” (138). He explains that “one of [Dora’s] motives for revenge was a revolt against her parent’s constraint” (141). In their last meeting, Freud confronts Dora with his explanation that her motives “were actuated by jealousy and revenge” and that she “gave free rein to [her] feelings of revenge” (148). In the end Freud reads Dora’s termination of the treatment as “an unmistakable act of vengeance on her part” (150) and the final footnote before the Postscript expands on the idea.

Conrad makes resentment and revenge basic elements of the world in Lord Jim, and here I think Conrad realizes the importance of the ideas as Nietzsche did. Even a cursory reading of the novel could not fail to recognize that Cornelius, Jewel, Brierly, Doramin, Sherif Ali, Jones, Brown, and Jim are all, to some degree, resentful. It is one of the common elements through which Conrad makes doubling proliferate throughout the novel. Conrad makes many of the characters both mirror and reveal Jim through resentment. The movement from resentment to revenge is interconnected with Marlow’s idea that Jim “seemed to have come very near at last to mastering his fate” (164). The phrase “mastering his fate” anticipates Freud’s later argument about a child’s desire to be “master of the situation.” One way of reading the trajectory of Conrad’s narrative is to recognize how Jim attempts to become the master of his own fate. In “Dora,” the narrative trajectory of Freud’s story is analogous. Several key passages in Lord Jim anticipate and expose Freud’s thought in “Dora” as analogous to Jim’s. Jim fails to understand his own resentment and desire for revenge. One of the basic failures in Freud’s thought is recognizing that revenge becomes a primary motivation for his writing of “Dora.” Jim avenges himself on others by making them relive his experiences. Part of the revenge is in Freud’s reliving and retelling the experience by writing the case history, not to mention publishing Dora’s
alleged secrets for the world to read. As Marcus suggests, Freud "had not yet, so to speak, 'gotten rid' of it" and "he had to write it out, in some measure, as an effort of self-understanding" (57). But that effort is a "failure" because Freud only succeeds in concealing from himself his desire for revenge.

Conrad's thought about resentment begins with raising the problem of how a person believes himself to be a passive victim of outside forces:

There are many shades in the danger of adventures and gales, and it is only now and then that there appears on the face of facts a sinister violence of intention—that indefinable something which forces it upon the mind and the heart of a man, that this complication of accidents or these elemental furies are coming at him with a purpose of malice, with a strength beyond control, with an unbridled cruelty that means to tear out of him his hope and his fear, the pain of his fatigue and his longing for rest.... (11)

Jim's thoughts are plagued by the possibility that nature possesses a human will that is vengeful, an ability to execute very human acts, such as to manifest the "sinister violence of intention." He thinks of himself as the focus of this sinister intention and reads a "purpose of malice, with a strength beyond control" in outside forces. It is the basis for resentment, the belief that the self is being victimized by unfair and unjust powers.

Marlow recognizes this kind of thought in Jim's relation of the Patna affair. He sees that Jim was crowded with a tumult of events and sensations which beat about him like the sea upon a rock. I use the simile advisedly, because from his relation I am forced to believe he had preserved through it all a strange illusion of passiveness, as though he had not acted but had suffered himself to be handled by the infernal powers who had selected him for the victim of their practical joke. (68)
Jim constructs himself as a passive victim and Marlow identifies this as a "strange illusion." When Jim acknowledges "I had jumped" he adds a moment later "I knew nothing about it till I looked up" (69, 70). Jim either will not or cannot know himself as an active participant. He thinks he was overwhelmed by the conditions and by the rest of the crew, whom he sees as active: "but I tell you they were too much for any man. It was their doing as plainly as if they had reached up with a boat-hook and pulled me over" (77). Jim's challenge to Marlow - "can't you see it? You must see it" - is also directed at readers by Conrad (77). The problem is for us to recognize Jim's will to passiveness. This is the cause of his later resentment and desire for vengeance. He begins with the idea that he is not to blame because what has happened is not his fault.

