

Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*: The Revelation of the Problems of Racialism

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“[G]iving your life up to them” (*them* meaning all of mankind with skins brown, yellow, or black in colour) “[is] like selling your soul to a brute.” ... “[T]hat kind of thing” [is] only endurable and enduring when based on a firm conviction in the truth of ideas racially our own[.] (339)¹⁾

In Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*, Marlow's friend, as quoted above, represents a racist and imperialist opinion. According to Cedric Watts, "*Blackwood's Magazine* [in which *Lord Jim* was serialized] ... followed a broadly conservative policy in literature and political matters," and Marlow's friend's opinion shows "the orthodox Victorian prejudice (racist and pro-imperialist) of the magazine's readership."²⁾

Is it true that Europeans' service to non-Europeans is "endurable and enduring" only when based on such a racist "conviction"? If we try to serve the need of someone whom we despise as "a brute," we will probably find what we do for him to be hollow and vain, and so our service to him will *not* be "endurable and enduring." What I should like to show in this essay is that *Lord Jim* dramatizes and reveals the hollowness inherent in the racist "conviction" above.

I am aware that this could be too simplistic, that racial discourse is commonplace in the late nineteenth century and that it is unlikely that any writer of the period can escape entirely from it. My point is that, unusually in his time and perhaps because of his own special position as exile and *déraciné*, Conrad has considerable and critical insight into imperialist racialism, and that in effect *Lord Jim* can be read as a criticism of racist attitudes. When I say Conrad criticizes "racialism," I am using this word in the sense as *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it: "Belief in the superiority of a particular race leading to prejudice and

antagonism towards people of other races."

Criticism of racialism in *Lord Jim* seems to focus in particular on the idea of "superiority" that European characters feel — an idea that the narrative shows to be unfounded, dangerous, and self-destructive.

I should like to consider this topic through three key incidents in the novel: the European crew's abandonment of the Asians on the ship *Patna*; the suicide of Captain Briery; Jim's pose as a hero in Patusan. It is my contention that each of these incidents can be read as implying a criticism of racist attitudes. I wish to suggest that, as the novel develops, the problems of racialism and the analysis of them become more complex and multifaceted; but at the same time the cumulative effect of these incidents adds up to a singular and searching critique of racist imperialism — even when imperialism attempts to create heroic purity.

The depiction of the departure of the *Patna*, the ship in *Lord Jim* which is commanded by European sailors and carries Asian Islamic pilgrims, suggests the Europeans' psychological distance from the Asians:

“Look at dese cattle [the Asian pilgrims],” said the German skipper to [Jim]. ... [F]ar astern of the pilgrim ship a screw-pile lighthouse, planted by unbelievers [Europeans] on a treacherous shoal, seemed to wink at her its eye of flame, as if in derision of her errand of faith. ... The five whites on board lived amidships, isolated from the human cargo [the pilgrims]. (15–16)

What gives an ominous atmosphere to the departure of the *Patna* here is the Europeans' "derision" of the pilgrims. This passage seems to suggest that what follows — the European crew's abandonment of the

Asians on the ship — is in part caused by the problem of racialism.

When Marlow, who is shocked at Jim's — a seemingly honest European seaman's — abandonment of his duty and is caught by "the doubt of the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct"(50), tries to conduct a personal "inquiry" into the affair, the problems of racialism are revealed to be some of the causes of the European crew's abandonment of the Asian passengers. When he has an interview with the chief engineer of the *Patna*, who has become crazy soon after the affair, it becomes clear that his abandonment of the Asians on the *Patna* is at least partly caused by his racial prejudice. The chief engineer, who has become alcoholic and is worried by hallucinations, tells Marlow that the ship was full of sleeping pink toads, and that he "had to clear out on the strict Q.T." in order not to wake them up and be "tramp[ed] on" by them(52-54). The "pink toads" of his hallucination represent a parodic version of the Asian passengers who were sleeping when he left the *Patna*; he was afraid that the pilgrims might panic if they knew of the accident, and so he left them asleep on the seemingly sinking ship. When Jim cut the life-boats clear of the ship so that the passengers could be saved, the chief engineer said to him: "You silly fool! do you think you'll get the ghost of a show when all that lot of brutes is in the water? Why, they will batter your head for you from these boats"(103).

