Orphic Descent in "Lord Jim"

Sonya Willie

*College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd](https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd)

Part of the *English Language and Literature Commons*

**Recommended Citation**


[https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-4vvc-tn83](https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-4vvc-tn83)
ORPHIC DESCENT IN LORD JIM

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of English

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Sonya Willie

2001
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of

The requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

[Signature]
Author

Approved, May 2001

[Signature]
Chris Bongie

[Signature]
Richard Lowry

[Signature]
Thomas Heacox
In loving memory of James Henry Willie.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. INTRODUCTION: MODERN RELEVANCE OF CONRAD’S ARTISTIC DESCENTS AND MYTHIC SUBSTRUCTURE</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. ORPHIC DESCENTS AND EASTERN BRIDES</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. MYTH AND THE FEMININE PRINCIPLE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CONRAD’S IMPRESSIONISM: INVOLVING THE READER IN MODERN MYTH-MAKING</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. QUESTS IN PROGRESS: THE PATNA EPISODE</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. JIM’S GETHSEMANE: THE MYTHIC MALABAR HOUSE</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. STEIN’S UNDERWORLD</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. THE FINAL UNDERWORLD: PATUSAN</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. HEROIC CODES OF CONDUCT: REWEAVING THE MORAL FABRIC IN MYTHIC TERMS</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. THE DEVIL IN THE GARDEN OF PATUSAN</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. CONRAD’S ARTISTS: SACRED WEAVERS OF WORDS</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII. CONFESSIONS AND FRAGMENTATIONS</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII. CONCLUSION: DEATH OF THE AUTHOR AND ORPHIC DESCENT</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WORKS CITED 85
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to express her deepest appreciation to Professor Chris Bongie, under whose guidance this study was conducted, for his patient guidance and criticism throughout the study. The author is also indebted to Professors Richard Lowry and Thomas Heacox for their careful reading and criticism of the manuscript. The writer is also grateful for the technical support of Ashley Marroy.
ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I am attempting to investigate how Joseph Conrad's artistic manifesto as expressed in the Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* (1897) works itself out in his novel *Lord Jim* (1900); more specifically, I am examining the way in which the Preface's equating of artistic process with descent—a descent that I argue is Orphic in nature—is illustrated in the pattern of descents that constitutes *Lord Jim*. In *Lord Jim*, Orpheus becomes a metaphor for both art and existence, for modern consciousness and the paradoxically simultaneous relativity and universality of truth.

I began this study hoping that a close mythic reading of *Lord Jim* would resolve the paradoxes of the text and affirm the structural integrity of the novel that I presumed was to be found behind the veil of its apparent dis-integration of conventional nineteenth-century narrative forms. I was surprised to find that approaching the concept of Orphic descent in the substructure of the text was merely a starting point for a larger and less resoluble project. Orphic descent is, indeed, technically and thematically integral to the structure of the novel, its impressionistic narrative technique, and the heroic code it attempts (but fails) to assert; however, a close mythic reading of the text, far from resolving many or even any of the paradoxes in the text, only compounds them, leaving the text's mysterious multiplicity intact. Orphic descent in the novel provides not the unifying myth I first suspected it would, but rather a way for Conrad of understanding the lack of such a myth and of the unity, and lifting of the veil, that such a myth might be thought to provide.

Orphic descent figures into Conrad's consistently voiced rhetoric of enigma: the Orphic artist speaks about Truth but does not reveal it; gestures toward a Unity, but always in a language that resists unification. Myth becomes not a solution to the problem of disunity, but a way of exploring that problem. It is the exploration of this problem, rather than any solution to it, that has engaged me in this thesis.
ORPHIC DESCENT IN LORD JIM
Since it is not given to man to solve the mystery of existence, he must learn his limitations by looking into the mirror of mankind, which will unite him in compassion, pity, and love for all men, who are perishing in the supreme disaster. (Robert Andreach, 39)

(i) Introduction: The Modern Relevance of Conrad’s Artistic Descents and Mythic Substructure

Joseph Conrad, Polish expatriate and former sailor, embarked upon a career as a writer at the close of the nineteenth century—a time when sailing ships were being replaced by steam and when the progress of imperialism was destroying the exotic. The century saw highly concentrated advancements in psychology, science, and technology. The sheer mass of new ideas undermined the old, suspending traditional belief systems and values. The literature of the period—mirroring the modern experience—adopts this suspension of traditional forms and values; "there is the strong sense that relativism and increasing subjectivism had made all things false, revealed the old standards and forms as so many hollow idols" (White, 64). Early modern novelists experimented with language and form, seeking new methods to communicate and order the chaos of their changing and bewildering time. Myth and ritual, according to Clyde Kluckholn, "supply... fixed points in a world of bewildering change and disappointment" (Kluckholn, 68), for primitive and modern man alike. Undertones of myth and ritual provide the modern writer with a method of structuring the chaos of modernity by suggesting universal themes in an increasingly relativized world. This use of myth and ritual—so fundamental to the vision of high
modernists like Joyce and Eliot—is vitally present in the work of the early modernist novelist, Joseph Conrad.

In this thesis, I am attempting to investigate how Joseph Conrad's artistic manifesto as expressed in the Preface to The Nigger of the 'Narcissus' (1897) works itself out in his novel Lord Jim (1900); more specifically, I am interested in examining the way in which the Preface's equating of artistic process with descent—a descent that I argue is Orphic in nature—is illustrated in the pattern of Orphic descents that constitutes Lord Jim. Not long before Joyce chooses Daedalus as his archetypal artist, Conrad chooses Orpheus as his. In Lord Jim, Orpheus becomes a metaphor for both art and existence, for modern consciousness and the paradoxically simultaneous relativity and universality of truth. Orphic descent provides the rhetorical device through which Conrad approaches but never reveals ultimate truth—the enigma behind the veil of the visible world.

I began this study hoping that a close mythic reading of Lord Jim would resolve the paradoxes of the text and affirm the structural integrity of the novel that I presumed was to be found behind the veil of its apparent dis-integration of conventional nineteenth-century narrative forms; I also hoped (and I still do hope) to confirm, contradict, and complement other critical interpretations through my exploration of Orphic descent as integral to the mythic substructure of the novel. However, just as Conrad was surprised to find that his original idea for a short story centered around what would eventually become the Pilgrim ship episode of Lord Jim had turned into "a good starting-point for a free and wandering tale...an event, too, which could conceivably colour the whole 'sentiment of existence' in a simple and sensitive character" (Conrad, Lord Jim [henceforth referred to only by page number] 1), I was surprised to find that approaching the concept of Orphic descent in the substructure of the text was merely a starting point for a larger and less resoluble project. As I had first suspected, Orphic descent is, indeed, technically and thematically integral to the structure of the novel, its impressionistic narrative technique, and the heroic code it attempts (but fails) to assert; however, as it turned out, a close mythic reading of
the text, far from resolving many or even any of the paradoxes in the text, only ended up compounding them, leaving the text’s mysterious multiplicity intact. Indeed, Orphic descent in the novel provides not the unifying myth I first suspected it would, but rather a way for Conrad of understanding the lack of such a myth and of the unity, and lifting of the veil, that such a myth might be thought to provide. Orphic descent figures into Conrad’s consistently voiced rhetoric of enigma: the Orphic artist speaks about the Unspeakable but does not reveal it; gestures toward a Unity, but always in a language that resists unification. Myth becomes not a solution to the problem of disunity, but a way of exploring that problem—and it is in this respect that Conrad’s use of myth is typically modernist. Modernists recognize, as Frederick Karl has argued, that “in the interstices of knowledge there lies an entire universe of unchartables...in the seams of all these abundant data, there are other data that have no coordinates except in the mind of the artist” (Karl, 72). Conrad’s “disaffected,” Orphic artist “is the only one who can, verbally, visually, aurally, bring together these multiplicities that make modern life so compartmentalized” (Karl, 72)—and yet, as I found, this bringing together of a "universe of unchartables" is only possible through an acknowledgment of the relative, non-universal nature of modern life.

The mythic substructure of Conrad’s Lord Jim reenacts the death of Western tradition and modern man’s subsequent quest for renewal. Robert Andreach best explains Conrad’s modern predicament:

the old God is dead and since science and materialism fail to give a satisfying new One, Western man, cut off from his past, is an abandoned derelict in a universe which, constantly stirring his surviving primitive religious instinct, invites him to uncover the mystery behind the veil of the visible world. (210)

In response to this dilemma, Conrad creates an innovative hero and artist, Charlie Marlow, through whom Conrad seeks “to uncover the mystery behind the veil of the visible world” via Orphic descent and return. Conrad—like Nietzsche’s myth-less man—is “eternally hungering among all the bygones” of Romantic individualism for the passion and meaning that mark
Romantic wonder (Nietzsche, 109). In his short stories and novels, Conrad constantly “digs and grubs for roots, though he have to dig for them even among the remotest antiquities” (Nietzsche, 109). In Lord Jim, Conrad’s descending narrator, Marlow, digs for “fixed points,” or “roots,” to overcome the sense of isolation and loss of value associated with modernity.

Marlow is the secondary narrator in the short story, “Youth” (1898), the novella, Heart of Darkness (1899), and the novel Lord Jim (1900). All three Marlovian tales—which Conrad originally intended to publish together—explore the heroic and artistic quest in an atmosphere loaded with myth and ritual. Marlow descends in each work, emerging each time with a progressively longer and more complicated tale as Conrad progresses from the story to the novella to the novel. In “Youth,” Marlow descends to a younger Marlow, a Romantic dreamer much like Jim, and describes his naïve response to the sinking of his first ship. A little bit older in Heart of Darkness, Marlow as narrator not only descends to an earlier version of his self as character, but also to the destructive egoist Kurtz, and emerges transformed. Lord Jim’s middle-aged Marlow encounters a younger version of himself and of Kurtz in Jim, as well as in a series of descending and confessing character doubles. Each Marlovian adventure incorporates the mythic substructure of the heroic quest for maturity through rituals of descent, confession, and writing. Lord Jim—the largest and final installment of his early Marlovian trilogy (Marlow will, of course, reappear in the much later Chance [1913])—puts into play the densest mythic substructure and the most complexly interwoven descending and confessing heroes and artists in an impressionistic redefinition of modern values.

In the mythic substructure of Lord Jim, Conrad re-creates and recombines the descent of the mythic hero and Christian and Orphic mythology in a complex juxtaposition of heroism and artistry. Lord Jim is an amalgamation of mythic elements and evocative settings, in which multiple heroes and artists reenact creation, the fall, and the redemption of mankind. Jim falls—descends from the Patna—then descends into Patusan and creates an alternative identity as a Lord, redeeming himself in his own eyes; Marlow, recreating Jim and reenacting Jim’s descents
through his tale, is left the task of determining the true redemptive value of Jim’s self-destruction. Both Christ-like Jim, who sacrifices himself to atone for his errors, and Orphic Marlow, who descends and returns with a tale, are artists for whom descent is integral to creation and renewal.

Orphic and Christian allusions are the predominant mythic elements in Lord Jim: Conrad uses these mythic heroes to indicate the inadequacy of Christian tradition for modern man and to sacralize the role of the artist (as embodied by Orpheus) in an impressionistic effort at modern mythmaking and renewal. Conrad replaces the Christian paradigm with the Orphic, rendering sacred the artist as the hero who fulfills man’s needs for wonder and for solidarity through patterns of descent and return. For Conrad, the artist is the hero, descent is necessary for creation and regeneration, and striving for solidarity is the only answer to modern isolation. Walter Strauss clarifies the importance of the transformation of the Orphic poet as a result of his descent:

the Orphic poet seeks to regenerate himself particularly by means of the voyage downward, with its attendant self-recognition through remembrance and its mandatory self-transformation, followed by return to the world that will become the ground of a vaster metamorphosis. (Strauss, 13)

In each text of the Marlovian trilogy, Conrad’s paradigmatic artist, Marlow, is transformed by his descent. In Lord Jim, while Jim himself never acquires self-knowledge, Marlow recognizes himself in Jim, and leaves Patusan with an altered consciousness. As a result of Jim’s experiences on the Patna and in Patusan, Marlow changes his (and by extension the reader’s) ideas of heroism and of how to be. Jim’s fall from moral security parallels that of Marlow, that of Conrad, and that of Conrad’s modern audience. Jim’s Romantic form of renewing his link with society is paradoxical self-destruction; Marlow’s modern form of renewing his link with society (and with his reader) is his Orphic tale telling. Conrad repeatedly explores this dialogue between romance and modernity, leading the reader of Lord Jim through the mythic and psychological milieu of its disrupted narratives to an impression of solidarity.
In telling Jim’s tale, Marlow recounts his own spiritual journey, along with the accounts of other narrators who provide diverse perspectives on the same tale. Marlow’s narrative is broken and filled in intermittently—and never in chronological order—by disparate narrators, including the *Patna* engineer, Chester, Brierly, Brierly’s first mate, the French Lieutenant, Brown, Jewel, and Tamb Itam, to name a few. This complex diffusion of doubled characters and narrators and the interwoven patterns of plural descents that results from it inextricably links, as we will see, Conrad's aesthetics of artistry with his code of heroism. Each teller, frequently a hero or artist who doubles either Marlow or Jim or both, not only reveals a truth about Jim but also reveals truths about human nature, human experience, and the place (or lack thereof) of heroism in the world of *Lord Jim*. This fragmentation of truth suggests the relativism of modern experience and any or all moral codes.

Conrad’s fragments of truth and succession of tellers also reiterate the importance of tale-telling in structuring truth or reality. Each blatant shift in tellers conveys the vital role of the subjective teller, or artist, in heroically ordering the chaos of modernity and determining what is sacred:

> The Orphic poet is, once more, at the beginning of a journey, confronted with the task of sacralizing time, space, and language before the Orphic spell can take place. His task is to face the Nothingness, to overcome (abolish) it in order to make poetry once more possible. (Strauss, 12)

Marlow’s journey is a continuous effort to confront this Nothingness; he doggedly retraces the path of Jim’s absence until it ends with Jim’s death. Frederick Karl explains the desacralization of the modern world—the disruption of the “continuum” of man, nature, and history—as the result of the splitting off of words into new roles, “the separation of things and the languages to express them” (69). Of all the doubled heroes and descending artists in *Lord Jim*, only Marlow’s Orphic descent and return overcomes the Nothingness in order to make “poetry” (as embodied by Jim) once more possible. The interminable disruptions of the tale by various tellers define Jim as the
sum total of his absences: he becomes a receding truth produced by the “collective memory” (Karl, 309) of the multiple descents and various tellers.

The layered artistic descents (or states of consciousness) of Lord Jim are analogous to the experience of the artist as described within Joseph Conrad’s Preface to The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’. This Preface identifies the object of literary craftsmanship and artistic descent as an appeal to the reader’s subconscious that will establish solidarity with the reader:

The artist, then, like the thinker or the scientist, seeks the truth and makes his appeal....

Confronted by the same enigmatical spectacle the artist descends within himself, and in that lonely region of stress and strife, if he be deserving and fortunate, he finds the means of his appeal. His appeal is made to our less obvious capacities: to that part of our nature which, because of the warlike conditions of existence, is necessarily kept out of sight within the more resisting and hard qualities.... But the artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent on wisdom... to the subtle and invincible solidarity...which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn. (Conrad, Prefaces, 49-50)

Conrad’s comments relating creation and renewal to the human subconscious here are extremely relevant to the patterns of descent in Lord Jim. Conrad appropriates the subconscious as the realm of the artist. Exiled subsequent to the Patna incident, Jim enters the “lonely region of stress and strife” associated with the heroic quest. Despite Jim’s exile and flight, Marlow continually affirms that Jim is “one of us” (57), part of the society of men which includes the reader. Marlow’s devotion to Jim and compulsion to tell his tale evokes the importance of tale telling in promoting human solidarity. Jim, hardly a paragon of “wisdom,” and certainly associated with the subconscious depths, is the means of Marlow’s appeal to his audience and of Conrad’s appeal to his reader. Not only does Marlow identify with Jim, so does the reader. In Jim, the reader recognizes the naïve egoism of his own youth.
Several passages in particular describe this subconscious appeal of Jim and invoke his enigmatic nature: early on in the novel, for instance, we are told that he appeals “to all sides at once—to the side turned perpetually to the light of day, and to that side of us which, like the other hemisphere of the moon, exists stealthily in perpetual darkness, with only a fearful ashy light falling at times on the edge” (57). Jim is the invaluable gem hidden in the universal subconscious; he embodies the subconscious need for Romantic wonder, and as such he connects “the dead to the living and the living to the unborn.” In a later passage, the parable spoken by master artist Stein implies the importance of universal man’s subconscious needs to his conscious survival and links artistic descent to a metaphor for existence. Stein’s parable diagnoses the Romantic’s need to immerse himself in the destructive element in order to survive. Crucial in any discussion of the symbolic layering of artistic descent in Lord Jim, Stein’s diagnosis subtly parallels both the modern existential dilemma and Jim’s personal dilemma, as well as Conrad’s evocation of artistic descent in the Preface to The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’. Invoked in Stein’s parable are enigmatic metaphors involving the sea and the dream into which man is born or falls. Stein reiterates the importance of descent and submission in surviving the destructive elements of existence/artistry:

...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 wahr...No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up. So you ask me—how to be? (130)

For Stein, and for Conrad, existence has become the task, or art, of creating one’s own system of meaning in the face of modernity. Stein indicates that the inexperienced person will self-destruct by resisting his nature and by struggling against his natural element, an element Stein associates with water and with dreams. The way to survive, by contrast, is to submit to this watery, subconscious element in which one is immersed so that one is sustained rather than destroyed by it. This watery baptism, symbolic of death and rebirth, suggests the rebirths necessary for man to
actualize his potential: burying Jim in Patusan is, for Stein, "something practical" (131), and necessary for his rebirth.