Freud's thought works in the same way. Like Jim, he constructs himself as a passive victim of Dora's actions. Actually, from the beginning of the work Freud presents himself as a man on the defensive, forced to answer charges from critics and justify his method of treatment. He complains that The Interpretation of Dreams has been met with an "inadequate degree of comprehension" (39). And he thinks himself blameless if the "results remain incomplete" in his account of Dora's case history (40). It is not his fault if "the treatment was not carried through to its appointed end" because it was "broken off at the patient's own wish" (40). Freud and his analytic study have suffered because "if the work had been continued, we should no doubt have obtained the fullest possible enlightenment upon every particular of the case" (40). Freud had an "appointed end" in mind that was not satisfied (40). In making this claim he resembles Jim whose constant refrain is that "It is all in being ready. I wasn't: not - not then" (52). Freud wasn't ready for Dora's termination of the treatment because he hadn't arrived at a satisfactory solution. He constructs himself as a victim, much as Jim does.

Part of the difficulty in understanding how revenge is operating in both books is that it is distorted and obscured when it is revealed. Both Marlow and Freud construct distinctions and oppositions that conceal the similarities between the major antipodes; however it is not clear that
either Marlow or Freud understands how he is concealing important elements of the relations between Brown and Jim and Dora and Freud. In both cases neither Marlow nor Freud recognizes the element of identification contained in the antipodal structure. Freud conceals his identification with (or projection of ideas upon) Dora through an elaborate argument about transference during psychoanalytic treatments in the Postscript. Freud's claims that "during psychoanalytic treatment the formation of new symptoms is invariably stopped"; this disclaimer renounces any blame attaching to him (157). He argues that transference "is an inevitable necessity" and "cannot be evaded" during treatment (158), but is also something only a patient suffers from. The double movement of concealing and revealing can be seen in his argument that the content of transferences "has been subjected to a moderating influence — to sublimation, as I call it — and they may even become conscious, by cleverly taking advantage of some real peculiarity in the physician's person or circumstances and attaching themselves to that" (158). Freud only reads transferences one way, as a projection from the patient onto the physician. His perspective is incomplete and conceals what Freud calls the sublimation of his own revenge in the writing of the story.

The meeting between Brown and Jim is yet another of Conrad's lessons in reading the complexities of identification, doubling, and antipodal relations that I have already discussed at length in previous chapters. By limiting our knowledge of the meeting to Brown's recollection of the events retold through Marlow's account of his conversation with Brown, Conrad makes reading the scene difficult. Marlow introduces the idea of Jim's and Brown's mutual "antagonism" and represents them as "standing on the opposite poles of that conception of life which includes all mankind" (226). For Conrad there is always a play of opposite antagonisms that shift back and forth and exchange positions. Conrad knows that opposition is also a form of identification. In the meeting between Brown and Jim he emphasizes that "there ran through the rough talk a vein of subtle reference to their common blood, an assumption of common experience, a sickening suggestion of common guilt, of secret knowledge that was like a bond of
their minds and their hearts” (229). Marlow knows Jim’s history, while Brown does not, and the connection of the two is made from Marlow’s retrospective position recalling the acts. Marlow understands something of the duality in sympathy and antipathy, but Conrad reveals Marlow’s knowledge as incomplete. Like Freud, Marlow understands the situation only partially, whereas Conrad’s understanding is much larger. Like some critics, Marlow is content with the idea that Jim identifies with Brown with a shared sense sense of victimization. Ralph Rader says that “Jim is accepting the claim from his own sense of having been once the too hardly used victim of circumstances” (233). And like Rader, Marlow concentrates on the moments when Brown “made [Jim] wince” by alluding to the “recklessness of a man spurred on and on by ill-luck” and “when ‘it came to saving one’s life in the dark, one didn’t care who else went – three, thirty, three hundred people’” (229). Marlow concludes that Jim allows Brown to have a second chance because of a shared sense of powerlessness, of having been treated unjustly by the world. But this is not the only element in the identification. As Michael Sprinker argues, Jim does not simply give “Brown a second chance, in effect, because Jim himself had been given one” (239). Marlow will have it that “Jim did not know the almost inconceivable egotism of the man which made him, when resisted and foiled in his will, mad with the indignant and revengeful rage of a thwarted autocrat” (233). He claims that Jim cannot know, but Conrad counters his claim by giving readers good reason to think otherwise. Jim has experienced repeatedly the egotism of a man who has been frustrated. Strangely enough, Marlow is aware of this too, but does not recognize the importance of the idea. Marlow does not recognize how Jim shares something with Brown in his resentment of the world. Or, Marlow conceals the connection in their resentment because he thinks Jim better than he is or wants to present him in a more sympathetic light. But Jim cannot help revealing it. Critics such as Jameson and Sprinker recognize Brown as “the most potent representative of the authentic Conradian villain: the homme de ressentiment,” but they do not recognize how Jim shares this trait as well (Sprinker 246).
In Chapters 31 and 32 Conrad creates a remarkable scene in which Jim gratifies his desire for revenge by killing one of the assassins that had been sent to end his life. Conrad delivers the last two paragraphs of Chapter 31 with a deliberate concentration by slowing down time. Marlow retells Jim’s thoughts about the moment in which he kills another man:

He told me he was experiencing a feeling of unutterable relief, of vengeful elation. He held his shot, he says, deliberately. He held it for the tenth part of a second, for three strides of the man – an unconscionable time. He held it for the pleasure of saying to himself, That's a dead man! He was absolutely positive and certain. He let him come on because it did not matter. A dead man, anyhow. He noticed the dilated nostrils, the wide eyes, the eager stillness of the face and then he fired. (179)

In this moment Jim achieves the illusion of being the master of his fate. The deliberation with which he held his shot prolongs the pleasure. For one moment in his life Jim is in control of the situation, and knows the power intimately. Of course, the “tenth part of a second” is relatively nothing in the grand scheme of time, but for Jim, who has suffered for so long under the idea that he has been victimized by powers outside his control, the moment is expanded, valued far more than any quantified measurement can register. The slow movement of the prose registering every detail of the experience continues until the meaning of the entire affair is revealed: “Jim says he didn’t lose the smallest detail of all this. He found himself calm, appeased, without rancour, without uneasiness, as if the death of that man had atoned for everything” (179). For Jim it is a moment of pleasurable satisfaction because he has balanced what has seemed a lifelong injustice. For Jim, who has always felt out of control, the building resentment of being a passive victim is released because he is for a brief time the master of his fate. At the beginning of the next chapter Jim forces the remaining three assassins to reenact his jump across the river earlier when he escaped from Sherif Ali’s camp. By forcing those three men to re-enact his own experience, Jim reveals an identification and projection in the vengeance. Here Conrad shows an analogy to
Brown in Jim’s “strange vengeful attitude towards his own past” (219). He makes others relive his own past.

But perhaps more importantly, Conrad reveals an analogy with Stein’s earlier adventure with the assassins whom he kills before capturing the butterfly of his dreams. Rader notes that Stein “immediately and intuitively understands and accepts Jim”; however, Rader does not connect this identification with his later observation that Marlow does not note the parallel between Stein’s conduct in the face of danger and Jim’s in his later encounter with assassins on Patusan when, aided by Jewel, he meets the challenge as Stein had his, holding his shots with cool bravery, and finding after his triumph a “great freshness” in the earth around. (232)

In effect Conrad connects the lives and actions of Jim, Stein, and Brown. Brown of course orders the man with the “dead shot” in his crew to kill the man in the village and then participates in the massacre at the end of the novel in which he “took his revenge upon the world” (200-201, 239). In all three cases the men are, as Rader suggests, “carrying out Stein’s admonition to follow the dream” (232). I cannot detect anything explicit in Chapter 20 that suggests Stein is resentful, but that is easily explained because he succeeded in capturing his butterfly. Nevertheless, the capacity for resentment, the potential for revenge is in Stein as Conrad reveals in making the three men’s lives analogous to one another through the detail of the killings they commit. Freud is most like Stein in Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy, also known as “Little Hans,” a case study that confirms Freud’s psychoanalytic theories as perfectly as he could wish. Little Hans is Freud’s butterfly, a fact that is apparent in the glowing admiration he has for the child who behaves like a preschool psychoanalyst. But Dora certainly is no butterfly; in Freud’s mind

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30 I understand that my analysis elides the fact that Jim would probably be acquitted on the grounds of self-defence, but as I argued in Chapter 4, Jim’s motivations in the passage are extremely difficult to know with a high degree of certainty. The actual conduct of killing implicates Jim himself.
she is one of Stein’s beetle-like monsters. The analogy that Conrad creates shows that, like Stein, Freud is just as capable of avenging himself as Jim or Brown.