The chief engineer's fear of the Asians' violence and panic is derived from contemporary Orientalist discourse; Westerners in this era tended to fear Easterners' excitement and panic. For example, in G. A. Henty's *With the Allies to Peking*(1903), a contemporary adventure romance, a European who is said to know the East very well says: "[Eastern people] get into a tremendous state of excitement sometimes, and hollo and shout each other so that you would think they would tear each other to pieces."⁴³

Even Jim, who seems more moral than the chief engineer, shares this racial prejudice, and this is one of the reasons for his eventual abandonment of the Asians on the *Patna*:

[Jim] was tempted to grip and shake the shoulder of the nearest lascar [who was sleeping], but he didn't. Something held his arms down along his sides. ...[H]e was afraid of the emergency. His confounded imagination had evoked for him all the horrors of panic, the trampling rush, the pitiful screams, boats swamped — all the appalling incidents of a disaster at sea he had ever heard of. (87-88)

In the actual affair of the *Jeddah*, the model on which Conrad based the *Patna* affair in the novel, the Asian passengers on the ship are said to have really panicked and done violence to the European crew to get the life-boats.⁴⁴ But, in *Lord Jim*, Conrad alters the situation; in the novel, the Asian passengers are asleep and not aware of the accident, but the European crew *imagine* (because of their racial prejudice) that they may panic, and abandon them. By this alteration of the situation, Conrad is able to indicate that the European crew's abandonment of their duty stems from their racial prejudice.

The European crew's abandonment of their Asian passengers is caused not only by their racial prejudice about Easterners' "panic," but also by their racist lack of concern about the lives of the Asians. The skipper, the chief engineer, and the second engineer try to rescue one European man, George, at the cost of their lives, but do not have any hesitation in abandoning the eight hundred Asian people:

"There were eight hundred people in that ship," [Jim] said.... "Eight hundred living people, and they [the three Europeans in the lifeboat] were yelling after the one dead man [George] to come down and be saved. ... Suddenly the skipper howled, "Mein Gott! The squall! The squall! Shove off!' With the first hiss of rain, and the first gust of wind, they screamed, "Jump, George! We'll catch you! Jump!' The ship began a slow plunge; the rain swept over her like a broken sea.... 'Geo-o-o-orge! Oh, jump!' " ... [After escaping from the ship,] [Jim] noticed that they [the three men] talked as though they had left behind them

nothing but an empty ship. (110, 115)

Though the ship's "first nod to the swell that precedes the burst of such a squall would be also her last"(102), the three men in the lifeboat take the risk of being involved in a squall, trying to save George at the cost of their lives. On the other hand, they do not care about the eight hundred Asian people whom they call "cattle"(15) or "brutes"(103). As we can see in the passage above, Jim is much less racist than the three other men, but even he *at bottom* shares the racist neglect of the Asians, as I hope to show later.

The problems of racialism become clearer through the episode of Captain Brierly, a member of the jury of the court of inquiry who commits suicide soon after judging Jim guilty. Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* interprets Brierly's suicide as "a class abdication,"⁹ but this seems too simple. If Brierly is to abdicate the seamen's class to which he belongs, why does he, before committing suicide, have to direct the course of the ship, set the log, and leave a letter in which he says to the owners of his ship that "he [has] always done his duty by them...and even now he [is] not betraying their confidence"(61)? Besides, just before jumping into the sea, he "carefully"(61) hangs under the rail the gold chronometer watch which he was awarded for a heroic deed as a seaman. All these actions seem to show that Brierly wants people to regard his suicide as a heroic deed as a seaman and that he himself thinks so.