Because Stein’s truth is directly applied to the situation of Jim, that of an exile in need of personal exoneration, his parable conveys to the modern reader the need for personal redemption and solidarity. Jim’s “world pain” (130) is caused by his break from society, a break that he chooses to repeat at the end of the novel (as Robert Andreach has emphasized) when he sacrifices himself in Patusan. Capitulating to Doramin’s avenging bullet, Jim is fully immersed in the destructive element of his dreams. Not until this ultimate immersion in the destructive (but also, at least for Marlow and the reader, redemptive) element does Jim finally seem joined with the Eurydice-like Eastern bride whose ghostly presence, as we will now see, accompanies him on his quest to realize his Romantic dreams throughout the novel. In Patusan, Christ-like Jim becomes a hero and an artist, a slain god speaking to our conscious and subconscious needs for wonder, resurrected by his most obvious doubles, God-like Stein and Orphic Marlow.
David Lynn has argued—and I agree—that anyone seeking a resolution to the paradoxes that lie at the heart of *Lord Jim*, is following a misguided impulse (Lynn, 45); Conrad’s novel defies a closed interpretation because the meaning undergoes an Orphic metamorphosis for each reader and each critic at each reading. With each reader the quest goes on, because “strictly speaking, a ‘quest’ is never geared to success; its (etymological) essence lies in ‘seeking’—not in attaining at some point in the future that which is being sought” (Bongie, 21). As my recourse to the idea of “Orphic metamorphosis” demonstrates, I will be seeking to understand (if not resolve) the novel’s paradoxes by emphasizing its mythic and ritualistic dimensions. Through the course of this study, I will have occasion to refer to a number of Conrad critics who have taken this approach to his work: notably, Joseph Dobrinksy, David Lynn, Robert Andreach, Walter Strauss, and Deborah Guth. No critic, though, has contributed more to this line of interpretation than Albert J. Guerard in his seminal study *Conrad: The Novelist*, where he noted Conrad’s fixation with spiritual and moral isolation and first recognized in Conrad’s sea voyages and Congo journey the anthropological and psychological concept of “the night journey” (Guerard, 15) into the realm of the subconscious.

The night journey—what I refer to as descent—is apparent in all three Marlovian explorations of spiritual or moral isolation. For Guerard, Conrad’s night journey is an archetypal myth of spiritual redefinition, the “story of an essentially solitary journey involving profound spiritual change in the voyager… [whose] journey is a descent into the earth, followed by a return to light” (Guerard, 15). Careful to avoid Jung’s system of symbols for the unconscious even as he applies Jungian psychoanalytic methodology, Guerard likens this myth to a universal dream caused by “certain psychic needs” which result from conscious and unconscious living—the psychic needs
of modern living. Conrad was exceptionally attuned to the cost of modern living: he knew, in the words of Haskell M. Block, that “Civilization has its price, not the least of which is the extinction of mystery and the impoverishment of wonder” (Block, 52). Conrad returns to myth and ritual—to Orphic descent and return—to explore the Romantic roots of wonder, to define a new mythology, and to create a new but definitely familiar type of hero.

Orphic myth throughout the ages links Orpheus with art, desire, descent and creation, death and rebirth, metamorphosis. Desire for the dead Eurydice fuels Orpheus’s use of his art to create a bridge to the underworld. Orpheus descends to Eurydice by the power of his song, ascending to the surface only to lose his retrieved bride as the result of a premature backward glance. Alternating mythic versions conclude the Orphic journey with variations involving Orpheus’s dismemberment by the Bacchae and the retrieval of his transfigured head, which becomes oracular. While his dismemberment and post-descent transformation link Orpheus to metamorphosis, this stage of his journey is not the one for which Orpheus is primarily known. Orpheus, as a hero and an artist, a triumphant and a tragic figure, is famous for the transcendence of human limitations inherent in his descent into the Underworld. Interpretive approaches to Orphic myth have evolved through various generations. Like modern existence, Orphic myth is fraught with paradox: the Orphic dilemma—to view the unknown is to lose the unknown, its mystery extinguished—is very similar to the modern experience, and its shattering of traditional belief systems, the triumph of science over mystery, the loss of the exotic in the wake of exploration and imperialism. Relevant to the modern audience and artist is Orpheus’s descent into death, the chaos of the unknown, and his return by the power of his art.

Maurice Blanchot’s essay “The Gaze of Orpheus” interprets the Greek myth as a psychological metaphor for creation, emphasizing that a work cannot be created unless the artist descends. The artist must “pursue the enormous experience of the depths—an experience which the Greeks recognized as necessary to the work, an experience in which the work is put to the test by that enormousness—...for its own sake” (Blanchot, 99). Blanchot relates this descent to the
existential quest of facing the *other* in one’s self and emerging thus transformed. Orpheus emerges from Hades, having met the forbidden gaze of his dead bride, and facing what Blanchot terms his death in death (his own extinction) he returns with this knowledge, either destroyed or renewed by it. Conrad’s concept of the modern artist incorporates this archetype of Orphic descent and renewal. Marlow experiences the enormousness of the depths and faces himself as *other(s)* throughout the Marlovian tales—notably through Jim, Stein and Brown, in *Lord Jim*. The idea of Orphic descent is more historically elaborated on in Walter Strauss’s *Descent and Return: the Orphic Theme in Modern Literature*, which traces three stages in the development of the Orpheus myth: (1) the sixth century b.c. Hellenistic cult; (2) the Renaissance Orphic archetype of the poet based on Virgil and Ovid; and (3) the modern concept of Orpheus, where he functions as the emblem of metamorphosis, the embodiment of transformation. Appealing especially to the conflicting values of the modern age, Orpheus is, for Strauss, the meeting point of the Apollonian and the Dionysiac (Strauss, 6-7), and the link between the Romantic and the modern. While Strauss never mentions Conrad, his explanation of Orphic appeal to modern writers certainly pertains to the author of *Lord Jim*. As the link between the Romantic and the modern, Orpheus serves Conrad’s modern and Marlovian purposes.

Strauss cites Mircea Eliade as best expressing the particularities of Orphic myth which “make it eminently suitable to a certain kind of modern mentality” (Strauss, 5) and which thus make it suitable for Conrad. In *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*, Eliade explains how Orphic myth lingers in the matrices of the modern imagination:

> The life of modern man is swarming with half-forgotten myths, decaying hierophanies and secularized symbols. The progressive desacralization of modern man has altered the content of his spiritual life without breaking the matrices of his imagination: a quantity of mythological litter still lingers in the ill-controlled zones of the mind. (Eliade, 18)

Eliade’s “ill-controlled zones of the mind” recall the subconscious realm in which the Conradian artist descends to make his appeal in the Preface to *Nigger*. The heap of mythological waste
products in *Lord Jim* includes the Christian imagery associated with Jim and the Orphic descents associated with both Jim and Marlow. Strauss evokes Conrad’s modern mythmaking when he describes modern mythopoeia as a “private fabrication utilizing traditional personae and details...to protect a personal vision of the world that expresses a certain notion about man and his ‘reality,’ the world, and some power or destiny that lies beyond or within” (Strauss, 4). As a symbol of transformation and reconciliation of opposites, Orpheus provides the opportunity to redefine modern values, including the destiny of “the poet and poetry” (Strauss, 9). Through his metamorphic night journey, Conrad’s Orphic artist Marlow links the Romantics Stein and Jim to the modern world and establishes the artist as the prophet, priest, or divinity of the modern age.

The Orphic artist always descends to Eurydice and all of Conrad’s artists in *Lord Jim* have a corresponding figure of Eurydice: Stein’s Eastern bride, the princess, dies in Patusan; Brierly’s bride, like Jim’s, is a Romantic vision of himself; Brown’s stolen bride languishes of a fever as does Stein’s. For Marlow, Eurydice is embodied both by Jim and Jewel. Jim’s Eastern bride—vital to his Orphic identity—is not really developed in the novel until Marlow becomes active in deciding Jim’s fate. Jim’s Romantic dreams and missed chances for heroism are mentioned, but they do not take on a (female) body until he meets Marlow in the Malabar House.

Jim’s Eastern bride has her roots in his Romantic dreams, the objects of his desire, “the best parts of his life, its secret truth, its hidden reality” (13). Jim “loved these dreams and the success of his imaginary achievements” (13), and it is to these dreams that Jim refers in the Malabar House when he mourns the “chance missed” (51) to realize such “Romantic achievements” (51) through heroism aboard the *Patna*. Jim’s imaginary achievements possess a (manly) “tread” before they are provided with a (female) body: “They had a gorgeous virility, the charm of vagueness, they passed before him with an heroic tread” (13). Marlow initially indicates Jim’s Eastern bride as a nebulous form: “a vague white form erect in the shadow, that, being looked at, cringed forward, hesitated, backed away silently” (71). The first explicit reference by Marlow to Jim’s dream or opportunity as embodied in an Eastern bride occurs as Jim’s dug-out enters
Patusan: “And his opportunity sat veiled by his side like an Eastern bride waiting to be uncovered by the hand of the master” (149). Marlow follows this statement by declaring Jim “the heir of a shadowy and mighty tradition!” (149). The appearance of Jim’s Eastern bride immediately provokes Marlow into identifying Jim as the heir of a tradition—the “shadowy and mighty” tradition, we might suggest, of the Romantic.

References to his Eastern bride are most numerous in Patusan, where Jim briefly realizes his Romantic dreams. Marlow describes this bride as again by Jim’s side when Jim makes the series of leaps or descents in Patusan that free him from the Rajah’s stockade to ally himself with Doramin. Jim emerges from the mud reborn as a heroic figure rather than as an exile cheated by fate, “and the opportunity ran by his side, leaped over the gap, floundered in the mud...still veiled” (154). When Marlow sees Jim for the last time alive in Patusan, Jim is Lordly, “white form head to foot...persistently visible with the stronghold of the night at his back, the sea at his feet, the opportunity by his side—still veiled” (204). Marlow questions if, since Jim seems to have been redeemed in Patusan, the opportunity is still veiled, but he is unable to answer his own question: Jim remains located “at the heart of a vast enigma.” The final allusion to Jim’s Eastern bride corresponds with Jim’s death: “For it may very well be that in the short moment of his last proud unflinching glance, he had beheld the face of that opportunity which, like an Eastern bride, had come veiled to his side” (253). Again, Marlow is not certain if that opportunity has truly been realized, if Jim’s death is a heroic act and his final redemption or only a final meaningless act of destruction—”whether his line of conduct amounted to shirking his ghost or to facing him out” (119).

Jim has his Eurydice, then, but his overall imperceptibility adds an element of Eurydice to his own character, at least for Marlow; Marlow’s own Orphic function is suggested by his many references to Jim’s veiledness or obscurity. In describing his last view of Jim as he departs Patusan, Marlow portrays the younger man as both Christ-like and Orphic, but also in Eurydice-like terms as a figure who is lost at the very moment he (like she) is seen:
He was white from head to foot, and remained persistently visible with the stronghold of
the night at his back, the sea at his feet, the opportunity by his side—still veiled. What do
you say? Was it still veiled? I don’t know. For me that white figure in the stillness of
cost and sea seemed to stand at the heart of a vast enigma. The twilight was ebbing fast
from the sky above his head, the strip of sand had sunk already under his feet, he himself
appeared no bigger than a child—then only a speck, a tiny white speck, that seemed to
catch all the light left in a darkened world.... And, suddenly, I lost him.... (204)

Though recalled above in terms that evoke the Christ child, Jim is here also an obscured
Eurydice. Jim, as usual, vanishes. Marlow’s dilemma is the Orphic dilemma. Close scrutiny leads
to the loss of the subject he has repeatedly resurrected.

In telling Jim’s tale, Marlow contemplates how Jim would tell it. Implicit in his thoughts on
Jim’s telling is the idea that Jim would not lift the veil or offer any real clarity or “orientation” to
his identity either:

I wonder how he would have related it himself. He has confided so much in me that at
times it seems as though he must come in presently and tell the story in his own words, in
his careless yet feeling voice, with his off-hand manner, a little puzzled, a little bothered,
a little hurt, but now and then by a word or a phrase giving one of these glimpses of his
very own self that were never any good for purposes of orientation. (208-209)

Marlow’s words intimate that Jim could rise again at any moment. Just as Marlow’s narrative
offers no clear and final truth, neither does Jim’s narrative, which also veils him. Marlow’s
perpetual representation of Jim’s imperceptibility evokes the forbidden gaze of Orpheus at
Eurydice. Like Orpheus, Marlow is not truly supposed to see Eurydice as he ascends from the
underworld. Eurydice is the other, the unknown, the mystery. Marlow tells his audience, “Neither
you nor I will ever look like this on any man” (52), suggesting modern isolation and Jim’s
individual inscrutability in his function as the embodiment of the mystery behind the veil of the
visible world. Marlow’s statement that “to watch his [Jim’s] face was like watching a darkening
sky before a clap of thunder, shade upon shade imperceptibly coming on, the gloom growing mysteriously intense” (44) demonstrates how Jim’s obscurity increases in proportion to Marlow’s scrutiny.

Another of Marlow’s comments on Jim’s inscrutability reiterates the idea of the lack of “orientation” provided by Jim himself and compares Jim to an unexplored country. Marlow subtly links Jim’s identity to that of (what we will be arguing is) the Romantic construction of feminized Patusan:

I don’t pretend I understood him. The views he let me have of himself were like 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 purposes of orientation. Upon the whole he was misleading. (47)

Underlying Marlow’s confusion concerning Jim’s nature and Jim’s imperceptibility is the latter’s own lack of self-knowledge; ironic in Marlow’s confusion concerning Jim’s nature is Marlow’s lack of self-knowledge. Jim is the feminized unexplored country of Marlow’s past or inner self. While Marlow affirms that Jim “would appear to my staring eyes distinct of form and pregnant with appeal like a symbolic figure in a picture” (81), Marlow fails to define Jim’s appeal or Jim’s meaning as his own alter-ego: “He was not—if I may say so—clear to me. He was not clear. And there was a suspicion he was not clear to himself either” (107). Marlow’s fear is Orpheus’s dilemma: “it was the fear of losing him...for it was borne upon me suddenly and with unaccountable force that should I let him slip away into the darkness I would never forgive myself” (109). Like ghostly Eurydice, Jim “kept his distance” (53); Jim is the aspect of himself that Marlow cannot see, or can only see at the cost of losing it once and for all.

Orphic Marlow effectively begins to lose Jim the moment his gaze meets Jim’s at the inquiry. Jim eventually does slip away into the darkness of his own final death; he is permanently fixed in the underworld of Patusan by the gaze of Doramin’s pistol barrels. Marlow fails to resurrect Jim, though he does summon Jim’s ghost, as he himself comments, through the Orphic weaving of his
tale. Telling Stein about Jim, Marlow notices, “At that moment it was difficult to believe in Jim’s existence…but his imperishable reality came to me with an irresistible force” (132). Marlow pursues Jim’s ghost into Patusan, perpetually increasing the concentration of his scrutiny until he loses Jim twice over—he sees what Maurice Blanchot would term Jim’s death in death. Marlow may ascend from Patusan/Hades, but he is forever locked in his own text, in the creation of and the loss/destruction of Jim—in the Orphic dilemma. That there is a mystery behind the veil of the visible world can be represented by Jim and communicated by Marlow, but the mystery itself is inexplicable despite Marlow’s scrutiny.

The reciprocal gaze, a recurrent motif in Lord Jim and integral to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, perpetuates the enigma at the heart of Lord Jim. Jim meets Marlow’s gaze at the inquiry, the French Lieutenant pierces Marlow’s gaze in the café, Dain Warris’s eyes are fixed in a death gaze, the fierce gaze of the dying Brown compels Marlow to listen, Jewel’s dark eyes demand an answer, Stein’s perceptive gaze echoes Doramin’s pistol barrels, and Doramin’s final deadly gaze concludes Jim’s life. Allon White, in The Uses of Obscurity, identifies Conrad’s use of the gaze as another mechanism adopted to render the mystery behind the veil enigmatic, “endlessly reflective” (116). In Conrad’s works, the gaze is an inversion that results in the transference from subject to object and “the discursive production of ‘mystery’ by the mirror process” (White, 116). Conrad’s characters look (pun intended) to each other for answers but see only more questions. According to White, Conrad’s motif of the gaze is characteristically feminine, effecting “the specular equivalent of narrative suspension” (117), and making the reader feel “that there is something to be expressed other than that which objectively offers itself to expression” (White, 118). That something implied but not expressed is the enigma.