Freud’s desire to master his own fate manifests itself in a way analogous to Jim’s momentary pause before firing as well as his projected identification with the men he victimizes; the steady deliberation of the act is the same. In terms of pausing before firing Freud didn’t wait very long to shoot because he began writing up Dora’s case history at once, finishing it three weeks after she left him. As Crews recognizes, the writing of Dora’s story is the act of revenge, in that Freud was publishing her secrets to the world (149). But in terms of the narrative, he doesn’t produce the master motivation of revenge for Dora’s dreams and her termination of the treatment until very late in his story, during the description of his last session with Dora. The motivation for his own revenge did not enter Freud’s mind until Dora’s surprise announcement that she was terminating the treatment. But once introduced, the motivation of revenge is repeated continually until the end of the account. Freud reproaches Dora’s actions in describing them as “an unmistakable act of vengeance on her part” fueled by a “craving for revenge” (150, 151). Strangely, Freud himself reveals that “a string of reproaches against other people leads one to suspect the existence of a string of self-reproaches with the same content,” never applying his idea to himself (67). As Sprengenther demonstrates, while revealing his “desire for retaliation” Freud “feels the need to defend himself from the reproach of having betrayed [Dora] by writing her history” (262). Freud’s long account of transference that closes his story conceals the problem of projection and identification by arguing that only patients are prone to transferences. Freud was unable to force the successful termination of the treatment, but he did attempt to master his fate by avenging himself on Dora by recording her case history and exposing her secrets for everyone to read. And in this Freud resembles Brown.

Through Brown, Conrad makes his most devastating criticism of Freudian psychoanalytic case histories, exposing the problems in Freud’s actions and thoughts as they are recorded in “Dora.” In telling his story to Marlow, Brown indulges in his feelings of resentment towards and
his desire for revenge over Jim. Brown's exultation at having "paid out the stuck-up beggar after all" is the same resentment informing Freud's thought about Dora; of course, Brown employs a coarser style, but the idea is the same (LJ 204). Jim frustrates Brown's desire to occupy and control Patusan, just as Dora frustrates Freud's desire to write a great document confirming all of his claims in The Interpretation of Dreams. Angered by the memory of the person who frustrated their desires, the very act of telling by Freud and Brown is a manifestation of their "intense egoism, inflamed by resistance" (LJ 204). But what is more significant is that Brown's meeting with Jim is a very strange yet recognizable version of a Freudian psychoanalytic treatment; Conrad creates a situation analogous to the structure of Freud's relation to Dora in which Brown plays the psychoanalyst and makes Jim his patient. Or at least this is how Marlow represents the meeting in letter to the privileged man. In Marlow's reflections on Brown, Conrad creates a remarkably accurate criticism of several characteristic tendencies in Freud's thought:

Some great men owe most of their greatness to the ability of detecting in those they destine for their tools the exact quality of strength that matters for their work; and Brown, as though he had been really great, had a satanic gift of finding out the best and the weakest spot in his victims. (229)

Like Brown, Freud is nearly a "great man," insofar as he identifies someone like Dora as a "tool" with which he can work to achieve the ends he desires. Freud makes Dora into another of the "victims" of his treatment and resentment. But unlike Freud, who largely invents Dora and her history, Brown's "ability in detecting" actually finds something in his victims. In everything Brown says, he is speaking of himself, and the self-accusations in some measure apply to Jim; the same is true of Freud and Dora, because Freud projects much onto Dora that is present in his mind. So that at the end of the paragraph, when Marlow summarizes the conversation, Conrad once again creates a remarkable commentary on Freudian thought and practices: "And there ran through the rough talk a vein of subtle reference to their common blood, an assumption of common experience, a sickening suggestion of common guilt, of secret knowledge that was like a
bond of their mind and of their hearts” (229). This passage is a wonderful summary of Freud’s relation with Dora, except Freud is unaware of it and Dora remains unknown to him. If we remember that psychoanalysis is at least partially the product of Freud’s self-analysis and interpretation of his own dreams, fantasies, and desires, then we can see how Conrad reveals how Freud, deliberately or unconsciously, treats Dora as if she were a repository of his own thoughts. The “common blood” is in the shared feelings of victimization and the resentment which follows. The “common experience” is in Freud’s assumptions that her dreams operate like his own, so that he can simply superimpose his theories upon her thoughts to explain her experience. The “common guilt” is in the acts of revenge both of them commit: Dora towards her family and Herr K and his wife, and Freud towards Dora. In effect, there is a “bond” between Freud and Dora, and Conrad makes the basis of the identification apparent.
Conclusion