Why, then, does Brierly, confronted with the *Patna* affair, have to commit suicide in order to regard himself as a hero? His motive for suicide becomes clear when Marlow tells us about his last conversation with him. Brierly says to Marlow:

"This infernal publicity [the court of inquiry] is too shocking: there he [Jim] sits *while all these confounded natives, serangs*[native boatswains], *lascars*[Oriental seamen], *quartermasters, are giving evidence that's enough to burn a man to ashes with shame*. This is abominable. A man may go pretty near through his whole sea-life without any call to show a stiff upper lip. But when the call comes.... Aha! If I...." (67-68, emphasis added)

As Marlow says, Brierly is "holding silent inquiry into his own case"(58). Brierly is annoyed at seeing Jim — a gentlemanly European seaman whom he in a way cannot but identify with himself — humiliated in the court in front of the natives. From Brierly's angle, for a European seaman to be regarded as inferior to the natives is an intolerable and unbearable thing, as if he were "burned to ashes." Viewed thus, his suicide is his way of answering to his own "case"; he tries to answer the question "if I were on the seemingly sinking *Patna*, what would I do?" By committing suicide by jumping into the sea, Brierly tries to show that he is brave and not afraid of being drowned, and that, if he had been on the seemingly sinking *Patna*, he would have remained on it, unlike Jim. He finds it more intolerable to be humiliated in front of the "confounded natives" and Oriental seamen than to be drowned.

But ironically enough, by jumping into the sea from his ship, Brierly has committed the same crime as Jim's: he has abandoned his ship. Besides, his suicide can be seen as a "cowardly" act: he desperately wants to distinguish himself from Jim, who has been humiliated as a coward and shown to be inferior to the natives; his cowardice lies in that he is *scared* of being regarded as a coward inferior to the natives. Marlow talks about his suicide in an ironical tone: "Who can tell what flattering view he [Brierly] had induced himself to take of his own suicide?"(64)

What drives Brierly into his useless suicide is in part his racist way of thinking. He feels he must show that "decent" European seamen would be brave enough to keep to their duty at the cost of their lives, unlike the European crew of the *Patna*, whose cowardice provides "infernal publicity" to the "confounded natives" and Oriental seamen. He talks about the *Patna* affair as follows:

"Frankly, I don't care a snap for all the pilgrims that ever came out of Asia, but a decent man would not have behaved like this to a full cargo of old rags in bales. ...[T]he only thing that holds us together is just the name for that kind of decency. (68)

What mainly annoys Brierly is not the fact that the eight hundred Asians were abandoned, but the fact that Jim, a gentlemanly European seaman, did not keep to his duty and is humiliated in the court in front of the natives. From his angle, the *Patna* affair is a threat to the ratified idea of “decency” which “holds together” the European seamen. When he says “decency,” it does not indicate a humane attitude to Asian people, and so his service to Asians as a seaman is not supported by humane feelings toward them. It is because his ideal is thus dependent on racialist categories of thought that he, as Ian Watt says, “sees solidarity as something based not on any internal ethical foundation, but entirely as a response to the need to maintain public esteem for the group to which he belongs.”⁶⁰

On the other hand, Jim’s, Marlow’s, and Conrad’s feelings and attitude toward the Asian passengers are much more humane than Brierly’s. We can see this in the following passage:

I[Marlow] believe that, [just after escaping from the *Patna*,] his [Jim’s] 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...?” (113)

Jim’s feelings toward the Asians are thus more humane than Brierly’s, but terribly enough, Jim *at bottom* shares a racialist attitude with Brierly, and Jim’s abandonment of his passengers is in part caused by his latent racialist attitude.

On the seemingly sinking *Patna*, when the other Europeans begin to prepare for escape, at first Jim decides to remain on the ship, together with the two Malayan helmsmen:

[Jim] had remained apart [from the other Europeans] without a single glance at them and at

the boat.... The Malays had meantime remained holding to the wheel. Just picture to yourselves the actors in that, thank God! unique, episode of the sea, four beside themselves with fierce and secret exertions, and *three* looking on in complete immobility.... (96-97, emphasis added)

It is not only Jim but also the two Malays that are resolved to remain on the ship, and so Marlow calls them “three.” But Jim, who is in a situation of the utmost extremity, forgets the existence of the two Malays, and his consciousness concentrates only on the other Europeans:

[The two Malays] stuck to the helm of that ship.... The whites did not give them half a glance, had probably forgotten their existence. Assuredly Jim did not remember it. He remembered he could do nothing; he could do nothing, now he was alone. (99)

This passage clearly shows us the racialist attitude of the “white” crew including Jim. Jim’s thought that he is “alone” is contrasted with Marlow’s word (“three”). At this critical point Jim sees people as defined by racial categories. Thus it is no wonder that Jim finally joins the other Europeans and abandons the Asians, though almost despite himself. So I partly agree with John W. Griffith when he says as follows:

Jim’s desertion of the pilgrims on the *Patna* apparently derives, in part, from an ethnocentric disregard for those who make no claim on ethnic or cultural solidarity; they are not, to use Marlow’s phrase in its latent racial context, “one of us.” Before he makes his “jump,” Jim fails to distinguish the faceless mass of pilgrims as kindred spirits. He even denies the very basic claim made on his conscience by the pilgrim who asks him only for water.⁶¹

Griffith’s view here (and his whole argument in his book), however, seems to me limited, because he fails to notice the pecking order between the Europeans and

the Asians in the novel. It is not only ethnic *distance* but also *the pecking order* that lies between the Europeans and the Asians; the Europeans are assumed to be superior to the Asians. Thus the European crew of the *Patna* despise the Asians, while the Asians respect the Europeans; and this is the reason the Malayan helmsmen keep to their duty, while the Europeans abandon them. Conrad carefully shows this, depicting the statement of one of the Malays in the court of inquiry:

[The Malay] explained that he had a knowledge of some evil thing befalling the ship, but there had been no order; he could not remember an order; why should he leave the helm? ...[I]t never came into his mind then that the white men were about to leave the ship through fear of death. He did not believe it now. (98)

This Malay deeply and blindly trusts and respects the Europeans, and this is why he has stuck to the “order” given by them and kept to his duty, while the Europeans have “not give[n] [the Malays] half a glance,” “forgot[ten] their existence,” and abandoned them. Thus the social superiority of the Europeans has ironically made them commit a “cowardly” crime, while the social inferiority of the Asians has made them “heroically” hold to their duty. The Malays’ statement in the court (98–99) is set just before the passage that tells us “The whites did not give [the Malays] half a glance” (99); it is obvious that, by this narrative sequence, Conrad wants to contrast the Malays’ respect to the Europeans and the Europeans’ neglect of them.

That the European crew’s neglect of the Asians is one of the causes for their abandonment of their duty becomes clearer when Marlow tells us about his conversation with the French lieutenant who has saved the *Patna*:

[The French lieutenant:] “Man is born a coward.... It is a difficulty.... But habit — habit — necessity — do you see? — *the eyes of others*.... One puts up with it.”

[Marlow:] “That young man [Jim] — you will

observe — had none of these inducements....” (147, emphasis added)

Marlow suggests that Jim on the *Patna* did not have “the eyes of others” which might have made him put up with danger and keep to his duty, though actually there were “the eyes of” the Malays. Marlow’s words draw our attention to the fact that, for the European crew, “the eyes of” the Malays were not “the eyes of others” which might function as a restraint, because the European crew did not in effect see the Malays at all as other individuals: “The whites did not give [the Malays] half a glance, had probably forgotten their existence.” Again it is shown that the problem of a racist blindness to reality is one of the important causes for the European crew’s abandonment of their duty.

In this way, Marlow’s friend’s racist opinion which I have quoted at the beginning of this article turns out to be false. Marlow’s personal inquiry into the *Patna* affair reveals that Europeans’ service to non-Europeans is *not* endurable and enduring when based on a racist way of thinking. Marlow shows us that, because of Europeans’ racism, the moral “sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct” does not actually exist among European seamen working for non-Europeans.