Facing the enigma and experiencing descent are integral in Conrad’s artistic manifesto as expressed in his Preface to Nigger, and it is the combination of recurring gazes and descents that first linked Blanchot’s “Gaze of Orpheus” with Lord Jim in my mind. The multiple descents and reciprocated gazes in Lord Jim reflect the reader’s attention back to the artist. This reflection has
a narcissistic dimension. Conrad’s use of Orphic, Christian, and other mythic elements in *Lord Jim* has the effect of valorizing the artist, his descents, his gaze, his textual doubles; in his exploration of the power of the artist, Conrad exhibits a “modern self-consciousness” (Strauss, 11) that narcissistically sacralizes the figure of the artist. Nowhere is this narcissism more apparent in *Lord Jim* than in Jim’s relation with his “Echo,” Jewel, the novel’s primary feminine principle.
(iii) Myth and the Feminine Principle: Jewel

One of Jim’s Eastern brides is Jewel, the most disturbing character in Lord Jim. Jewel’s grief disturbs Marlow, Stein and the reader by calling Jim’s trueness into question. As the only real woman in the novel and featured in the feminine landscape of Patusan, Jewel is one of the most complex symbols in Lord Jim. Jewel reinforces the links between the doubled Romantic heroes in the novel by invoking various mythic females and tragic female figures at once. Yet another ill-fated bride, Jewel connects Jim with alter ego Brown by recalling Brown’s doomed lover, and she associates Jim with Romantic double Stein by recalling Stein’s dead wife and child. Jewel’s tragic figure eerily doubles Jim, and because both function as a type of Eurydice, both evoke the inexplicability of the mystery behind the veil of existence. Jewel simultaneously embodies and rejects the motif of Jim’s veiled Eastern bride, just as she violently rejects Jim’s Romantic self-sacrifice at the novel’s end.

Jewel evokes the three dead women already entombed in Patusan—the princess, Emma, and Jewel’s mother. These three women prefigure Jewel’s destiny, hovering in the background like three fates. Jewel is trapped in the Underworld of Patusan, like her mother before her, tormented by Cornelius, and then abandoned by Jim. Approaching Jewel’s mother’s grave, Marlow describes the mother’s fate in a vision which forebodes her daughter’s own fate: “there is visible in its background the melancholy figure of a woman, the shadow of a cruel wisdom buried in a lonely grave, looking on wistfully, helplessly, with sealed lips” (168). The two women blur together, suffering the same fate. Marlow “can not help picturing...first the young woman and the child, then the old woman and the young girl, the awful sameness and the swift passage of time” (169). Even Cornelius links the two women: “‘Like her mother—she is like her deceitful mother. Exactly. In her face, too” (200). Jewel’s ghostly existence in Stein’s catacomb-like household
following Jim’s death reiterates her connection to these entombed or doomed women. Something eerily redolent of the demon-lover hovers over the tragic fate of Brown’s lover, Stein’s wife, Jewel’s mother, and Jewel. Instead of fertility in the union of man and woman in Lord Jim, there is a pattern of dead or abandoned muses in the wakes of Conrad’s Romantic heroes that cannot help but evoke Eurydice.

Jewel plays a part in the supernatural legends that spread about Tuan Jim in Patusan and magnifies the Romantic idealism of Patusan by doubling Jim. Jewel’s name “means precious, in the sense of a precious gem” (169); Jewel jealously guards her precious Jim (pun intended). This pun on their names (gem/Jim) reinforces their relationship as doubles. Jewel and Jim greet each other as “boy” and “girl” (195), indicating their archetypal roles as the mythic hero and the mythic heroine in Marlow’s framing of their story: “they came together under the shadow of a life’s disaster, like a knight and maiden meeting to exchange vows amongst haunted ruins” (189). Jim describes finding Jewel as one might “go out on a stroll and come suddenly upon somebody drowning in a lonely, dark place” (185). After Jim rescues Jewel, they are “two white forms, very close...[whose]...soft murmurs reached...[Marlow]... penetrating, tender...like self-communion of one being carried on in two tones” (173). They double each other in their white imagery and inscrutability, and create a new harmony in Patusan; yet, Jim ultimately chooses, like Narcissus, the Romantic image of himself over the realized self Jewel offers him and Jewel is left “soundless, inert” (253)—a used up Echo.

Jewel’s relationship with Jim lends her a richly mythic air, evoking a plethora of female archetypes at once. Just as Jim is both Orpheus and Christ, Jewel is both Eurydice and more, paradoxically recalling Eve and the Madonna as well. “With her head fallen back[,] her hair touch[ing] the ground” (251), Jewel is most Eve-like. When she saves Jim’s life and mourns his loss, she evokes the Madonna. One night Jewel emerges half-seen, veiled by the darkness, to wake Jim and warn him of the imminent attempt on his life. Jewel attempts to save Jim from death again at the novel’s end by reminding him of his vow to her. Robert Andreach and Joseph
Campbell assert that by providing the hero with supernatural aid, the mythic woman protects his quest, “a figure of the Virgin Mary, mother of Redemption and Mediatrix of grace” (Andreach, 22). Jewel’s ultimate grief is also similar to that of the Madonna who bears a son only to lose him as a sacrifice to mankind. Jim’s frequent comparisons to Christ reinforce Jewel’s connection to the Madonna, again indicating the dysfunction of Christian redemption. Marlow’s descriptions of Jewel emphasize her whiteness: he perceives her “white figure ... shaped of snow; the pendant crystals of a great chandelier... above her head like glittering icicles” (211). Not only does Jewel’s whiteness evoke the purity of the Madonna and of virginal Eurydice or Persephone (the latter two also trapped prematurely in the Underworld), her whiteness also signifies the enigmatic whiteness of the abyss (which was evident to Jim after his leap into the Patna lifeboat).

Allon White’s “Joseph Conrad and the Rhetoric of Enigma” in his Uses of Obscurity discusses the use of whiteness in Conrad’s works to denote absence or blankness that signals the position of a secret to be discovered; according to White, whiteness signifies enigma. White’s explanation of how Conrad’s rhetoric of enigma feminizes the incomprehensible explains the doubling of the real woman, Jewel, and Jim, feminized by his white attire and his inscrutability:

His rhetoric of mystery is omnivorous. ‘Woman’, ‘unconscious’, ‘nature’, ‘language’, these are effectively placed into a single paradigmatic set by their common designation as ‘enigma’. They are all rewritten ‘like a script in an unknown language’, and this has the crucial consequence that they are symbolically interchangeable on the basis of their resistant incomprehensibility. (118)

Both Jim and Jewel embody the subconscious need for wonder and both function to mirror the mystery behind the veil of the visible world. That Jim does not recognize Jewel as part of himself or as the embodiment of mystery is part and parcel of her inscrutability and of his own lack of self-knowledge. When Jewel laments to Marlow, “'He went away from me as if I had been worse than death. He fled as if driven by some accursed thing he had seen or heard in his sleep’” (212), she reinforces her link with the subconscious and the disparity between the subconscious dream
Jim might have followed and the one he chooses. Jewel’s comment also reiterates Jim’s identification with Brown, desperately fleeing the specter of a prison.

While Jim is the one who leaves Jewel behind, Marlow is the artist who recognizes in Jewel the inscrutable mystery of Eurydice. Marlow comments again and again on Jewel’s inscrutability. While Marlow never connects this inscrutability to Jim’s, the phrases he uses to describe the two are so similar that Jewel effectively seems as veiled, obscure and ghost-like as Jim. Marlow first encounters Jewel in the dark, and all he can see are “the flowing lines of her gown, the pale, small oval of her face, with the white flash of her teeth, and...the big, sombre orbits of her eyes” (187). Marlow’s descriptions of Jewel’s eyes suggest the function of her gaze as similar to that of Blanchot’s mysterious other. Jewel’s eyes remind Marlow of “an immensely deep well.” To Marlow, Jewel is “more inscrutable in her childish ignorance than the Sphinx propounding childish riddles to wayfarers” (187). Jewel makes a nameless demand on Marlow: “She wanted an assurance, a statement, a promise, an explanation...—the thing has no name” (186). Marlow describes how “it was impossible to distinguish her features, the darkness of the eyes was unfathomable; two wide sleeves uprose in the dark like unfolding wings, and she stood silent” (187-188), a mourning Madonna, an inscrutable Eurydice. Marlow looks at the stream beside Jewel, which rolls “silent and as black as the river Styx” (190), and feels somehow responsible for her, as an Orphic artist should. Jewel tells Marlow, “in a voice as quiet in the obscurity as her white [my italics] half-lost figure,” that she wants Jim to save her from her mother’s fate, that she does not want “‘to die weeping’” (190), abandoned and buried in the underworld of Patusan.

Marlow can neither comfort Jewel nor save her—her mythic role is to be inscrutable and to be left behind and Marlow’s role is to ascend from the world in which he leaves her behind (which, of course, provides fuel for thought for a feminist criticism of Conrad’s aesthetics in this novel!):

‘She said we lied. Poor soul! Well—let’s leave it to Chance, whose ally is Time, that cannot be hurried, and whose enemy is Death, that will not wait. I had retreated—a little cowed, I must own.... I had only succeeded in adding to her anguish the hint of some
mysterious collusion, of an inexplicable and incomprehensible conspiracy to keep her forever in the dark.’ (195)

With this unintentional lie (reminiscent of the one he tells Kurtz’s Intended at the end of Heart of Darkness) Marlow assumes the role of spokesperson for all Orphic artists, addressing the woman—and the mystery—that is always left behind. Jewel certainly foretells her own fate when she doesn’t believe Jim’s promise and tells Marlow, “‘Other men had sworn the same thing’” (191). Her father left her mother, and her mother’s father had left her mother, too. Marlow certainly cannot aid Jewel; her protests only reiterate the futility of protest.

In addition to directing the reader’s attention to the issues surrounding Jim’s heroism, Jewel’s inconsolable grief also directs the reader’s attention to the significance of Marlow’s heroism. Just as it is Jewel’s role never to leave the underworld, it is Marlow’s Orphic role to ascend. Marlow’s visit to Jewel at Stein’s marks the point in the novel from which he can begin his ascent, and break from the underworld in which Stein and Jewel will remain. After Jim’s death, Jewel leads “a sort of soundless, inert life in Stein’s house” (253), and Marlow, attempting to console her, is surprised “to discover that she had a voice at all” (192). Marlow describes Jewel as “a poor mortal [like Jim] seduced by the charm of an apparition...[trying] to wring from another ghost the tremendous secret of the claim the other world holds over a disembodied soul astray amongst the passions of this earth” (192). It is unclear if the ghost she attempts to wring the secret from is Marlow or Jim. Marlow’s remark—“Her immobility before me was clearly expectant, and my part was to speak for my brother [Jim] from the realm of forgetful shades” (192)—briefly locates him in the realm of the shades along with Jim. Marlow “would have given anything for the power to soothe her frail soul, tormenting itself” (192), but he cannot soothe Jewel’s soul. Unlike Jim, when Marlow turns from Jewel, she propels him forward in his mythic journey to emerge from the underworld of Patusan (or Stein’s home) with his identity as an artist and his tale of descent intact.
As Andreach argues, "Of the three men who travel up an S-shaped river into the heart of darkness—Kurtz, Jim, and Marlow—two straggle and die whereas the third is reborn" (62). Andreach asserts that Jim “becomes the slain god by fleeing from [Jewel]” (Andreach 63), and that “demanding redemption on his own terms” (Andreach, 61) is a form of betrayal and no true redemption at all. Jewel is Jim’s guide to survival in Patusan. In preventing his early assassination and offering him a choice he realizes that he cannot make, Jewel extends Jim’s opportunity for self-discovery. Jim accepts Jewel’s guidance on matters in Patusan, especially during the night of his attempted assassination; but he will not allow her to guide him out of Patusan, away from his idealistic but outmoded code of honor, or to the self-knowledge that would allow him to reject this code. Unlike Andreach, I argue that Jim cannot accept Jewel’s demand because Jewel can offer Jim no redemption. Jewel never believes in Jim’s dishonor; she cannot offer Jim any true sense of redemption because she does not believe he has fallen. As a Romantic hero, Jim must turn away from the real woman, and act individually. Jim sees Jewel as a real woman; Marlow sees Jewel as the embodiment of mystery. The sterility of Jim’s isolation also reflects the sterility of modern isolation: Jim must make his own meaning, in the absence of others. Defining redemption in his own terms is also something a modern hero must do. Jim defines it in Christ-like gestures, as the son of a minister might be expected to do.

Refusing to humble himself before the unknown and before the unknown mystery of the heroine, according to Andreach, has dire consequences for the hero:

The heroine is the catalyst for... self-discovery: if he does not reject her, she will guide him to the region of supernatural wonder within himself. This initiation is his religious experience. The male who persists in his illusion that he does not have anything in common with the rest of mankind does not redeem himself because he does not have the experience that makes the moral response possible. Refusing to humble himself before the mystery in her person, he misses the opportunity to humble himself before his own mystery, which would be an acknowledgement of his kinship with all of mankind and the
beginning of a moral response. By invading her or by ignoring her reality, he finds what he is fleeing, death, since he does not realize himself as a human being in moral action.

(Andreach, 57-58)

According to Andreach, instead of being humble before feminized Patusan or Jewel, Jim is hubristic and amoral, as is evidenced in the following passage: “'Nothing can touch me,' he said in a last flicker of superb egoism” (251). He refuses to have anything in common with the other officers of the Patna or with any other character besides Stein and Marlow. Neither Stein nor Marlow seem amoral, however; and neither Stein nor Marlow fully condemn Jim. Saying goodbye to Marlow and refusing to leave Patusan does not necessarily sever Jim’s last link to the world outside Patusan, as Andreach argues. Andreach’s analysis explores descent in Christian rather than Orphic terms. Conrad’s theme is solidarity, his primary archetype for the artist is Orphic, and Marlow is determined that Jim is one of us: Marlow is Jim’s tenuous Orphic link to humanity. Orphic Marlow can briefly resurrect Jim and Jewel with each telling of his tale, and with each telling he is “touched” (as will be the reader) by the Romantic wonder of Jim and by the anguished wisdom of Jewel—figures of ancient mythologies rewoven to suit Conrad’s attempts at reimposing a vision of artistic order on the chaos of the modern world.
(iv) Conrad's Impressionism:
Involving the Reader in Myth-Making

Literary impressionism depicts a scene or character through details "intended to achieve a vividness or effectiveness more by evoking subjective and sensory impressions than by re-creating or representing an objective reality" (Merriam-Webster, 583). The impressionist—Conrad in this case—aims "to achieve a fuller truth than realism can," by evoking in the reader an "intricate play of emotion ... a rich conflict of sympathy and judgement, a provisional bafflement in the face of experience" (Guerard, 390). One of Conrad's most astute critics, Ian Watt, has discussed how Conrad’s impressionism results from, and relies on, his shift to Marlow’s first person disjointed narrative chronology a few chapters into the novel, and the interposing of scenes and doubling of characters that results from this shift, and which establishes an ambiguous emotional interplay in the reader by depicting the fuller truth of experience that cannot be represented by the realist novelist. I argue that the disparate mythic and supernatural allusions and ritual elements of Lord Jim that form the mythic substructure of the text are also part of Conrad’s impressionism; their association with the novel’s primary artists lends the concept of artistry a mythic religiosity. Conrad’s mythic substructure is yet another of his impressionistic devices used to communicate man’s dependence on a community of men to interpret reality and the interdependence of the artist and the audience in defining meaning and creating a new mythology.

Conrad’s impressionism begins on the title page of Lord Jim with a quote from the German Romantic Novalis that evokes the dynamics of confession. Confession, another impressionist device, which I discuss near the end of this thesis, is a recurrent motif in the novel. The opening line from Novalis further sacralizes the role of the artist and points to the human need for solidarity: "It is certain my conviction gains infinitely the moment another soul will believe in it."
Strauss indicates that Novalis was intoxicated with mythological and symbolic thinking. Novalis used Orpheus as a bridge between body and spirit. Conrad’s referencing of Novalis, whose Dantean poem *Hymns to the Night* involves artistic descent to his beloved Sophie, reinforces Conrad’s theme of descent and invokes the psychological doubling, the politics of confession, and the impressionism employed throughout the mythic substructure of the novel.

As anticipated through the Novalis epigraph, the narrative frame of *Lord Jim* establishes a situation in which both the reader and the narrator’s audience are invited to see Jim and Marlow as psychological doubles of themselves enacting mankind’s subconscious needs for wonder and for interdependence. Jim enacts exalted egoism; Marlow sees in Jim a younger version of himself and relates to and comments on Jim’s egoism time and again. The interdependence of the two characters, confessor and confesser, at once represents mankind’s need for interdependence and the interdependence of the hero and the artist in literature and in society. Of course, the reader and audience only experience the dynamics of Marlow’s confessional relationship with Jim through Marlow’s vacillating narrative, which itself becomes an ambivalent form of confession directed at them.