In concluding, I want to suggest very briefly why my arguments in this thesis make a significant contribution to the study of Conrad at the present time and also to suggest how my work might provoke further studies on Conrad's relationship with the nineteenth century in general and some nineteenth-century authors in particular.

The argument throughout my thesis is that because Conrad assimilates and transforms significant ideas and structures found in his predecessors, reading Conrad's work in relation to writers such as Carlyle or Nietzsche enriches our understanding of how his art works, why it is written as it is, and what he thinks. If my arguments are convincing, then Conrad's art and thought can be reassessed in light of the kinds of connections that I have been discussing, not simply because the connections are interesting in themselves but because Conrad's writing is preoccupied with the intellectual history which he has inherited. The work of writing which Conrad undertakes is fuelled by his preoccupation with nineteenth-century ideas. In one sense, the question of how Conrad views his role as an author is very much at issue. One implication of my argument is that Conrad's idea of himself as a writer is tinged or inflected with a sense of transmission and re-examination. Conrad's innovations in artistic form are simultaneously rethoughtings of old forms. Conrad is very much the writer as rewritter because he deliberately and repeatedly takes stock of his predecessors' works and presents critical accounts of their ideas. Part of Conrad's originality as a writer is due to his ability to think about questions or ideas that troubled Carlyle or Nietzsche in ways those writers did not, to explore the causes and consequences of their ideas in a new or different light.

The question is whether we place Conrad in the history of English literature and thought either as a late Victorian or early Modernist. My argument is that we should resist the temptation to reproduce Stein's systematic categorization of the butterflies and the beetles when we attempt to identify Conrad's art and thought because identifying Conrad either as a late Victorian or early
Modernist obscures very real problems. Making sense of Conrad’s relationship with the nineteenth century is particularly difficult because his revaluation of the ideas of that century depends upon those ideas. Whatever the measure of Conrad’s resistance to Carlyle’s or Dostoevsky’s ideas, he is indebted to those writers and his work never entirely escapes from the shadow of those writers. My purpose throughout has not been to rediscover Conrad as a Victorian nor to confirm Conrad’s place in Modernism but instead to reveal some of the subtle shades in Conrad’s art and thought and show how different elements of his work are exaggerated or attenuated depending upon which of the authors Conrad is brought into conversation with. Any attempt to judge Conrad as a backward-looking Victorian or as a ground-breaking Modernist is undermined by the changes in one’s perception of him which depend on the writer with whom he is placed in conversation or according to which idea is made the focus of the discussion.

Regardless of the chronological distances between Conrad and another writer included in this thesis, the same kinds of difficulties remain. Although writing at opposite ends of the Victorian age, Conrad and Carlyle can appear remarkably similar in their basic assumptions, for instance, about the fundamental importance of work and hero-worship. Yet, while Carlyle sees work and hero worship as prescriptions or cures for the disease plaguing his culture, Conrad sees them very much as participating in the disease. Conrad and Freud can appear remarkably similar in the forms and structures which they employ in writing their ideas, yet, while Freud sees suspicion as the road to enlightenment and truth, Conrad has some serious doubts about what kinds of truth issue from suspicion. Each one of the chapters in this thesis could be the basis of a book-length study of the relationship between Conrad’s art and the works of another writer. Such a study should be undertaken not merely to illuminate certain elements of Conrad’s art, but also to inquire into how and why a critical comparison of a pair of writers such as Dickens and Conrad reveals important questions inherent in the art of both writers that would not be recognized through another kind of inquiry. By entering into a conversation with Dickens’s art, Conrad answers an implicit invitation to engage in a dialogue and respond to the assumptions informing
Dickens's thought. In effect, Conrad answers Dickens's proposition of "this is the world, isn't it?" with "yes, but...." To read the two writers together is to hear two sides of a dialogue and to recognize that only these two writers would have such a dialogue. One way of reading would see this conversation as complete in itself, but this viewpoint could be sustained only until another writer is introduced, such as Dostoevsky. Then Dickens's proposal is answered by Dostoevsky, both of whom in turn are answered by Conrad, providing the reader with an opportunity of listening in on a remarkable conversation about ideas that still inform and trouble our thinking today.