Marlow’s friend’s idea is like that of Kurtz which “strikes [Marlow] as ominous” in *Heart of Darkness*: “we whites...must necessarily appear to them [the natives] in the nature of supernatural beings — we approach them with the might as of a deity.”⁶⁸ Both Marlow’s friend and Kurtz arrogantly believe in white supremacy, and maintain that Europeans should not stand on equal footing with the natives. Conrad brings this kind of idea into his fiction in order to expose its danger and inadequacy. In his short story “Karain: A Memory,” he makes the narrator say as follows:

There are [people] who say that a native does not speak to a white man. Error. No man will speak to his master; but to a wanderer and a friend, to [a man] who does not come to teach or to rule, to [a man] who asks for nothing and accepts all things, words are spoken...that take no account of race or

colour. One heart speaks — another one listens[.]”

Conrad prefers Europeans’ heart-to-heart friendship with the natives, and dislikes a master-slave relationship in which Europeans try to teach, rule, and exploit the natives. And thus he dislikes the imperial hierarchical system (which Kurtz belongs to and work for), and is in favor of the European “wanderers” who do not belong to such a system and can make friends with the natives, such as the narrator of “Karain” (who secretly sells guns and gunpowder to the natives, violating the European law) or the Russian youth in *Heart of Darkness* (who “want[s] nothing from anybody”¹⁰⁰). Jim in Patusan is, to some extent, a “wanderer” who does not belong to the imperial system, and in a sense is able to make friends with the natives. And thus Conrad can be, to some extent, sympathetic to Jim and his enterprise in Patusan, a place which is not incorporated into the wider imperial system.

But, on the other hand, Conrad does not forget to point out the problems of Jim’s enterprise in Patusan; it is shown that Jim as a “white lord”(270) is still not free from the problems I have pointed out while talking about the *Patna* affair. Or, rather, the Patusan episode can be seen as a device with which the problems of racialism are effectively revealed from a different angle from that of the *Patna* episode. In the *Patna* episode, the problems of racialism are revealed through the European crew’s *failure* in keeping to their duty; on the other hand, in the Patusan episode, Conrad reveals the problems of racialism to us by showing the hollowness inherent in Jim’s apparent success.

After achieving an apparent success and becoming a “white lord,” Jim says to Marlow:

“I must feel — every day, every time I open my eyes — that I am trusted.... I have got back my confidence in myself — a good name.... I shall hold what I’ve got.... To-morrow I shall go and take my chance of drinking that silly old Tunku Allang’s coffee, and I shall make no end of fuss over these rotten turtles’ eggs. No. I can’t say — enough. Never. I must go on, go on for ever holding up my end, to feel sure that nothing can

touch me. I must stick to their [the Patusan people’s] belief in me to feel safe and to...keep in touch with...those whom, perhaps, I shall never see any more [Europeans].”(247, 333– 34)

Jim feels that he needs “to keep in touch with [Europeans],” and in this respect his idea resembles that of Marlow’s friend who maintains that Europeans’ service to non-Europeans must be “based on a firm conviction racially [their] own.” As Jewel, the native girl in love with Jim, rightly points out: “[Europeans] all remember something! [They] all go back to it”(315). Thus Jim’s bond with the people of Patusan has to exist along with his loyalty to European people and ethics, as John W. Griffith says: “Paradoxically, the imperialist must maintain an identification with his own people while he serves the interests of another culture.”¹⁰¹ Because of his pride as a European, Jim at bottom despises the things and the people of Patusan; he talks contemptuously about his work such as “taking the chance of drinking that silly old Tunku Allang’s coffee” or “fuss over [the] rotten turtles’ eggs.” In this respect, Marlow’s friend, who has “prophesied for [Jim] the disaster of weariness and of disgust with...the self-appointed task”(338), is in a sense right. That is to say, Jim in a sense shares the same racist attitude with Marlow’s friend, though only slightly. The reason Jim still serves the need of the people of Patusan is that he needs to be “trusted” “in order to feel safe”; his motive is fundamentally egoistic rather than benevolent. In these respects, Jim resembles Brierly, who says “We are trusted...trusted! Frankly, I don’t care a snap for all the pilgrims that ever came out of Asia”(68). They do not find substantial meanings in what they do for Asians, because their way of thinking is dependent on racist categories of thought. As Marlow rightly points out, Jim “love[s] the land and the people [of Patusan] with a sort of fierce egoism, with a contemptuous tenderness”(248).