As first person narrator and Conrad’s primary impressionistic mechanism, Marlow alternately empathizes with Jim’s youth and then criticizes Jim’s egoism. Marlow beholds Jim at the inquiry and responds to Jim’s uncertain fate with a feeling of unavoidable solidarity, which Marlow, in turn, conveys to the reader. At times, Marlow is disgusted by Jim’s egoism; at others, he is touched by Jim’s anguish or admires Jim’s determination to face the inquiry. Marlow outlines Jim’s desperate eastward trek with parental concern and frustration and traces Jim’s later rise and fall in Patusan with a suggestion of parental pride and grief. Incidents or comments condemning Jim interrupt passages in which Marlow is sympathetic to the young man. Scenes and doubled characters are thematically overlapped in order to manipulate the reader’s judgment towards an ambivalent response to Jim’s egoism (something that the omniscient and straightforward narrator of the novel’s opening chapters could not achieve).
Ultimately, in recounting Jim's death, Marlow neither condemns nor condones Jim's actions. Conrad concludes *Lord Jim* with Marlow's critical comments on Jim's abandonment of Jewel—"He goes away from a living woman to celebrate a pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct" (253)—and with Marlow's comments about Jim's inscrutability. Marlow confirms his own confusion by questioning his own judgment and involvement in Jim's affairs: "Was I so very wrong after all?" (253). With this rhetorical question and a wave from the dying Stein, Marlow's tale ends with no easy answer to the inefficacy of Jim's function as a hero or as an artist. While the opening Novalis epigraph invites the reader to share Marlow's conviction, Marlow often seems to lack conviction. Jim's conflicting shame and determination, his Lordly conduct in Patusan and then Jewel's condemning grief, further complicate Jim's character as well as the reader's response to it. Because of the resulting "provisional bafflement," the reader is not certain how to judge Jim's egoism; Marlow's, and therefore the reader's, lone firm conviction—or truth—is that Jim "is one of us" (253). Included in that "us," readers must question the values defining their world and answer these questions for themselves, by considering the stories of Conrad's doubled heroes and artists interposed throughout Marlow's narrative, as well as the subjective utterances of which (and with which) those stories are made up.

In addition to Marlow's ambivalent opinion of Jim, each interposed passage and each doubled character reveal a disparate perspective or fragment of truth concerning the complex issue of Jim's dilemma and destiny. Conrad considered it the writer's ethical "task to rescue 'the image of truth' from the flux of reality, thereby communicating to the reader a sense of human continuity and fellowship" (Fraser, 5-6). Another important passage from his Preface to the *Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* describes this sacred task of the artist:

> The task approached in tenderness and faith is to hold up unquestioningly...the rescued fragment before all eyes in the light of a sincere mood. It is to show its vibration, its colour, its form; and through its movement, its form, and its colour, reveal the substance of its truth.... In a single-minded attempt of that kind, if one...
be deserving and fortunate, one may perchance attain to such clearness of sincerity that at last the presented vision of regret, of terror or mirth, shall awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of unavoidable solidarity; of solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy, in hope, in uncertain fate, which binds men to each other and all mankind to the visible world. (Conrad, Prefaces, x)

One ultimate, unified truth is beyond grasping or communicating, but fragments may be rescued. The fragments of truth rescued from the flux of reality through the doubled heroes and artists of *Lord Jim* indicate human social, psychological, and philosophical interdependence. While Conrad’s impressionism calls Jim’s heroism into question, neither Jim’s single-minded attempt to achieve heroism, nor his bond with Marlow, nor his link to the other doubles is ever questioned (despite what Andreach argues concerning Jim’s ultimate separation from humanity). Certainly, regardless of Jim’s cowardice or heroism, the respective bonds between Jim and Marlow, Jim and Stein, and Jim and Jewel survive Jim’s death. In his quest to realize his Romantic image of himself, Jim is as sincere as Marlow/Conrad is in his efforts at holding Jim up unquestioningly as a fragment of truth representing the conflicting values of the modern world. Jim is not the perfect hero, man, or god. His failings and successes and questionable ending reflect the “regret,” the “terror,” and the “mirth” of the “uncertain fate, which binds men to each other,” and which binds together Conrad’s character doubles.

Doubled characters such as Jewel, Marlow, Brierly, Stanton, the French Lieutenant, Brown, and Stein—all characters who tell a tale, descend, or are buried with mythic undertones—either call Jim’s heroism into question or confirm it. The responses of various character doubles to Jim affirm man’s need to define himself in a social context as a result of the “preoccupation and hesitations and audacities of modern thinking” (Strauss, 18). Jim, Marlow, Conrad, and his modern reader have “questioned the nature of reality, the nature of being, the nature of God, the nature of nature, and the nature of poetry and thought themselves” (Strauss, 18). Sorting through Marlow’s array of rescued truths, Conrad’s reader must recognize the inefficacy of traditional
values and Christian mythology in resolving either Jim’s or the modern dilemma. “By taking us from a moribund tradition to a realm of archetypes to a re-created myth” (Andreach, 218), Conrad attempts to “redefine Western man’s values and virtues to make them meaningful today.” In the end, the reader emerges from the underworld with Marlow, who has—through the weaving of his tale/text—rewoven these fragments of truth and dead mythologies into a modern mythology. This modern mythology, like all of the older paradigms, involves a quest—indeed, several quests.
(v) **Quests in Progress: The *Patna* Episode**

*Lord Jim* begins in medias res, with two quests in progress: Jim has already descended, or leaped, from the *Patna* into his night journey and Marlow’s quest is also in progress, though he will not be introduced until the inquiry. In the process of moving east, Jim has already endured the inquiry, has already consulted with Marlow, and has already caused Marlow, too, to question the values defining his existence. Because the opening paragraph of *Lord Jim* takes the reader immediately into the underworld to face Conrad’s Romantic hero before Marlow ever appears, the mystery surrounding Jim is magnified. In the opening lines of the novel, a mysterious image of Jim advances towards the reader (indicated by the second person “you”) with “a fixed from under stare which made you think of a charging bull” (3). Conrad’s initial unidentified narrator provides this image, the “most concrete portrait of Jim we ever receive” (Lynn, 29), and immediately draws the reader into a head-on collision with Jim as he flees from what the reader does not yet know is the dishonor of the *Patna*. Because this initial unidentified narrator “shares the same moral foundation as Jim” (Lynn, 29), locating the reader here in Jim’s confused flight establishes the context of Jim’s unheroic failure to adhere to the moral code of his society when he leaps from the *Patna*.

The initial setting of an obscure string of progressively Eastern ports where Jim works as an incognito water-clerk is already pervaded by the sense of doom redolent of the *Patna*. Every setting after the *Patna* assumes the latter’s underworldliness. David Lynn describes Jim’s initial movements eastward as the “purgatorial years” (Lynn, 29), similar to the initiation stage of the heroic quest as discussed by Andreach. Jim’s progress away from the West parallels a religious pilgrimage or spiritual journey, though he is “a seaman in exile from the sea” (4). The reader is,
as it were, already in Hades, on a similar quest, and moving East with Jim. The novel will end with an image of Jim’s “last proud and unflinching glance” (253) at the easternmost point of his journey, facing his death in Patusan. At the end of Jim’s pilgrimage, he finds his Eastern Bride in his own death. These opening and closing images of Jim’s unflinching glance are crucial in the impressionist maneuvers of Conrad as he first presents and then destroys a problematical hero and artist on a problematical quest. Jim’s inaugural and ultimate gaze also invoke Conrad’s rhetoric of enigma. Marlow’s uncertainty surrounding Jim’s final culpability implies that Marlow’s quest, and that of the reader, is still in progress, will always be in progress. Facing Jim’s final unflinching reciprocal gaze, the reader, through Conrad’s impressionism, is involved in the production of mystery, in what White refers to as Conrad’s mirror-process.

Conrad’s initial narrator increases the mystique of the Patna catastrophe by passing over it and moving (in chapter four) directly to Jim’s trial. This unidentified narrator regresses from the first unflinching image of the adult Jim to boyhood Jim’s Romantic dreams of himself being “as unflinching as a hero in a book” (5). Jim’s boyhood dreams are ill met by his less than heroic hesitation aboard the training-ship; this failure is an early example of how “his imagination, the very source of his heroic image ... undoes him” (Lynn, 36). After his first few years at sea, Jim finds himself recovering from a falling spar at an Eastern port and accepts the fateful berth as chief mate of the Patna, where he continues to dream an heroic life for himself until the ship’s mysterious collision with an unidentified object and his unheroic leap. During the trial, Marlow’s gaze meets Jim’s and Marlow’s identification with the younger man—the mirror-process—begins; he takes over as first-person narrator. The reader henceforth accompanies Marlow on his quest to make meaning of Jim’s dilemma. In consequence, the reader’s quest to decipher the meaning of Jim and Marlow’s disparate yet conflated spiritual journeys—as well as his own—begins.

The subsequently fragmented story of the Patna and Jim’s first catastrophic failure to realize his dream, is told in turns by Jim, the engineer, Marlow, the helmsmen, and the French
Lieutenant. As the truth emerges, truth becomes a more abstract and increasingly relative concept for all involved. The *Patna*—the pilgrim ship—carries the reader, Jim, and Marlow on a journey of redefinition—of heroism, artistry, and existence; it takes them, and us, through the death of old traditions and mythologies towards the formation of a new value system. The ageless pilgrim ship becomes fraught with mythic power of her own. The *Patna* is the first of a series of feminized underworlds through which Conrad’s impressionism carries the reader along with his heroes Marlow and Jim.

The *Patna* is introduced into *Lord Jim* by the unidentified initial narrator as a vessel “old as the hills” (9); the ship becomes increasingly ageless and supernatural as she proceeds on her “errand of faith” (10) to the spiritual center of the (Islamic) East (paradoxically, in a journey *westward*). The *Patna* carries “eight hundred pilgrims (more or less). . . urged by faith and the hope of paradise” (9). The unidentified narrator of chapters one through four describes how the “pilgrim ship” (10) passes over a sea that remains “still, without a stir, without a ripple, without a wrinkle—viscous, stagnant, dead. . . with a slight hiss” (11). The ship becomes more spiritually evocative as she progresses over this dead sea and leaves “behind her a white ribbon of foam that vanished at once, like the phantom of a track drawn upon a lifeless sea by the phantom of a steamer” (11). Already the white wake of the *Patna* seems to erase her path rather than to mark it—there will be no turning back. Jim dreams his virile dreams on a ghost ship sailing the stagnant sea of a dead world.

The days pass, “disappearing one by one into the past as if falling into an abyss for ever open in the wake of the ship,” and the nights “descended on her like a benediction” (11). In this other world, this underworld, of the *Patna* “a marvelous stillness pervaded the world, and the stars, together with the serenity of their rays, seemed to shed upon the earth the assurance of everlasting serenity” (11). Jim basks in this security and serenity as he watches the eight hundred various souls of the pilgrims, “all equal before sleep, death’s brother” (12). The dead world with the living hero is reminiscent of the underworld of Conrad’s *Nigger* Preface in which the dead, the
living, and the unborn meet. “The rows of prone bodies” (12), including that of “a woman covered from head to foot, like a corpse, with a piece of white sheeting” (yet another invocation of feminized mystery), seem dead. In the stagnant stillness of the Patna, Jim awaits an opportunity for heroism but little expects one, and the reader awaits an explanation of Jim’s exile.

Jim’s vigil on the Patna is characterized by “the taut stillness of an unspeakable power that lies in wait” (159), similar to the stillness pervading Marlow’s river in Heart of Darkness. In Heart of Darkness, Marlow describes this stillness as that “of an implacable force brooding over an inscrutable intention” (Conrad, Heart, 56). Deborah Guth relates this stillness to “the stillness that precedes creation...not that of a world at peace awaiting the magic call of life” (159), but one awaiting destruction. Similarly, Jim’s world of unquestioned tradition and codes of honor is about to be destroyed, left behind for an unfamiliar and frighteningly meaningless universe void of communal codes of honor. The hell-like undertones of this meaningless universe become more apparent in the figures of Jim’s fellow officers as the moment of Jim’s fall draws nearer in the text.

Jim’s underworldly fellow officers contrast strongly with his unrealized Romantic dreams and emphasize the hellishness of the Patna. The three officers evoke “the incarnation of everything vile and base that lurks in the world we love” (14). In this underworld of the Patna, there is a yet more subterranean level, inhabited by the second engineer, whose voice beckons from below deck: “‘Hot is no name for it down below,’ said a voice” (14). The corpulent German skipper and the skeletal second engineer become demonic foils in Pandemonium. The German skipper is “dull-eyed, malevolent, and of soft, fleshy curve” (15), and the second engineer is “lean, all hollows, with a long head bony like the head of an old horse, with sunken cheeks, with sunken temples, with an indifferent glazed glance of sunken eyes” (15). When the second engineer moves, “a skeleton seemed to sway loose in his clothes; his walk was mere wandering” (15). While “those men did not belong to the world of heroic adventure” (16), they certainly belong to the underworld represented by the Patna, “poised on the brow of yawning destruction” (17).
The security and peace of the voyage is broken when the *Patna* suffers a surreal collision with an unidentified object, perhaps (as Marlow later puts it) “a kind of maritime ghoul on the prowl to kill ships in the dark” (97). The initial narrator’s communication of the *Patna* incident ends with the moment of collision. Marlow’s disrupted narrative fills in the gap between the collision and the trial. Jim relates to Marlow in the Malabar House how, after ascertaining the damage, he knew “there must be a big hole below the water-line” (18), that the bulging bulkhead will not hold, and that the *Patna* will sink. Jim’s imagination paints a vivid picture of his inability to save the pilgrims and Jim enters a personal hell, which he describes in Chapter Four during his trial. On the deck of the *Patna*, Jim is trapped; there are “eight hundred people and seven boats” (53). He states, “I was angry, as though I had been trapped. I was trapped! The night was hot, too, I remember. Not a breath of air” (63). Jim almost seems to feel buried alive in the moments before he jumps from the *Patna*.

Describing the scene to Marlow in the Malabar House, Jim is still on the *Patna*, “looking at these recumbent bodies, a doomed man aware of his fate, surveying the silent company of the dead” (53). In the mythic underworld of the *Patna*, “there was no time. No time!” (53); the seas around the *Patna* are likewise “deadly still” (56). As Jim watches the other officers struggle with the lifeboat, he sees “a silent black squall” whose “shadow flies over the waters, and confounds sea and sky into one abyss of obscurity” (62). Before descending even further into this enigmatic obscurity by leaping from the *Patna*, Jim stumbles over the legs of a dead man; when he jumps, Jim lands in a lifeboat that is more like a coffin, taking Marlow and the reader with him. Describing the deadlock between himself and the other officers on the lifeboat, Jim states that, “We were like men walled up quick in a roomy grave” (74).

Jim refers to his escape from the *Patna* as “a joke hatched in hell” (66): it was “as if I had jumped into a well—into an everlasting deep hole...” (68), into which “the end of the world had come through a deluge in a pitchy blackness” (69). The rainy darkness of the lifeboat “was like being swept by a flood through a cavern” (69). In the darkness and silence of the lifeboat, the
officers can discern no sign of the *Patna* and can hear nothing. Jim says, "You couldn’t distinguish the sea from the sky; there was nothing to see and nothing to hear. Not a glimmer, not a shape, not a sound!" (70). The lifeboat becomes an abyss of "annihilation," in which "everything was gone and—all was over..." (70). Thus one world ends, and another begins, in an abyssal stillness: "only a night; only a silence" (70), "not a star, not a light anywhere" (72).

In her account of *Heart of Darkness*, Guth explains the nature of this abyssal experience: "From the point of view of the Quest myth," she asserts, it represents "one of the ordeals which the hero must overcome in order to reach his goal" (Guth, 160). From the perspective of the creation myth that Guth identifies as central to Conrad’s earlier novella, Jim is in between worlds. His world has just been destroyed, returning him to a primordial past: "Within the explicit context of a return to the past, however, the sense of an ending is unmistakable" (Guth, 160). Jim’s assumed but never challenged unity with society and Western tradition has ended: not only has he missed an opportunity for heroism, but he has acted the part of a scoundrel and will become a social pariah. From this point on, like Milton’s Satan, Jim will carry his hell (his leap from the *Patna*) with him wherever he goes. For Jim, a world and all its communal creeds and their meaning have died. Marlow supports Jim’s existential description of his experience on the lifeboat:

> There is something peculiar in a small boat upon the wide sea. Over the lives borne from under the shadow of death there seems to fall the shadow of madness. When your ship fails you, your whole world seems to fail you; the world that made you, restrained you, took care of you. It is as if the souls of men floating on an abyss and in touch with immensity had been set free for any excess of heroism, absurdity, or abomination. (74)

Marlow comments further on the isolation of Jim and the other officers in the lifeboat, cut off "more completely from the rest of mankind, whose ideal of conduct had never undergone the trial of a fiendish and appalling joke" (74). Marlow continues, "Trust a boat on the high seas to bring
out the Irrational that lurks at the bottom of every thought, sentiment, sensation, emotion” (74). As Guth’s analysis indicates, the mythic creation/descent of the Patna codifies the irrational and the supernatural forces at work in Jim’s life. Marlow contributes to this codification by interposing the existence of “Dark Powers whose real terrors, always on the verge of triumph are perpetually foiled by the steadfastness of men” (74). Neither Jim nor his fellow officers have been steadfast; in this case, the Dark Powers have not been foiled. Marlow’s remarks reveal that both he and Jim are struggling artists, determined to make meaning out of the abyssal chaos that confronts them.