My thesis is important because it offers a kind of thinking about ideas and the history of ideas that is lacking at the present time. My arguments emphasize Conrad's participation in an intellectual tradition that includes writers from several nations, all of whom made vital contributions to the development of Western culture. The intellectual climate in which Conrad wrote would not have existed had it not been for those writers. And it is just as significant that the intellectual climate in which I am writing today would also not exist had it not been for them. There are many important considerations that might follow from these observations, but I will confine myself to just a few remarks.

In exploring how Conrad's art is a form of criticism, I have repeatedly emphasized the importance of Conrad both as a reader and as someone who should be read. A central concern for me is examining Conrad's work to discover how he reads and understands the art and thought of other writers. In a way analogous to Jane Adamson or Samuel Goldberg, both of whom argue that novelists have much to teach us about how to think, I am pointing towards Conrad as a novelist whose art has much to teach us, both about other artists and writers specifically, and about the nature of thinking and knowing and making art in general. Conrad is one of the most penetrating readers we can read if we want to have a better understanding of the arguments that Carlyle makes about work and heroes or a better understanding of the kinds of moral complexities involved in Nietzsche's profound attack on Christianity. And he is also one of the
best thinkers we can read if we are interested in the fundamental questions about our living and knowing. His art can be the beginning for an inquiry into the value and significance of certain ideas and instincts rather than merely the subject of an inquiry. The manner in which he writes his inquiries can also be recognized as a kind of ideal for how we might think about complex questions and problems rather than merely for the exaction of examples that substantiate theoretical speculations.

A major problem in contemporary criticism is that works of art are subjected to investigations or interrogations based upon a theory or a combination of approaches without sufficient doubts about whether the work of art is critical of or repudiates the very ideas that enable those approaches. Reading Conrad as I do raises difficult questions about the practice of using theories to explain art. Conrad may be critical of the ideas which enable a theoretical reading of his work. For instance, anyone who has studied the history of ideas knows that the fundamental assumptions informing Derrida’s deconstruction or Foucault’s genealogical methods can be traced back to important passages in Nietzsche’s philosophy. As I have shown, Conrad is profoundly critical of Nietzsche’s thought, so this provokes some difficult questions about whether theories enabled by Nietzsche’s ideas are reading Conrad or whether Conrad is reading those theories. Conrad’s assimilation and criticism of Nietzsche anticipates the work of later theorists, so we cannot assume because those theorists are writing later than Conrad that their thought is more valuable or more insightful. At the very least, we should attend to the potential objections which Conrad makes in his art about ideas that we bring to bear upon his novels in our reading. In essence, this means engaging in a real conversation with Conrad to understand how his perspective stands in relation to our own so that rather than dictating the terms of the discussion, we might question the terms of our criticism. This is the very real difference between a dialogue and an interrogation or a dictation, a matter which Conrad repeatedly reflects upon in Under Western Eyes and Nostromo.
Perhaps the most basic question in my thesis is about authority and the hierarchy of values we create among different forms of thinking and knowing which implicitly informs our judgements in reading. At least since Freud’s time, the critic as analyst has been identified as the most important thinker and knower and the artist has lost his or her claim to being the voice of wisdom or judgement. Very few people today would seriously consider Carlyle’s argument for the poet as a prophet and hero as a claim worth considering. However, there is a very real question of whether we have actually ceased to revere authors or simply exchanged our worship of poets and novelists for an admiration of analysts and critics. Implicit in my argument is the idea that Conrad is a major thinker and makes an impressive claim to being one of the best critics of several major nineteenth-century thinkers that we can read. I think Conrad has much to teach us about reading Dickens’s *Bleak House* or Nietzsche’s relationship with Christ in *The Anti-Christ*, and potentially offers insights that are lacking in contemporary critics. As much as possible, I have tried to keep questions such as “How and why does Conrad think?” or “What problem does Conrad raise?” as the fundamental basis of my inquiry. If I am right in arguing that Conrad teaches readers how to read other authors with more care and deliberation, then he is also teaching readers how to attend to his own works in the same way.