Though Jim talks contemptuously about the things and the people of Patusan, Conrad suggests that Jim is not so superior to them as he imagines himself to be. For example, Jim talks contemptuously about the old man who has come to consult him about his brass pots

and his wife(268 - 69), but from our point of view he is in parallel with the old man. Jim despises this old man as "an old fool" because the old man foolishly sticks to his "honour" and complains that "His enemies [jeer] at him; his face [is] utterly blackened," and makes a fuss about it "instead of attending to [his] crops." But Jim himself has been foolishly sticking to his "honour" and escaping from the rumor of the *Patna* affair, "instead of attending to" his work. In this way Jim is shown to be not so superior to the people of Patusan whom he despises.

Jim's effort "to...keep in touch with [Europeans]" is one of the causes of his identification with Brown, the European ruffian who attacks Patusan. When Brown says to him, "You have been white once, for all your tall talk of this [the natives] being your own people and you being one with them"(381), Jim comes to identify himself with Brown and let him and his followers go, despite the Patusan people's opposition, and consequently causes many people's death (Brown massacres them). This is partly because Jim's bond with Europe is at bottom stronger than his loyalty to the people of Patusan. As Cedric Watts says, "when [Jim] spares Brown, his motives are partly...those of racial prejudice."⁽¹²⁾

After Brown's massacre, Jim, who has promised "to answer with his life for any harm that should come to them if [Brown and his followers are] allowed to retire"(392), thinks it "faithful" for him to be killed by Doramin, the native leader whose son has been killed in the massacre, and carries it out. Before his death, he sends "right and left at all those faces a proud and unflinching glance"(416). This suggests that Jim thinks of his suicidal death as a heroic deed. By willingly allowing himself to be killed, he wants to show that he is brave enough to keep his word at the cost of his life. But, in this sense, his suicidal death is a kind of "pose," as J. Hillis Miller points out: "Jim's death is...in one sense...a sham. ... It is only one way of acting among others."⁽¹³⁾ Jim's "formula" is "I shall be faithful"(334), and it is true that his suicidal death is, from a certain angle, a "faithful" action in that he has kept his word. But, on the other hand, we remember that he has said to Marlow: "only try to think what it would be if I went

away [from Patusan]. Jove! can't you see it? Hell loose"(333). Jim actually thinks that, for the sake of the people of Patusan, he must not leave them. Besides, he has sworn to Jewel that he will never leave her(313). From this angle, Jim's suicidal death is even "treacherous," as Jewel says to Marlow: "[Jim] has left me.... [Y]ou [Europeans] always leave us — for your own ends.... [Y]ou are hard, treacherous, without truth, without compassion"(348). In a sense, like the narrator-protagonist in George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant," Jim has become "a sort of hollow, posing dummy" in order to "appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things"⁽¹⁴⁾ as a European in the East. In this respect, as Marlow points out, "In fact, Jim the leader was a captive in every sense"(262).

Jim's death only means that he has kept his word, and nothing else; he cannot make up for his mistake in a real sense, because the people who have been killed by Brown's followers will not come back even though Jim dies, of course. Hence Jim is actually not in a position to send "a *proud and unflinching glance*"(my italics) to the people of Patusan. The reason Jim is "proud" when he dies is that he at bottom thinks mainly about his honor and bravery (which he tries to show by his suicidal death), rather than about the lost lives of the people of Patusan. Thus Marlow's words about the *Patna* affair, "[Jim] made so much of his disgrace while it is the guilt alone that matters"(177), are also true of this case. In this sense Jim resembles Brierly, who thinks mainly about his and European seamen's honor and commits suicide in order to show that a "decent" European seaman is not afraid of death, though what really matters about the *Patna* affair is not European seamen's honor but the fact that the eight hundred Asians have been abandoned.