The morning after his dark six-hour vigil Jim watches the sea “giving birth to the globe of light,” which the reader realizes is the sun (75), but in effect Jim never emerges from the underworld of the pilgrim ship. This globe of light, the sun, that ironically appears in the midst of Jim’s darkness will later re-appear in the form of the globes of light in the Malabar House dining area, in the candles floating through the cavernous gloom of Stein’s home, and in the torch which Jewel flings into the river in Patusan. These lights mark either the destruction of the old world of traditional values and of the code of conduct defining honor and dishonor, or the birth of a new world—a modern world in which the values represented by this code are lost.

With the morning comes the sight of the other officers—a bizarre Trinity of “three dirty owls” (77)—and an abyss not of darkness this time but of light. Just as the complete and unbroken darkness of the night before had resisted Jim’s powers of perception, so does the unbroken whiteness of the new day. “It was dead calm,” and “all was light, light, and the boat seemed to be falling through it” (77). Both the whiteness—a crucial sign in Conrad’s rhetoric of enigma, as Allon White suggests—and the darkness are indecipherable. Traditional dichotomies and sacred trinities are broken down, replaced by eerily distorted triptychs throughout the novel. After being picked up by the Avondale, Jim becomes acquainted with the fate of the Patna, which does not in fact sink. Only then is Jim truly aware of the loss of his honor. Jim is strangely buried, paradoxically both dead and alive (or, better, undead).
Awaiting trial and relating his tale to Marlow, Jim is repeatedly described as buried or as a shade. Jim passes his days awaiting trial, “buried in a long chair…coming out of his place of sepulture only at meal-times or late at night, when he wandered on the quays all by himself” (51). After the old world has been destroyed, Jim is unsure of his place in the new one. Commenting on his situation, Jim says, “I was so lost, you know” (79). Jim is “detached from his surroundings, irresolute and silent, like a ghost without a home to haunt” (51). As Marlow listens to Jim, he feels himself “overcome by a profound and hopeless fatigue, as though his [Jim’s] voice had startled me [Marlow] out of a dream of wandering through empty spaces whose immensity had harassed my soul and exhausted my body” (81). Through Jim’s tale, Marlow will descend with Jim and identify with the younger man to the point of physical empathy, identification and obsession that borders on possession, and which possesses the reader, who follows Marlow as he follows Jim through the series of underworlds to come.
In the midst of Jim's official inquiry, Marlow invites Jim to dine with him at the Malabar House, and it is here that Jim confesses to Marlow and Marlow is compelled to listen, then to identify. Jim confides to Marlow that he finds the inquiry to be "hell" (48). I will elaborate in a more general way on the ritual of confession toward the end of this essay; here, however, I simply wish to discuss the dynamics of this particular confession. The reader, along with Marlow, hears Jim's confession in the underworld that the Malabar House becomes. The atmosphere of the Malabar House echoes that of the Patna, evoking the sense of another nether region in which Jim is being buried alive. In the dining room of the Malabar House, Jim seems buried in a bizarre crowd that includes "two nomadic old maids, dressed up to kill, [who] worked acrimoniously through the fare, whispering to each other with faded lips, wooden-faced and bizarre, like two sumptuous scarecrows" (48). These two underworldly old maids recall, along with the girl whose laugh is "innocent and empty as her mind" (48), the knitting women Marlow encounters at the beginning of Heart of Darkness, who also represent a curtailed version of the three Fates. The Malabar House dining room is "more than half full of people with a-hundred-pounds-round-the-world tickets in their pockets" (47). These diners are tourists, travelers similar to the Pilgrims on the Patna (and yet also very different, inasmuch as their presence in the exotic locale is the result of modern "progress" rather than traditional faith), unaware of their stop in Jim's private hell.

The light and dark imagery employed throughout the novel in establishing the mood of an underworld and in perpetuating mystery is also present in the description of the Malabar House:

On little octagon tables candles burned in glass globes; clumps of stiff-leaved plants separated sets of cozy wicker chairs; and between the pairs of columns, whose reddish shafts caught in a long row the sheen from the tall windows, the night, glittering and
sombre, seemed to hang like a splendid drapery. The riding lights of ships winked afar like setting stars, and the hills across the roadstead resembled rounded black masses of arrested thunder-clouds. (48)

The darkness and the lamp globes of the restaurant mirror the dark sea and stars visible through the tall windows and both the interior and exterior scenes evoke not only an underworld but also the darkness and stillness of the deck of the Patna on the night of the disaster. As Jim tells the story of that night the distinction between the scene of the Patna and that of the Malabar House dims. Describing Jim as he tells his tale of the Patna, Marlow notes: “He was very far away from me who watched him across three feet of space. With every instant he was penetrating deeper into the impossible world of Romantic achievements” (51).

The world of “Romantic achievements” is subterranean, requiring artistic descent. Jim recreates for Marlow the bulging plate and the flaking rust, the unconscious sleepers and his expectation “to see the iron open out as I stood there and the rush of water going over them as they lay....” (52). Jim tells his tale so vividly that he shudders “profoundly, as if a cold finger-tip had touched his heart” in remembrance (52). Listening to Jim, Marlow “can easily picture him...in the peopled gloom of the cavernous place, with the light of the bulk-lamp falling on a small portion of the bulkhead that had the weight of the ocean on the other side” (52). Jim recreates for Marlow the destruction of his world, in the process destroying Marlow’s comfortable world, and preparing the reader for the genesis and destruction of Jim’s new world order in Patusan.

In the Malabar House, Jim relates how “he had been tricked” and “taken unawares—and he whispered to himself a malediction upon the waters and the firmament, upon the ship, upon the men” (59). In the midst of his telling, Jim laughs bitterly at being called a coward by the first engineer. Jim’s bitter laughter falls “like a blight on all the merriment about donkeys, pyramids, bazaars, or what not” taking place at the Malabar House dining tables (61). The tense silence of the Patna quells the touristic chatter of the Malabar House: “Along the dim length of the gallery
the voices dropped, the pale faces turned our way with one accord, and the silence became so profound that the clear tinkle of a teaspoon falling on the tessellated floor of the verandah rang out like a tiny and silvery scream” (61-62). This stillness recalls that of the Patna. The pale faces of the crowd seem to gaze back at Jim from an underworld in which he is on trial. In this dead silence, Jim “flung his arm out at the night beyond the stone balustrade” as though it was the night beyond the deck of the Patna (65).

Marlow and the reader are both caught up in Jim’s tale and in what Guerard refers to as sympathetic identification with Jim. At one point during his confession, Jim asks his confessor Marlow what he would do if he felt the house moving below him. Jim does not wait for the older man to answer; Jim answers, “Leap! By heavens! You would take one spring from where you sit and land in that clump of bushes yonder” (65). As the distinction between the scene of the Malabar House and that of the Patna is obscured, so is the distinction between Jim and Marlow. Disturbed, Marlow doesn’t answer, but does, “with a rapid glance, estimate the distance to the mass of denser blackness in the middle of the grass-plot before the verandah” (65-66). Time and location become confused as Marlow recognizes himself in Jim.

Time, symbolically, is disrupted in the Malabar House as it is on the Patna and in the lifeboat. Jim’s wish to die in the lifeboat merges with his wish to die in the restaurant: “I wish I could die” (68), he tells Marlow. To demonstrate his stance on the lifeboat as he contemplated suicide, Jim “perched himself smartly on the edge of the table and crossed his arms....” (72). For Jim, telling and reenacting combine to reinforce the hellish indistinguishability of the Malabar House table and the Patna lifeboat. Jim seems to be in both underworldly places and yet in neither: “His hand groped stealthily, came in contact with a liqueur-glass, and was withdrawn suddenly as if it had touched a red-hot coal” (71).

At work in the Malabar House interview are both the dynamics of confession and the compulsion of identification. Marlow encourages Jim to finish his tale because he needs to hear it: “I pushed the bottle slightly. ‘Won’t you have some more?’ I asked” (71). As Jim relives the
anger he felt when he realized he had jumped ship, his anger resurges: “He looked at me angrily. ‘Don’t you think I can tell you what there is to tell without screwing myself up?’ he asked” (71).

As the evening and the tale unwind, Jim and Marlow are alone with each other in Hades with Jim’s Eastern bride looking on: “The squad of globe-trotters had gone to bed. We were alone but for a vague white form erect in the shadow....” (71). This vague white form, Jim’s Eastern bride, follows him to Patusan. Briefly glimpsed here, in the midst of the relation of the Patna incident, she only reinforces Jim’s failure to realize the opportunity to act heroically, and Marlow’s acknowledgement of her ghostly presence indicates his descent into Hades with Jim and his new capacity for seeing what Jim sees.

Not only does the Malabar House merge with the Patna, but the scene gets progressively hellish, and Jim explodes in a climax where the narrating and narrated worlds are violently conflated. Jim, caught up in describing the struggle with the crew on the lifeboat, “with a convulsive jerk of his elbow knocked over the cognac bottle” (73). The shattering cognac bottle only reinforces the tensions of Jim’s sense of the conflict on the Patna. At the sound, “He bounced off the table as if a mine had been exploded behind his back, and half turned before he alighted, crouching on his feet to show me a startled pair of eyes and a face white about the nostrils” (73). Jim is in his most defensive stance when the Malabar House is at its darkest moment. “The lights,” Marlow notes at this point, “had been put out in the dining hall; our candle glimmered solitary in the long gallery, and the columns had turned black from pediment to capital” (73). The floor of the Malabar House here, phantasm-like, transforms into the deck of the Patna. Marlow’s description of Jim implies that Jim is wherever he imagines himself to be: “He passed on a few steps to the imaginary end of his beat, and when he flung round to come back both his hands were thrust deep into his pockets” (78).

Marlow’s vision of Jim in the Malabar House not only takes us back to the Patna but foreshadows his vision of Jim on the coast of Patusan:
The dim candle spluttered within the ball of glass, and that was all I had to see him by; at his back was the dark night with the clear stars, whose distant glitter disposed in retreating planes lured the eye into the depths of a greater darkness; and yet a mysterious light seemed to show me his boyish head. (78)

The light illuminating the boyish head recalls the halo of Christ in Christian iconography and Jim’s emotional hell recalls Gethsemane, though Jim’s visit to Marlow’s room is actually more similar to Christ’s cathartic experience in Gethsemane than is his confession in the dining-room. The white form of Jim’s Eastern bride is reminiscent of the bride of Christ and the ghostly bride of Orpheus. The combination of all the white and dark imagery recalls Allon White’s discussion of Conrad’s use of such imagery in his rhetoric of enigma. The darkness behind Jim recedes into, and directs the reader’s attention toward, greater darkness. Of the light and the darkness, it is actually the light around Jim’s head which Conrad refers to as “mysterious”; the light of the clear stars lures the eye into the deeper mysteries behind Jim’s boyish face.

While Jim continues to pace, the atmosphere of the Malabar House continues to recall that of the Patna, the stillness of the lifeboat, and the grave: “All around everything was still as far as the ear could reach” (81). In this stillness in the Malabar House, Marlow notices:

The mist of his feelings shifted between us, as if disturbed by his struggles, and in the rifts of the immaterial veil he would appear to my staring eyes distinct of form and pregnant with vague appeal like a symbolic figure in a picture. The chill air of the night seemed to lie on my limbs as heavy as a slab of marble. (81)

Marlow may frame Jim as “a symbolic figure in a picture,” but this ability to look at Jim in a painterly fashion, as a distanced observer, is nonetheless matched by a sympathetic identification with Jim so complete that he feels a corpse himself. This is the fateful identification described by Ian Watt, the mirror-process mentioned by White, and what Blanchot refers to as meeting the gaze of the other. As Jim describes the coldness of the lifeboat, Marlow feels the chill of the grave, and he too seems buried alive. While Jim concludes, “Dead or not dead, I could not get
clear” (82), the reader discerns that Marlow cannot get clear either. Throughout the novel, Jim is neither dead nor alive: he is one of the undead, going from one underworldly environment to another in a series of initiations that ultimately fail to initiate anything or anyone besides Marlow and the reader. The stillness for Marlow sounds the end of his faith in the traditional code of honor, the “pre-creation slumber” (Guth) preceding an awakening into a new world in which Marlow will no longer be just himself but also Jim.

This awakening initiates Marlow’s inquiry into his own system of beliefs—an inquiry that parallels the official inquiry into Jim’s conduct aboard the Patna. The underworldly scene of the Malabar House gives way to that of the inquiry, which attempts to cast the light of the law upon Jim's dark actions, but cannot. Marlow himself remarks that the object of the official inquiry itself “was not the fundamental why, but the superficial how, of this affair” (35). He complains, “You can’t expect the constituted authorities to inquire into the state of a man’s soul” (35), which is what Marlow is, in fact, interested in. Marlow’s interest is “purely psychological—the expectation of some essential disclosure as to the strength, the power, the horror of human emotions” (35). When Marlow shakes Jim’s hand at the close of the inquiry, he acknowledges his connection to Jim. They shake and “the candle spluttered out, and the thing was over at last, with a groan that floated up to me in the dark. He got himself away somehow. The night swallowed his form” (95). From Marlow’s point of view, Jim is always descending or disappearing. Marlow cannot see Jim but can “hear the crunch-crunch of the gravel under his boots. He was running. Absolutely running, with nowhere to go to. And he was not yet four-and-twenty” (95). Marlow emphasizes Jim’s youth because Jim represents Marlow’s youth. If Marlow cannot create meaning for Jim, he cannot generate it for himself either.

Marlow describes his communion with Jim in the Malabar House in terms reminiscent of the Last Supper: “Our communion in the night was uncommonly like a last vigil with a condemned man” (92). Already, Marlow is rendering Jim in Christ-like terms. After the trial, Jim experiences the equivalent of Christ’s vigilant prayers in Gethsemane in Marlow’s room. Having served as
confessor in the Malabar House, Marlow serves as the Father who hears Jim’s prayers and
decides Jim’s fate. In Marlow’s room, Jim does “have it out with himself without being bothered
by the rest of the universe” (104). Jim struggles with his inner demons, “alone with his
loneliness” (104), while Marlow pointedly ignores him and writes letters which will direct the
passive Jim’s fate. Marlow’s purposeful and effective writing reiterates his role as artist, shaping
Jim’s life as he considers then rejects the idea of referring Jim to Chester. While Marlow takes
“refuge in the letters” (105) against the violence of Jim’s emotions, Jim is wracked by an
emotional storm. Jim “was rooted to the spot, but convulsive shudders ran down his back; his
shoulders would heave suddenly” (105). Marlow is a witness, a confessor, and a recorder of Jim’s
personal hell.

The scene in Marlow’s room becomes darker and hellish like the Patna, the lifeboat, and the
Malabar House as dusk falls; Marlow writes by candlelight, and Jim faces the darkness of the
night alone. Jim’s emotional storm drives him out onto Marlow’s verandah: “he rushed out on the
verandah as if to fling himself over—and didn’t” (108). Marlow’s verandah and the expression of
the suicidal impulse recall the Malabar House verandah and the deck of the Patna. Just as on the
deck of the Patna, a literal storm coincides with Jim’s emotional storm. As Jim struggles
emotionally, Marlow also experiences “that profound disturbance and confusion of thought which
is caused by a violent and menacing uproar—of a heavy gale at sea, for instance” (105).
Marlow’s anxiety and storm metaphor indicate his intensified identification with Jim, while his
description of Jim in terms of light and dark imagery continues his earlier rhetoric of enigma.
Marlow views Jim’s silhouette by candlelight: “he stood on the brink of a vast obscurity, like a
lonely figure by the shore of a sombre and hopeless ocean” (105). Jim is “distinct and black,
planted solidly upon the shore of a sea of light” (108). This switch from sombre ocean to sea of
light seems to anticipate Jim’s future heroic success in the midst of this dark tribulation, but Jim’s
tribulation here overshadows his later success: “I shall always remember him as seen through the
open door of my room, taking, perhaps, too much to heart the mere consequences of his failure” (107), mourning the death of a Romantic dream that has no place in a modern world.

Jim, “so grave and youthful” (111), so Romantic, appeals to modern Marlow as a fragment of a lost self. Jim’s fine sensibilities provoke Marlow’s decision: “But he was too interesting or too unfortunate to be thrown to the dogs, or even to Chester” (108). In writing Jim a recommendation that allows him to start over as a water clerk, Marlow expresses faith in Jim that gives the younger man confidence and a renewed resolution to realize his Romantic dreams in a new direction—East and towards Stein, through yet another underworld. While Jim leads Marlow into the underworlds of the *Patna* and transforms the Malabar House dining and hotel room into underworlds, it is Marlow who leads Jim and the reader to Stein and to Patusan. Before bringing Jim, Marlow first visits Stein’s Hades-like home himself.
(vii) Stein’s Underworld

The Patna incident becomes part of maritime folklore, a legendary underworld episode from which Jim cannot escape. While one character sagaciously comments that nearly everyone has jumped off of one Patna or another, Marlow never admits to failing either himself or the seaman’s code, even as he jumps ship vicariously with Jim in the underworldly Malabar House dining room. Years later, when Marlow realizes that his new start for Jim will not do, that the Patna episode will not sink, he voyages to Stein’s underworldly home for a consultation. Marlow enters Stein’s home late in the evening: like the Patna, the Malabar House restaurant, and Marlow’s room, it is a dark and silent place, described in terms of light and dark imagery that evokes the realm of the dead. Stein’s Javanese servant leads Marlow through a dimly lit dining-room to the door of Stein’s study; the servant vanishes after announcing Marlow, “as though he had been a ghost only momentarily embodied for that particular service” (123-124). Stein’s home is a house of shades.