At the very least my thesis offers an alternative way of reading Conrad that differs from the dominant discussion pervading criticism on Conrad at the present time. Postcolonial readings of Conrad’s works have all but monopolized the critical discussion of Conrad’s works in recent years. Titles of recently published books on Conrad provide ample evidence for my claim: Byron Caminero-Santangelo, *African Fiction and Joseph Conrad: Reading Postcolonial Intertextuality*; Stephen Ross, *Conrad and Empire*; David Adams, *Colonial Odysseys: Empire and Epic in the Modernist Novel*; Gail Finchem and Attie M. de Lange with Wieslaw Krajka, eds., *Conrad and the Millennium: Modernism, Postmodernism, Postcolonialism*; Adrian M. de Lange and Gail Finchem, eds., *Conrad in Africa: New Essays on Heart of Darkness*. There should be some question about whether Conrad is as interested in the questions that these studies raise as are the
critics writing the studies and whether Conrad has a different perspective than the critics on the problems they discuss. Are the critics interrogating Conrad and dictating the form of the inquiry or engaging in a conversation and finding the form with him? There is some danger that if the range of criticism on a writer is too narrowly defined then the criticism will fail to attend to alternative or potentially dissenting perspectives, especially the author's own. There is also the danger that instead of categories such as Victorian or Modern, Conrad will get firmly placed in a category such as postcolonial, and his works will not be discussed in terms that differ from that categorization. I think that Conrad understood very well the dangers inherent in the processes governing the creation and maintenance of categories, and his warning is written into the tragic lives that many of his characters, especially Jim and Razumov, are forced to live.

In this work I fill a significant gap in contemporary scholarship on Conrad. Few critics have explored Conrad's relationships with Carlyle, Dickens, and Nietzsche. Although the connection between Conrad and Dostoevsky has received a great deal of attention, readers have largely focused on tracing Dostoevskian echoes in Conrad's novels. I show that Conrad's thought relies upon a profound knowledge of these writers and his art offers a reassessment of the assumptions enabling their work. My work also reinforces and extends the kinds of connections that Ian Watt provokes us to consider in identifying Conrad as a nineteenth-century thinker. My work supplements Watt's work by showing the very important connections between Conrad and writers such as Nietzsche whom Watt does not consider. My thesis is also important because it answers some of the concerns that Edward Said raises about Conrad's profound understanding of the intellectual conditions in which he was writing. In many ways my thesis both complements and extends the kinds of questions that preoccupied both Said and Watt.

Were I to continue the work I have started, I would compare Conrad with several major thinkers who, because of time limitations, have been excluded here. These include Matthew Arnold, George Eliot, Karl Marx, and John Stuart Mill. For instance, I would compare Arnold's arguments about culture and anarchy with Conrad's representation of the disintegrating English
culture in *The Secret Agent*. By reading *Nostromo* in dialogue with *Middlemarch*, I would like to explore Conrad's ideas about history, both in relation to the individual and society as a whole. I would be especially interested in exploring the continuities and discontinuities between the doctors and intellectuals in the two books by comparing Eliot's Ladislaw and Casaubon with Conrad's Monygham and Decoud. But I think it would be important to revisit some of the arguments that I have made to tease out the complications I have only hinted at here. For instance, I feel compelled to revisit Conrad's ideas about heroism and greatness by including not only Carlyle but Dostoevsky and Nietzsche, and potentially Kierkegaard, whose *Fear and Trembling* is a sustained meditation on the nature of greatness.

Through the process of exploring the conversations among the authors included in this thesis, I have begun to realize just how difficult it is "to think by myself" (UWE 107). Thinking about Conrad's art as criticism has taught me "it is not very easy, such thinking. One has got to be put in the way of it, awakened to the truth" (UWE 107).
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