Jim's sending "a proud and unflinching glance" before his death is in parallel not only with Brierly's hanging his gold chronometer watch under the rail before committing suicide, but also with Brown's boastful talk to Marlow on his deathbed. Brown eagerly wants Marlow to listen to him in order to confirm his self-image as a great villain: "[Brown] seemed to fear that I [Marlow] would get tired of waiting and go away, leaving him with his tale untold, with his exultation

unexpressed”(345). Because of Conrad’s narrative method using time-shifts, when we read the depiction of Jim’s death, we already know of Brown’s squalid attempt to confirm his self-image before his death, and so we are made to see Jim’s self-satisfied attitude from the same critical angle.

That Jim is shot by Doramin with Stein’s gun is also Conrad’s way of suggesting that Jim’s deeds are problematic. It is Stein that has given Jim the opportunity to dominate Patusan, and so the fact that Jim is shot with Stein’s gun suggests that Jim’s death is an inevitable consequence of his own domination of Patusan, as Marlow comments: “who toys with the sword shall perish by the sword. [Jim’s death]...comes as an unavoidable consequence. Something of the sort had to happen”(342–43). The Europeans conquer the Asians by using guns (weapons peculiar to the Europeans and superior to those of the Asians), and so it is symbolic when the Europeans are shot with guns by the Asians. Just as Willems, the European protagonist in Conrad’s *An Outcast of the Islands*, is shot with his own gun by the native girl, Aïssa, when he tries to rob her of the gun (she does not intend to shoot him unless he attacks her), Jim is killed as a consequence of his own deeds.

In this way, showing us the hollowness inherent in Jim’s apparent successful enterprise, the Patusan episode reveals the problems of racialism from a different angle from that of the *Patna* episode. In the *Patna* episode, the European crew’s racialism makes it hard and even impossible for them to keep to their duty. On the other hand, in the Patusan episode, Jim keeps to what he regards as his duty, but because of his contempt for the things and the people of Patusan, he does not find substantial meanings in what he does for them, and his loyalty to European people and ideas makes him even “treacherous” to the people of Patusan (as seen in Jim’s letting loose Brown and his followers or in Jim’s self-satisfied suicidal death). Jim is, from Jewel’s angle, “treacherous” in that he (in Marlow’s words) has “surrender[ed] himself faithfully to the claim of his own world of shades” “at the call of his exalted egoism” (416).

Some critics, such as Chinua Achebe, have

maintained that Conrad was “a thoroughgoing racist,”¹⁵ and it may be in a sense true that, because Conrad lived and worked in the imperialist era, he was more “racist” than we are now — though the problem remains that Achebe does not make clear in what sense he uses the word “racist.” But Conrad was fascinated by the problems of ethical behavior and moral consistency, and these constantly brought up the issue of racialism through ethical dilemmas. As I hope to have shown in this article, *Lord Jim* can be said to show the problems of racialism and in a certain sense subvert racialist ideas of his age, such as Marlow’s friend’s opinion which Cedric Watts says is “the orthodox Victorian prejudice.”

Notes

- (1) Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983). All subsequent references to *Lord Jim* are to this edition.
- (2) Cedric Watts’ Introduction to *Lord Jim* by Joseph Conrad (London: Penguin, 1986), 16.
- (3) G. A. Henty, *With the Allies to Peking* (Taipei: Ch’eng Wen, 1974; originally published in England in 1903), 17.
- (4) As for the *Jeddah* affair, see Norman Sherry’s study in Thomas Moser, ed., *Lord Jim* (New York: Norton, 1968), 309–43.
- (5) Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981), 264.
- (6) Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: California UP, 1979), 278.
- (7) John W. Griffith, *Joseph Conrad and the Anthropological Dilemma* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), 185–86.
- (8) Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: Norton, 1988), 50.
- (9) Joseph Conrad, *Tales of Unrest* (London: Penguin, 1977), 32.
- (10) *Heart of Darkness*, 58.
- (11) Griffith, 50–51.
- (12) Watts, 23.
- (13) J. Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition: Seven*

English Novels (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1982), 29.

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