In this sacred underworld, Stein's writing desk and his insect specimens stand out from the darkness, connecting his artistry and death. Stein’s study is a dark “spacious apartment” with a strongly lighted writing desk in one corner; it gives an overall impression of “shapeless gloom like a cavern” (124). The underworldly atmosphere of the study is increased by the “narrow shelves filled with dark boxes of uniform shape and colour [that] ran round the walls, not from floor to ceiling, but in a sombre belt about four feet broad” (124). These lined-up coffins form “catacombs of beetles” (124), which reinforce the sense that Stein is a ruler of the land of the dead. In his old age, Stein “lived solitary…with his books and his collection, classing and arranging specimens” (126). Among the last specimens he classes and arranges will be Jim and Jewel.
When Stein talks to Marlow of his dead wife and child in Patusan, he strikes “a match, which flared violently” (126). This match recalls those struck by Marlow himself as he interrupts the frame of his tale from time to time to comment to his audience of listeners. This flare of light in the darkness also recalls the light and dark imagery that links each Hades-like setting and emphasizes Jim’s enigmatic nature. In this dark room, Marlow describes Stein as “the shadow prowling amongst the graves of butterflies” (130), moving in and out of the ring of light created by the writing lamp. Marlow asks Stein for guidance in Jim’s case. Stein “lit a two-branched candlestick and led the way…. through empty, dark rooms” (131). Marlow follows the “gleams from the lights Stein carried” (131), unable to discern the older man—who tends to disappear like Jim—in the darkness, following him through a void like that of Jim’s lifeboat:

They [the lights] glided along the waxed floors, sweeping here and there over the polished surface of a table, leaped upon a fragmentary curve of a piece of furniture, or flashed perpendicularly in and out of distant mirrors, while the forms of two men and the flicker of two flames could be seen for a moment stealing silently across the depths of a crystalline void. (131-132)

Stein’s two flames recall the lights of the Patna, the stars outside the windows of the Malabar House, the candlelight of Marlow’s room and every match struck in the midst of a narrative in the novel. These lights draw the reader’s attention back to the narrative frame as part of Conrad’s efforts to reinforce the importance of tale-telling and the teller’s efforts in overcoming the “crystalline void” of modern alienation.

Marlow follows Stein as blindly as Jim follows Marlow back to the latter’s room for guidance. As they progress through the darkness, Stein diagnoses Jim as a Romantic. Stein, like Jim in the Malabar House, has the darkness at his back, and Marlow realizes that Stein, himself a Romantic, is for that reason the best authority on Jim’s fate. “With his head dropping on his breast and the light held high he began to walk again” (132): Stein’s stance here foreshadows Doramin’s and the French Lieutenant’s and reinforces the truth he reveals, albeit as yet another fragment, to Marlow.
Marlow sees this truth in an epiphanic moment as Stein leads him through a descent into “pellucid depths” to a truth that Marlow cannot grasp on his own:

I saw it vividly, as though in our progress through the lofty, silent rooms amongst fleeting gleams of light and the sudden revelations of human figures stealing with flickering flames within unfathomable and pellucid depths, we had approached nearer to absolute Truth, which, like Beauty itself, floats elusive, obscure, half submerged, in the silent, still waters of mystery. (132).

Conrad’s rhetoric again confirms the enigma; Marlow descends to Truth which is “obscure” and “half submerged, in the silent, still waters of mystery.” In the course of this descent, Marlow cannot see Stein, only the gleaming lights that indicate his movements: “He preceded me. My eyes followed his movements…” (132). Stein is an absence, a mystery leading Marlow to greater mystery. This descent, Stein’s appeal, and the truth to which he leads Marlow, are analogous to the artistic descent described in Conrad’s Preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus. The thematic purpose of Stein’s underworldly home is to situate Stein in that subterranean world into which a Conradian artist must descend, in accordance with Conrad’s artistic manifesto in the Preface. From this Hades, Stein charts the course of Marlow, Jim, and the reader for yet another uncharitably mysterious underworld, the land of impossible dreams, Patusan.
Jim’s descents and his quest begin on the pilgrim ship, where he dreams his dreams, and end in Patusan, where he lives his impossible dream; Marlow’s vicarious descent and personal quest begin with Jim’s tale of the *Patna*, take him to Patusan, and end with the reader. Critics frequently cite the apparent division of *Lord Jim* into two completely different novels—the *Patna* episode and the Patusan episode—as a structural weakness. Semantically, however, the name of the ageless ship and the name of the ageless country recall each other; thematically, both the *Patna* and Patusan function as feminized underworlds, zones of the subconscious, realms of artistic descent. Just as the scene shifts in the second half of the novel, so do Conrad’s narrative modalities. The disrupted chronologies, thematic appositions, and overlapping inquiries of the first half of *Lord Jim* (all identified by Ian Watt as central to Conrad's impressionism and the process of prolonged psychological probing it makes possible) give way to the more straightforwardly simple narration of the Patusan section as a result of what Watt refers to as Conrad’s “progression d’effet.”

Conrad described in a letter to Garnett his use of light and dark imagery to achieve metaphorical spotlighting, and Watt has commented that, “After the brilliant spotlights playing starkly on every detail of human inadequacy and weakness in the first part, the lighting changes” (Watt, 309). Jim’s inadequacy is starkly explored in the *Patna* section of the novel; by contrast, both Jim and Patusan initially appear in a softer light. Watt notes the narrative disparity in Patusan as a structural flaw but inadvertently reveals the change in narrative technique to be necessary when he states that Patusan *has* to remain slightly out of focus to achieve the effect of the dream brought to life. Conrad changes to a more lurid lighting again at the novel’s end as Jim
and his dream dies: “for the catastrophe there is a sudden wrenching change to a spotlight of a more livid hue, which illuminates the dying Jim in the stark contours of melodrama” (Watt, 309).

Patusan has to remain out of focus because it is the world of impossible dreams, the domain of the unconscious, the underworld of Jim’s final descent. In terms of the rhetoric of enigma, Jim is now described as white against a dark background, but both Jim and Patusan are obscured. Neither can appear too clearly or the mystery will be shattered. Watt explains Patusan as an “‘other’ world” (Watt, 308) in which the psychological probing found in the first half of the novel is impossible because of the Romantic nature of the setting and plot. In Patusan, Conrad is no longer “dealing with realities that can stand up to three-dimensional scrutiny” (Watt, 308). Events such as “Jim’s triumph over Sherif Ali … would be revealed for the Romantic schoolboy adventures that they essentially are if they were subjected to the extended and rigorous cross-examination which is applied to Jim’s desertion of the Patna” (Watt, 308). Patusan is feminized, Romantic, primordial, a subconscious dream world, the destructive element in which Jim is immersed.

Patusan is feminized by its association with Jewel and by the blatantly feminine contours of the land. Andreach finds in the split-hills imagery of Chaper 21 an image of descent and birth subtly sexual and indicative of how Patusan’s landscape “imagistically defines the process of redemption” (Andreach, 59). Forty miles upriver from the sea, when the first few houses appear in Patusan, so too do “the summits of two steep hills very close together, and separated by what looks like a deep fissure, the cleavage of some mighty stroke” (134). At this same location, Marlow watches the moon ascend “ruddily…gliding upwards between the sides of the chasm, till it floated away above the summits, as if escaping from a yawning grave in gentle triumph” (135). This image transforms the landscape of Patusan into a strange world “foreign to one’s memory” (135), and also reinforces the function of Patusan as a grave for Jim and as a source of renewal for Marlow. Orphic Marlow alone escapes the yawning grave of Patusan.
When Brierly, Marlow, and Stein talk of burying Jim during and after the inquiry, their talk reinforces Jim’s descending identity and suggests his mythical function as a vegetative god. Chester’s suggestion of Walpole Island as a fertile and practical grave for Jim, where Jim would in effect become a slave driver exploiting the dark-skinned manure shovellers, offsets the more fertile landscape of Patusan in which Jim exploits the dark-skinned natives to their (supposedly) mutual benefit. After the inquiry, Marlow compares Jim’s wounded spirit to “a bird with a broken wing...[that might] flutter into some hole to die quietly of inanition” (112). Jim’s wounded spirit is reborn in Patusan in Christ-like terms; dressed in white, he first brings peace and hope, and later dies with outstretched arms in atonement for his own sin.

Stein implies Patusan’s function as the destructive element when he first diagnoses Jim’s need to immerse himself in the destructive element, then Marlow sends Jim there to get him out of the way of himself and everyone else. Stein says that in order to find redemption, Jim should, “In the destructive element immerse!...To follow the dream—and again to follow the dream—and so” (131). Following a dream figuratively entails artistic descent. Following a dream literally entails a descent into the subconscious, with its associations with sleep, dreams, and death. Marlow—sure that sending Jim to Patusan is the equivalent of sending Jim to his death or to “a star of the fifth magnitude” (133) from which he will never return—gives Jim a revolver to take with him, and then desperately rushes the forgotten cartridges to him. More people actually die in Patusan than in any other setting in the novel.

More descents are also enacted in the Patusan section than in the other underworlds of Lord Jim. Jim figuratively descends into the underworld of Patusan, even though, ironically, he must ascend a river to do so. Soon after, Jim makes two leaps to escape the Rajah’s stockade that lead to his vivid rebirth as he struggles from the muddy riverbank in the underworldly womb/tomb of Patusan. When Jim kills one would-be assassin and forces the remaining assassins to jump in the river, he recreates through others his leap from the Patna just as surely as he does earlier at an Eastern port when he tosses a fellow employee into the harbor.
Even when expressing surprise at the glory to which Jim rises in Patusan, Marlow affirms that no one could possibly know of Jim’s Romantic achievements in Patusan through any medium other than himself. As the primary artist in *Lord Jim*, Marlow has unique access to this Romantic, primordial, or subconscious world of impossible dreams. The only person who knows more of Patusan than Marlow or Jim is the fading master artist, Stein. Patusan becomes associated with artistry when Marlow describes it as a work of art, “a picture created by fancy on a canvas, upon which, after long contemplation [like Eurydice, or the unknown], you turn your back for the last time” (200). Marlow’s reference to Patusan as a picture, a framed reality, recalls his earlier comparison of Jim to a symbolic figure in a picture pregnant with appeal. In Patusan, the mythic imagery surrounding Jim proliferates and his symbolic nature culminates. Jim and Jewel are both trapped in the picture/grave/Hades of Patusan. Jim dies there, and Jewel is one “of the living who, buried in remote places out of the knowledge of mankind, still...[is] fated to share in its tragic or grotesque miseries” (196). Though she ends up in Stein’s home, Jewel no more escapes the underworld of Patusan than does Jim.

Conrad creates in Patusan a Romantic world of impossible achievements and truths, and Marlow recreates it for his audience. As such a creation, Patusan is the place not for reason but for intuition (which, again, establishes another stereotypical association with the feminine). Jim’s intuition guides him to rebirth and then final death in Patusan. Marlow, too, experiences rebirth when visiting Patusan. It is to the illusionary underworld of Patusan that Marlow descends for final truths concerning self, heroism, artistry, and existence. If “the journey to self-discovery is an interior journey into death and life on a feminine landscape” (Andreach, 43), then Patusan is the feminine landscape in which Jim both discovers and destroys himself, and in which Marlow and the reader discover themselves. Andreach argues that Patusan’s “blatantly feminine contours imagistically define the process of redemption as a journey to the limits of life and a rebirth through the agency of the heroine” (Andreach, 59). The heroine in *Lord Jim* is as much Patusan as it is Jewel.
Marlow recalls Patusan and the fragments of truth he discerns there but he will cathartically—through telling his tale—escape this world of impossible dreams:

I had looked under its obscure surface; and I felt that when to-morrow I had left it forever, it would slip out of existence, to live only in my memory till I myself passed into oblivion. I have that feeling about me now; perhaps it is that feeling which has incited me to tell you the story, to try to hand over to you, as it were, its very existence, its reality—the truth disclosed in a moment of illusion. (196)

This description of Patusan’s tenuous reality recalls Marlow’s statements concerning himself as the sole mediator of Jim’s reality to the rest of the world. His reference to Patusan’s obscure surface recalls Jim’s veil of inscrutability, and is part of the rhetoric of enigma that structures so much of Conrad’s narrative—a rhetoric that relies upon the twin ideas of a mysterious truth being disclosed in a moment of illusion and of an artist who can provide the illusion that will make this truth discernible to his audience.

Marlow evokes Patusan’s primordial, or a-historic, nature, calling it “one of the lost, forgotten, unknown places of the earth” (196). This exotic stereotype of a primordial world—which still finds its way into some contemporary criticism, as when Guth speaks of Heart of Darkness’s Africa as “the world before the advent of time” (Guth, 159)—is obviously important to Lord Jim’s Patusan. Indeed, I would argue that Marlow, and Conrad’s, evocation of this primordial nature is more than a reductive colonial stereotype. Patusan must seem like a land in an earlier stage of development because the Romantic must precede the modern, and because Patusan is steeped in the same timelessness as the Patna. Jim does go back in time, in a sense, when he recovers his lost worth in Patusan. His inability to mend the broken clock in the Rajah’s stockade indicates Patusan’s timeless nature and recalls the suspension of time aboard the Patna. In Patusan, Jim finds what, according to Guth, Kurtz finds in Africa: “a far more threatening image of elemental being, of wild and as yet unharnessed natural forces” (Guth, 159). Jim briefly
harnesses the natural forces of his imagination, of fear and of "primitive" man's sense of wonder, to create his own doomed Eden or Camelot in which he is Lord.

Patusan is a return to a more idealized past and a more idealized sense of man's capacity. Gail Fraser notes that "in the Patusan section of Lord Jim Conrad uses symbolic images and mythic allusions to emphasize the growth of Jim's moral sense and, consequently, the relationship between moral identity and 'exalted' egoism" (Fraser, 96). Jim becomes, in Patusan, the more godlike Lord Jim. Mythic allusions to Christ and to Camelot emphasize how Jim's selfish egoism serves the seemingly selfless moral purpose of providing order, peace, and security for the natives: "Marlow's comparisons of Jim with a knight in a medieval legend (312) and a hero of Greek mythology (267) suggest that man is capable of becoming more godlike than he really is" (Fraser, 103). Linking Patusan with Romantic realms such as Camelot invokes man's idealistic vision and sense of wonder and the impossibility of realizing such noble aspirations for more than a short time. Patusan is the universal realm of Romantic wonder into which Jim penetrates: "With every step he was penetrating deeper into the impossible world of Romantic achievements" (51). Jim's Camelot kingdom in Patusan replicates Stein's original enterprise and alliance with Doramin. Given the foggy history of Stein's earlier imperial exploitation of Patusan and the interminable rivalry of various tribal factions, including those of the Rajah and Doramin, Jim's emulation of Stein in Patusan is another form of return to the past. Viewed in historical terms, of course, the irony is that this discovery (and recovery) of Romantic wonder is inseparable both from colonial intrusion and from Jim's attempt to enforce the nineteenth-century moral code that he had failed to uphold when he leaped from the Patna. Jim's wonder ceases with him; more wonder-full is the thought-provoking and enigmatic tale Marlow tells of Jim's self-entombment in Patusan.

Like Kurtz, an imprisoned self-appointed god, Jim is a self-appointed Lord who cannot leave. When Guth calls Kurtz a figure in whom "the mythic past and the retributive present" meet (Guth, 161), she inadvertently describes Jim as well. Jim is Adam and Eve seduced by Gentleman
Brown and destroying paradise, causing “the death-throes of a primordial world” (Guth, 161), and marking the beginning of time in a fallen or modern world. Patusan is elemental, or primordial, not only in stereotypical, colonial terms, but in the metaphoric terms of artistic descent. Patusan is the destructive element in which Jim immerses himself on his quest for redemption. Andreach compares Jim to Kurtz, asserting that in making the mythic descent into himself that every man must make, Jim does not affirm his link to man but goes farther into the unknown than common man in order to break this link. Like Kurtz, Jim becomes:

a captive of the interior he set out to conquer. The confluence of his illusion and that of the Patusan natives allowed him to become ‘wholly other.’ He did climb out of the mud bank into which he leaped shortly after his arrival, “‘cracking the earth asunder’” (XXI. 254), but at a terrible price: he forfeited his membership in a human community. (Andreach, 58)

Jim may forfeit his membership in a human community, as Andreach argues, but he remains inextricably deposited in the human subconscious, and as such his links with the world are not in the final analysis severed. Indeed, Jim’s story—and the end of that story—may threaten Marlow’s faith in original and attainable perfection, but not in solidarity. While various aspects of the novel are ambiguous, for Conrad, the artist is the hero, descent is necessary for creation and regeneration, and they both make possible the solidarity that emerges in Lord Jim as the only answer to modern isolation. The artist is the hero capable of communicating man's solidarity in the face of the unspeakable through the weaving of his tale.
Andreach’s condemnation of Jim takes into consideration neither the conflict of the Romantic and the modern nor the importance of the heroic code of conduct in Lord Jim. Jim chooses the one form of self-realization that Jewel cannot initiate, the salvation of his honor and the retention of his nobility. This honor and nobility is part of the Romantic code of conduct Jim betrays in abandoning the Patna. Jim’s suicide salvages, for him, his link with the world through adherence to this heroic code that was severed when he leapt from the Patna. If Jim’s ritualistic suicide is interpreted as a rejection of his humanity as argued by Andreach, then the code of conduct governing men’s lives in Lord Jim is negative and arbitrary, and Jim’s suicide can be nothing more than an empty gesture in support of an equally empty code. Marlow questions but never rejects this code, just as he questions Jim’s suicide but never condemns it either. Alive with Jewel or dead in Patusan, Jim’s link with society is severed the moment he jumps from the Patna—until his confession to Marlow inextricably links them forever, and perhaps salvages the essence of the unsalvageable code to which both men questioningly subscribe.

When Marlow refers to Jim as “one of us,” it may be the case that he is referring to himself as isolated from the rest of humanity along with Jim. This recurring phrase actually refers to God’s description of Adam and Eve after the Fall as belonging to the community of God and the angels that knows the difference between good and evil; this allusion to Genesis 3:22 groups Marlow, Jim and the reader as among the fallen. Marlow seems to operate from within the code of conduct governing his society, but he nonetheless calls this code into question. Andreach’s interpretation of the hero’s quest in Lord Jim does not address in depth the code of conduct which Marlow seems to and which Bob Stanton, Brierly, and the French Lieutenant Bob Stanton do
endorse. Before continuing on with an account of the remainder of the novel (notably, the appearance of Gentleman Brown and his role in the final fall, or leap, of Jim), I would like to discuss here this code of conduct as it relates to the heroism of Stanton, Brierly, and the Frenchman. These heroic doubles live and die according to the seaman’s code of conduct—in Brierly’s case, he dies in order to avoid breaking it. All three of these heroes also enhance the mythic substructure of the novel by doubling Jim, Marlow or Stein, and their functions as doubles are relevant to an understanding of the end of the novel, and to Conrad’s intentions as a whole.

Jim betrays the seamen’s code of heroic conduct when he jumps from the Patna; ironically, in Patusan, Jim dies trying to recreate this same honorable code of conduct. To Marlow, educated by Jim’s successes and failures on the Patna and in Patusan, “the codes binding individual to community appear illusory if not capricious. The social world’s ability to fend off external chaos through habit and duty is thus imperiled” (Lynn, 35). The arbitrariness of these communal codes points toward the relativism of modernity. David Lynn suggests that it is ultimately through Marlow that meaning, if not the code, can be redeemed. Marlow is the dynamic hero who “awakens to social truths he has never before dared question” (Lynn, 31) as a result of his encounter with the series of underworlds into which he descends with Jim. For Marlow, “the ‘fixed pattern of conduct’ is no longer adequate; it is replaced with the ironic juxtaposition of such fundamental human values as solidarity, labour, and love, against a radical skepticism” (Lynn, 42). Lynn explains that Marlow’s task in staying true to Jim and in telling the tale is “no less than to reweave the moral fabric of human endeavor” (Lynn, 35). Telling his tale—acknowledging the threatening darkness and recognizing the importance of solidarity, labor and love in combating it—is Marlow’s duty and his Orphic heroism (as previously affirmed by Strauss).

Andreach may posit Marlow as the true Conradian hero of Lord Jim, but Jim is also a hero, though his heroism is the most questioned. Andreach takes a strong stand in condemning Jim’s chosen method of redemption at the end of the novel; however, Conrad is rather more nuanced in
his attitude toward Jim than Andreach will allow for. Andreach’s exploration of slain and resurrected gods does not differentiate between modern and Romantic heroes. Jim is a Romantic hero and Marlow’s tale is an elegy honoring this problematic Romantic hero. Jim’s ritualistic death is his final descent and union with his chosen Eastern bride. Marlow’s response to Jim’s abandonment of Jewel is ambiguous. Rather than criticizing Jim’s decision, Marlow defends Jim’s honesty. Marlow’s identification with Jim renders them doubles of one another. But, as Andreach points out, “That everyone is a double for everyone else is implicit throughout Conrad’s writings, since everyone shares the actual and potential reality of the human condition” (Andreach, 96).

Duty and heroism connect each of the doubles who form the dynamic framework for Jim’s heroism. Jim is doubled or foiled not just by Marlow but by a series of heroes or anti-heroes throughout Lord Jim. Each of these heroes or anti-heroes either accepts or rejects the code of conduct, or inadvertently reveals its absurdity. Each double is engaged by duty or heroism or artistry. While Jim abandons ship and Marlow and Jim both abandon Jewel, Little Bob Stanton refuses to abandon woman or ship in a comic suicide that recalls the suicides of Brierly and of Jim but that seems absurd in comparison with those ostensibly heroic examples, in turn making the code of conduct that kills Stanton seem absurd.

Marlow interrupts his narrative confession to the French Lieutenant to tell the apparently marginal story of Stanton, so that Conrad can remind the reader exactly how Jim falls short and provide another recurring image of descent in the novel. Little Bob Stanton follows the code of conduct to the letter, both doubling and foiling Jim. Stanton is unquestionably what a hero should be, though his comic physical description and destruction offset the Romantic glamor of Jim’s lordly appearance and heroic crisis. Stanton dies in an act of practical heroism—he goes down with woman and ship while trying to save an hysterical lady’s-maid from the sinking Sephora. Jim dies in an act of Romantic heroism, a suicide act that preserves his Romantic image of himself and his honor but serves no practical purpose. Stanton, like Jim, suffers the “mode of life
more barren of consolation, less capable of being invested with a spark of glamour—unless it be the business of an insurance canvasser” (91). Stanton’s experience, however, is the reverse of Jim’s. Stanton is first exiled from the sea because “of the complications of a love affair” (92), and then returns to the sea to encounter a fateful collision.

Stanton’s fateful descent is very disparate from Jim’s because Stanton is a foil to the real Romantic hero, Jim. Unlike the abandoned pilgrims of the Patna, all of the Sephora’s passengers have been cleared off the ship save the crazed lady’s-maid, who “held to the rail like grim death” (Conrad, 91). Rather than a Romantic rescue, Stanton’s gallant efforts result in a comic “wrestling match” (91) between “the shortest chief mate in the merchant service,” (91) and the maid, who “stood five ten in her shoes and was strong as a horse” (91). A deck hand, “hiding a smile at the recollection” (91), tells Marlow, “‘It was for all the world, sir, like a naughty youngster fighting with his mother’” (91). Practical Stanton stops struggling with the girl hoping to save her when the watery rush might tear her from the rail (91-92). Unfortunately, Stanton’s pragmatism, duty, and patience cost him his life. The ship sinks and the survivors “never saw anything alive or dead come up” (92). Like Jim’s, the story of Stanton’s collision is passed on by word of mouth—but as a comic story rather than as a tragic twist of fate and dishonor.

Despite the grim description of the suction of the sinking ship, rather than contemplating Stanton’s death as a tragic loss, Marlow recollects it with amusement, perhaps because Stanton’s gnome-like stature is so unheroic. In contrast to Jim’s tall, blond, blue-eyed, handsome figure dressed impeccably in white, Marlow recalls Stanton as “undersized and bearded to the waist like a gnome” (92). Whereas Stanton’s love life, work as a water-clerk, and death served to amuse Marlow, Jim’s love affair with Jewel, work as a water-clerk, and death saddens and confuses Marlow—revealing, to say the least, a possible double standard at the heart of the manly code to which he subscribes. Immediately after completing the anecdote about Stanton, Marlow incorporates Stanton’s comment that because of the shore work, his “immortal soul shrivelled down to the size of a parched pea after a week” (92). In this manly world, as it were, size matters.
Marlow then returns to the serious topic of Jim's sensitive and suffering soul, the "punishment for the heroics of his fancy—an expiation for his craving after more glamour than he could carry" (92), his larger-than-life stature notwithstanding.

Because Stanton’s final actions are a heroic though comic suicide, Stanton foils and doubles Jim in Conrad’s process of manipulating the reader’s response to Jim. Stanton, the descending gnome, and the “priest”-like (85) French Lieutenant are two true heroes according to the standard of conduct or maritime code of Lord Jim. Marlow’s failure to praise Stanton’s heroism and emphasis on the buffoonery of his heroic endeavor should cause the reader to question Marlow’s authority on heroism and Marlow’s judgment about Jim. The condemnation of Jim by the French Lieutenant, who understands that “‘Man is born a coward’” (90), but who does not, as Marlow first assumes, take “a lenient view” (90) of Jim, also calls into question Marlow’s bias in favor of Jim. The French Lieutenant condemns Jim in terms that foreshadow Doramin’s final and fatal condemnation of Jim at the novel’s end:

He drew up his heavy eyelids.... I was confronted by two narrow grey circlets, like two tiny steel rings around the profound blackness of the pupils. The sharp glance coming from that massive body, gave a notion of extreme efficiency, like a razor-edge on a battle-axe. (90)

Doramin is similarly elderly and massive and the double-barrel gaze of the French Lieutenant, made up of “two narrow grey circlets,” mirrors the pistol barrels that Doramin will later efficiently level at Jim’s chest.

The lieutenant’s final words concern the loss of honor:

I contended that one may get on knowing very well that one’s courage does not come of itself.... There’s nothing much in that to get upset about. One truth the more ought not to make life impossible.... 'But the honour—the honour, monsieur!... The honour... that is real—that is! And what life may be worth when....the honour is gone...—I can offer no opinion. I can offer no opinion—because—monsieur—I know nothing of it.' (90)
The French Lieutenant, like Bob Stanton, knows nothing about life without honor, because he has adhered to the code of honor that applies to all seamen. Had the wounded Patna sunk, the dutiful lieutenant, like Stanton, would have gone down with the ship in the course of his duty. Does this performance of duty make him a hero? Or simply a performer? Neither the lieutenant nor Stanton abandon ship and passengers as Jim does, though both face life-threatening danger. Both the Frenchman and Stanton are “steady reliable men who are the raw material of great reputations… uncounted lives that are buried without drums and trumpets under the foundations of monumental successes” (87), but Marlow only recognizes this reliability and steadfast heroism in the Frenchman. The French Lieutenant adheres to duty when he stays aboard the wounded Patna for thirty heroic hours. Stanton returns to save the crazed girl because it is the proper thing to do. Jim does not do the proper thing when he jumps from the Patna, and whether his suicidal return to Doramin and abandonment of Jewel is the proper thing is one of the most important, and enigmatic, questions raised in the novel.

The French Lieutenant comments that “an honest man… would confess that there is a point… when you let go everything… And you have got to live with that truth…. Given a certain combination of circumstances, fear is sure to come” (89). Despite the circumstances and despite this fear, the seaman must still adhere to a heroic code of conduct. The French Lieutenant seems on the verge of recollecting an anecdote concerning the trying of his own courage when he hastily concludes that one does not die of fear, but that loss of honor is a form of death. He condemns Jim for not performing his duty, as does Captain Brierly, another heroic foil and double of Jim, who participates in the pattern of descents, and considers the loss of honor worse than death. Brierly identifies with Jim as Marlow does, but also recognizes the inefficacy of life without honor as the French Lieutenant does. Guerard attributes Brierly’s destruction to excessive sympathetic identification with Jim. Marlow attributes Brierly’s destruction to “one of those trifles that awaken ideas—start into life some thought with which a man unused to such companionship finds it impossible to live” (36). Jim’s Eastern bride is a potential for heroism and
honor. Brierly’s bride, or companion, is the idea of his own loss of honor, a matter “of the gravest import” (36). He chooses to die at the peak of his honorable career rather than to risk losing his honor through some development of circumstances; Jim chooses to die rather than to lose what honor he has regained in Patusan.

While Jim’s descents begin with a leap from the Patna and end with his walk towards Doramin, Brierly jumps “overboard at sea barely a week after the inquiry...as though on that exact spot in the midst of waters he had suddenly perceived the gates of the other world flung open wide for his reception” (36). Brierly’s submersion, another example of the recurrent motif of descent into an “other world,” is triggered by Jim’s descent on the Patna. Brierly attends Jim’s trial as part of the panel passing judgment on Jim, and soon after passes judgment on himself. Brierly’s discomfort with the proceedings of Jim’s inquiry leads to a consultation with Marlow about Jim. Brierly feels Jim's situation brings shame to the craft, offers financial aid to help Jim leave, and expresses anger that Jim has allowed the inquiry to torture him in this way.

While his interest in Jim’s fate aligns Brierly with Marlow, his identification with Jim and subsequent self-destruction associate him more closely as a double of Jim. Despite his “good-natured and contemptuous pity” of Marlow (36), the latter admits that there is something “indefinite and attractive” about Brierly (36). Similarly, Marlow is attracted to Jim because of his youthful appearance and despite Jim’s fierce egoism. Brierly, like Jim, turns his back on his duty to recover his honor and preserve his heroic image of himself as “Montague Brierly in command of the Ossa” (36). The Ossa is “the crack ship of the Blue Star line” (35) and Big Brierly, at thirty-two, about ten years senior to Jim, “had saved lives at sea, had rescued ships in distress [as did the French Lieutenant], had a gold chronometer presented to him..., and a pair of binoculars with a suitable inscription from some foreign Government, in commemoration of these services” (35-36). Marlow comments that “meek, friendly men” (36) did not usually like Brierly because of his sense of superiority. The image of superiority is what Brierly dies to save.
Brierly’s gray-headed mate shares the details of the night of Brierly’s descent with Marlow. The mate regrets his dislike for Brierly as he recounts the latter’s meticulous care of his ship before his ritual suicide (which foreshadows Jim’s). Brierly—like Marlow and Stein—is also a writer. Brierly records his own demise and he writes the letter to the mate giving instructions regarding the ship’s passage and hints at how to gain command of the Ossa. Brierly charts the fate of the mate of the Ossa with an eloquent letter to be delivered to the Company after his death. Brierly precisely lays down the chart and time “in his neat figures” (37), and instructs the mate, “Thirty-miles more as she goes…and then we shall be clear, and you may alter the course twenty degrees to the southward” (37). The mate, who does not understand Brierly’s exaggerated concern with such details at the time, inherits Brierly’s duties and his dog. Brierly sets the log for his mate, hangs his gold chronometer under the rail, places four iron belaying-pins from the mainmast in his pockets to help him down, and goes over the rail. The gold chronometer marks the spot where time stops for Brierly when he makes his artistic descent, just as time stops for Jim when he descends from the Patna. Like Stanton and the French Lieutenant, Brierly is utilized in the novel to explore the codes defining heroism, and the example of these three men is part of Conrad’s attempt to move the idea of heroism in the direction of artistry; ironically, though, the most artistic of these three heroes is the one whose suicidal course of action (doubling Jim’s) on the surface seems to offer the least potential for a future reinvention of those codes and for any ascent from the abyss of an unheroic underworld back into the clear light of day that the maritime code once seemed to offer a man like Brierly and for which Conrad still seems to hold out some ambivalent hope in Lord Jim.
Having given this synthetic account of how the code of honor functions in the narratives of three heroic doubles in *Lord Jim*, we can return to Patusan and to the last double of Jim: Gentleman Brown. Brown is an egoist who comes straight out of a Romantic tale of South Sea pirates, and one who does what he can to destroy Jim. In the lengthy written tale with which the novel closes (appended to a letter to an unidentified narrator), Marlow resurrects Brown just as he resurrects Jim. After describing a visit to Stein and the ghostly-grieving Jewel, Marlow’s “letter proper ended” (214) and the story of Jim’s final days begins on pages separate from the letter: “It all begins...with the man called Brown” (214). Marlow’s letter introduces Brown as a legendary Romantic figure, like Jim. Brown’s origin is obscure: “he was supposed to be the son of a baronet” (214). Like Jim, he is one about whom stories are told: “he was always trotted out in the stories of lawless life” (214). What distinguishes Brown from “his more celebrated prototypes” like Bully Hayes and Dirty Dick is “the arrogant temper of his misdeeds and a vehement scorn for mankind at large and for his victims in particular” (214). Brown is described as “savage and vengeful” even “in the days of his greatest glory” (215). The climax of Brown’s Romantic tale is the death of his lover: Marlow recounts Brown’s “sombre and violent grief” (215) over the young girl’s body as “the most wonderful part of the tale” (215). After this loss, Brown’s luck changes and he is driven in desperate straits into the storybook world of Patusan. Gentleman Brown is a Romantic figure in a tale, dead before the tale is told, just as Jim is. The similarities do not stop there.

Brown’s loyal Solomon Islander servant is described as a devil with “glittering eyes” (216); the loyalty and efficiency of the Solomon Islander recalls Tamb Itam’s faithful adherence to Jim. While Jim battles the “Dark Powers” to escape his past failure, Brown battles “an adverse
fortune" (215); both men are motivated by an “inconceivable egoism” (239), by “some complex intention” (214). By the time he reaches Patusan, Brown is, like Jim, “tired of his life, and not afraid of death” (216). Jim is imprisoned by his own memory and creates his own prison in Patusan; Brown “stood in mortal fear of imprisonment... the sort of terror a superstitious man would feel at the thought of being embraced by a spectre” (216). Jim embraces the specter of his honor. Desperation drives both men to Patusan. Brown is “running away from the spectre of a Spanish prison” (217), when he attempts to raid Patusan; Jim is fleeing his own dishonor. Like Jim, Brown survives because he surprises the Rajah's stockade. In negotiating with Brown, Jim is seduced into what Albert Guerard defines as self-destructive identification with the desperate pirate. Identifying with Brown destroys Jim, just as identifying with Jim destroys Brierly. Jim cannot “tolerate the presence of his other self, Gentleman Brown, ...[in]... the jungle village to which he [has] fled in quest of a new life far from constant reminders of his past” (Andreach, 58). Jim’s identification with Brown begins when Brown tells Jim, “we are both dead men, and let us talk on that basis as equals” (232). Brown then evokes “an assumption of common experience; a sickening suggestion of common guilt, of secret knowledge that was like a bond of their minds and of their hearts” (235). This association with guilt, secret knowledge, and seductive speaking renders Brown Satan-like.

Marlow introduces Brown in Chapter 37 as a demonic figure gloating on Jim’s destruction upon his deathbed: “I did come upon him a few hours before he gave up his arrogant ghost” (209). Marlow must meet Brown’s gaze, “bear the sunken glare of his fierce, crow-footed eyes” (209), and hear Brown’s confession, if he wants to know how Brown destroyed Jim. In the following chapter, Marlow compares Brown to “some man-beast of folk-lore” (226), who “running his appointed course, ... sails into Jim’s history, a blind accomplice of the Dark Powers” (215). Marlow defines Brown’s egoism as evil and insane: “Certain forms of evil are akin to madness, derived from intense egoism, inflamed by resistance, tearing the soul to pieces” (209). About Jim, Brown says, “he hadn’t devil enough in him to make an end of me” (209).
Brown’s gaze, “yellow eyes out of a long, ragged, brown face” (209), seems canine. The dying Brown is sheltered by “a loafing, fuddled vagabond—a white man living amongst the natives” in a hut with an obese Siamese woman who chews betel in a corner (reminiscent of Doramin’s wife). An unattractive little Buddha, “an ugly, yellow child, naked and pot-bellied like a little heathen god” (210), studies Brown’s dying Satanic form and provides a subtle link between Lord Jim and Heart of Darkness, in which Marlow is the Buddha-like figure telling the tale of Kurtz’s death. Marlow’s presence at the deathbed of Kurtz and the deathbed of Brown links the two characters from the two novels. In fact, a fragmented Kurtz appears in Lord Jim, in the double figures of Jim—supposedly benefiting the natives—and Brown—attempting to exploit them.

Deborah Guth discusses Kurtz’s “Promethean quality” in Heart of Darkness. Brown’s insanely selfish greed contrasts with “the heroic gift of self that is the cornerstone of the Promethean myth” (Guth, 161); yet this “Promethean quality” applies both to Jim and to Brown. Jim and Brown are foils and doubles: Jim reflects the suffering self-sacrifice and Brown reflects the anger of Promethean transgression (“Like the ancient hero he is a symbol of daring and transgression, a lone forerunner,” Guth notes, “reflecting through his extreme suffering the anger of the powers he has defied”). Prometheus and Satan are both isolated and disobedient mythic archetypes or rebels. Guth compares Kurtz to Lucifer; Brown is described by Marlow as a devil. Brown certainly destroys the Romantic balance of life in Patusan much as Satan destroys paradise.

Dying, demonic Brown turns artist, confessing to Marlow his own tale of Jim’s destruction. Like Jim, Gentleman Brown is both art (narrated) and artist (narrator); he descends into and emerges from the underworld of Patusan in order to maintain an ideal image of himself, yet unlike Jim, Brown is not Christ-like but Satanic, aligned with the “Dark Powers” that confront Jim. Like Marlow and Jim, Brown is compelled to tell his tale: “He talked feverishly; but in the middle of a word...an invisible hand would take him by the throat, and he would look at me dumbly with an expression of doubt and anguish” (210). Brown’s narrative, like Marlow’s and Jim’s, is a necessary confession. He is compelled to tell his tale: “He seemed to fear that I would
get tired of waiting and go away, leaving him with his tale untold, with his exultation unexpressed” (210). Like Marlow, Brown resurrects Jim in his confessional narrative; like Jim, Brown is compelled to confess to Marlow.

Joseph Dobrinsky has argued that Jim, Marlow and Stein are the novel’s three primary protagonists who double each other, but his argument fails to take into additional account the fact that Brown is the dark double of all three. Brown is a crucial figure in the mythic substructure of the novel and in Conrad’s sacralization of the artist. Like Stein, Brown lost a young and beautiful love. Like the typical demon-lover archetype, Brown seduced the “wife of a missionary, a very young girl from Clapham” (215), away from her husband and to an early death; she dies soon after boarding Brown’s ship. Brown’s fierce antagonism towards Jim echoes Marlow’s distaste for Jim during their first interview. Like Jim and Stein, Brown is a legendary Romantic figure. Guerard’s discussion of Jim’s fatal identification with Brown emphasizes the latter’s role as Jim’s double. Though at times he faintly echoes Marlow, Brown strongly doubles both Jim and Stein, perhaps because more explicit mythic undertones construct his character. Brown’s artistry is not restricted to tale-telling and writing like Marlow’s artistry; Brown both tells his tale and lives his Romantic vision of himself, much as Jim and Stein do. While Jim creates a world, Brown—Miltonic in his rage and isolation—causes Jim to fall and destroys the world Jim has created. Brown’s destruction of this world and of Jim subverts the efficacy of Jim’s dream and his function as a Christ-like figure. Jim’s self-sacrificing death as a result of Brown’s treachery lacks the strong redemptive resonance of Christ’s sacrificial death.

All four characters—Jim, Marlow, Stein, and Brown—as both artists and mythic archetypes, participate in the novel’s pattern of descents and returns. In their roles as artists these characters double each other and the various mythic archetypes they evoke reinforce and echo one other to strengthen the mythic substructure of the novel. These doubles represent the dead and resurrected gods of the various descents and multiple underworlds of Lord Jim. While Jim, Brown, and Stein evoke one vegetative god or another—Christ, Satan, and Hades respectively—Marlow, like
Orpheus, descends and returns with a tale, while subtly doubling these more fertile, mythic figures.
(xi) Conrad’s Artists:

Sacred Weavers of Words

As just stated, critics such as Dobrinsky and David Lynn have pointed out Conrad’s artistic triptych of Marlow, Stein, and Jim. Marlow, Stein, and Jim represent three disparate fragments of Conrad’s artistic identity, functioning as layered symbols of the quest for psychological or artistic maturity in Lord Jim (Lynn, 27). These three artists form a sacred if fragmented artistic trinity that echoes the minor trio of heroes—Stanton, the French Lieutenant, and Brierly—that I examined in the section on heroic codes of conduct. Stein, Marlow and Jim form an artistic triptych of the father, son and the Holy Ghost opposed by Brown’s Satanic form. In Orphic Stein, God and Hades meet. Marlow, solely Orphic, resurrects both Jim and Stein. Jim, both Orphic and Christian (predominantly Christian), both Romantic and modern, recreates a paradise for himself in Patusan after his Fall from the Patna—Brown destroys it.

As doubles, Stein and Marlow are both patriarchal figures guiding and then mourning Jim. For both Stein and Marlow, grief inspires art. Ghostly Stein has lost a wife and child and loses a son in Jim. Marlow’s voice is rendered hushed and distant as Stein’s in recounting his loss of Jim through the disruptions in his narrative. Stein, little more than a ghost, “a [R]omantic model who belongs already to a vanishing era” (Lynn, 37), waves farewell at the novel’s end, releasing the reins of master artist to Marlow. Marlow and Stein double each other and both also double Jim. Marlow evokes both Stein and Jim when he refers to himself paradoxically as a ghost recounting Jim’s tale: “and have I not stood up once, like an evoked ghost, to answer for his eternal constancy?” (253). Marlow’s life differs from Jim’s Romantic aspirations and achievements, while Stein has actually lived the life of a Romantic hero.
Stein's Romantic idealism has led him to Patusan, and he sends Jim along the same journey. In Patusan, a native befriends Stein. Like Jim and Dain Warris, Stein and his best friend, Mohammed Bonso "both became the heroes of innumerable exploits" (125). The natives recall these exploits for years afterwards. Stein, like Jim, inherits his role as trader in Patusan from a father-figure, an old Dutch traveler and trader, who leads the young Stein into the council-hall before the queen and declares Stein his son (125). Stein's tale of the princess's warning against his traveling alone and his successful defense against the ambushing assassins recalls Jewel's warning and Jim's defense against would-be assassins. Stein's dead princess and daughter link him to Jim by echoing Jewel and her dead mother. The ring that Stein gives to Jim is a sign to Doramin to treat Jim as he would Stein. When Marlow says goodbye to Stein in the few paragraphs after Jim's death has been chronicled, the reference to one dead Romantic hero implies the waning of the elder. Stein composes the final enigmatic image of Lord Jim as he "'waves his hand sadly at his butterflies'" (253). Stein, like Jim, has been resurrected through Marlow's Orphic tale, and Stein, like Jim, must be left behind in the world of shades.

Dobrinsky posits Stein as the "Conradian exemplar of the artist, in the nature of his gift, his devotion to his work, the inner springs of his vision, his specific mode of utterance, and the enviable strength achieved in the process" (33). Stein is a gifted explorer "whose cryptic pronouncements Marlow has journeyed far to hear and act upon" (28). Marlow defers to Stein as to a master artist until the end of the novel when Stein retires with Jewel in a house of shades. The mature Stein has metamorphosed from the young and Romantic adventurer and colonial exploiter to the sedentary and objectively distanced oracular speaker and artist. Stein is a Romantic figure who has led a heroic life and made the descent of the mythic hero into Patusan/Hades, where a heroine—the princess—served as the agent of life and death. Like Orpheus, Stein emerges from the underworld without his mate and having lost his virility. A "shadow prowling amongst the graves of butterflies" (130), Stein emerges to a death in life similar to Jewel's. After leaving Patusan, Stein's "tall form, as though robbed of its substance,
hovered noiselessly over invisible things with stooping and indefinite movements” (130). As an artist or writer, Stein is thus identified with Hades, a keeper of the dead who is described with demiurgic undertones. There is no place in the modern world for Stein’s Romanticism, anymore so than there is for Jim’s. Both characters belong to the subterranean realm to which Conrad’s Orphic artist descends to dig for the roots of mankind’s sense of wonder.

Dobrinsky’s analysis of Conrad’s artists in The Artist in Conrad’s Fiction: A Psychocritical Study recognizes Marlow, Jim, and Stein as the three primary protagonists and symbolic artists in Lord Jim, and usefully comments on Stein’s role in the novel; however, in addition to neglecting Gentleman Brown’s anti-heroic art of destruction, Dobrinsky also fails to take into account Stein’s passing of the reins to Marlow. In ignoring the arresting voice of the Satanic and withering artist Brown and Marlow’s ascendance to master artist, Dobrinsky fails to address the full scope and function of the mythic substructure of Lord Jim. Like Stein and Jim, Brown belongs to a world of Romantic adventure tales that cannot last and evokes the mythology of the slain and resurrected gods. Brown’s bitter rebellion against mankind evokes Stein’s parable about the man who struggles against, rather than immersing himself in, his destructive element. Brown never seeks renewal—he is destruction and self-destruction. Brown is the destroyer, the angry god who slays himself. Stein is a Romantic and a dying shade, a slain god; Jim also is a slain god, Romantic and Christian—out-dated and inefficacious. Marlow is the Orphic artist resurrected in their stead.

Dobrinsky accurately depicts Marlow’s initial disciple-like subordination of his artistic ability to that of Stein, because Marlow acknowledges the stronger focus, better judgment, and experience of a master artist in Stein. Marlow describes Stein’s ability to see beyond the mortal, commenting on

the intense, almost passionate absorption with which he looked at a butterfly, as though on the bronze sheen of these frail wings, in the white tracings, in the gorgeous markings,
he could see other things, an image of something as perishable and defying destruction as these delicate and lifeless tissues displaying a splendor unmarred by death. (126)

Marlow attributes this Romantic image-vision to both Stein and Jim, but never to himself; he explicitly denies that he possesses any imagination. Though the white tracings and the gorgeous markings of Stein’s butterfly have been translated by some critics as a metaphor for the written page, the focus of the passage is nonetheless Stein’s recording of his Romantic vision. Stein’s Romantic vision enables him to see more than what is there and to live according to his Romantic image of himself. Unlike Jim, Stein can look beyond himself to see that image in others. In Jim and in the other specimens he collects, Stein sees the image defying destruction, unmarred by death. This image Stein catalogs and collects and describes in writing, much as Marlow does despite his lack of Romantic experience. Jim is captured in death, by both Stein and Marlow, as an image defying destruction and unmarred by death.

While Marlow denies that he possesses such vision, he too is a re-collector of souls in the name of art. Marlow recollects and calls up ghosts, accepts confessions, consults with priests, and tells elegiac tales. Marlow does not record what he imagines Jim to be, but what he sees, in an effort to make his audience see Jim. Instead of imagination, Marlow attempts to perceive truth. Marlow’s repeated attempts to scrutinize Jim reiterate the younger man’s inscrutability and result in a catalog of images fraught with the rhetoric of enigma. His elegiac tales contain the images of perfect specimens defying destruction and unmarred by death, recorded, passed on, like Stein’s insects (in a process of cataloguing that is, notwithstanding its Romantic genealogy, ironically complicit with the modern “order of things” being institutionalized through nineteenth-century scientific discourse). Marlow may praise Stein’s vision but the reason Marlow defers to Stein’s artistry in Jim’s case is actually Stein’s experience—Stein has been the Romantic hero and lived his vision. In the subterranean gloom of his home, Stein rescues a fragment of truth (to recall Conrad’s Nigger Preface) concerning Jim’s nature. The air of hushed sanctity that surrounds
Stein’s work and utterances convey Marlow’s reverence for Stein and Conrad’s reverence for the artist as the true Conradian hero in Conrad’s modern mythology.

Together, Stein’s reverence for Nature as the great artist and Marlow’s reverence for Stein sacralize the role of the artist, even though neither Nature nor Stein can survive the transition into the modern world from which Marlow is compelled to write, and rewrite, them. Carrying his specimen in a glass case “religiously to its place, passing out of the bright circle of the lamp into the ring of fainter light—into shapeless dusk at last” (130), Stein recedes into the darkness much as Marlow describes Jim doing. It is significant that Marlow takes the question of Jim’s survival to Stein, to an artist. Marlow’s narrative posits Jim’s loss of honor and of the Romantic as “the great evil” for which he and Stein together must find “a practical remedy” (131). The great evil for which Marlow must actually find a remedy, however, is the evil of modernity, and Stein cannot guide him in this. If codes of conduct, values and belief systems are relative, how is modern man to define his existence and satisfy his needs for wonder and for order? Another great evil in Lord Jim seems to be the conflict of the Romantic (the hero that Jim—and maybe Marlow, vicariously—wants to be) and the modern (the consciousness that denies the possibility of such heroism). The novel’s encounter with the modern and its discovery of Modernism—fraught with “the waning of certainty, the fading of vision, the absence of final truth” (in Ian Watt’s words)—produce and chronicle the existential dilemma of how to be.

Stein’s final words dramatize the absence of final truth: “There were things, he said mournfully, that perhaps could never be told” (130). He certainly cannot tell Marlow the answer to the modern dilemma of how to be. Marlow, too, offers no remedy to the modern dilemma—except for a tale that repeatedly indicates the importance of the storyteller in conveying and grappling with this dilemma. Despite the inefficacy of language to communicate the mystery behind the veil of the visible world, Conrad still reverences the weaving of words in the passionate effort to produce truth.
The power of art, of the word, both spoken and written, is a central theme in Lord Jim. The power of words to resuscitate and to destroy is inherent in Lord Jim's patterns of descent and return and in the primary triptych of artists. Because Marlow is first described in the third person, then becomes a first-person narrator, he too seems to be brought to life by the original unidentified narrator of the text. In this way, Marlow himself is resuscitated and then becomes a resuscitator. His elegiac text resuscitates a series of mythic doubles of himself and each other. Marlow remarks on the power of his words to influence Jim's fate: "I had a sense of responsibility. If I spoke, would that motionless and suffering youth leap into the obscurity?" (106). "There is a weird power in the spoken word" (106), Marlow notes, while in the process of writing letters that will decide Jim's fate; "And a word carries far—very far—deals destruction through time as the bullets go flying through space" (106), he adds. The power of Marlow's spoken and written words effectively resuscitates Jim, decides Jim's fate, but also destroys Jim. Marlow's words become Doremin's bullets, killing the hero off in an enigmatic gesture of resuscitation.

The exploration of Jim's heroic dilemma may begin and end in a "persistently inconclusive and interrogative note" (Watt, 310), but the narrative consistently points attention back to Marlow's art of weaving words. Marlow's artistry includes the oral and written tale that resuscitates and destroys Jim into a hero of sorts. When telling the tale of Jim, "Marlow's body, extended at rest in the seat, would become very still, as though his spirit had winged its way back into the lapse of time and were speaking through his lips from the past" (21). Marlow's text functions as the Orphic song to bring Jim/Eurydice back from the past and into the light for close scrutiny. Close scrutiny of the Romantic is fraught with paradox, as in the case of Patusan, the Romantic land that must be out of focus because it cannot sustain modern scrutiny. Patusan is part of that lonely region of stress and strife where Jim goes to make his appeal to the subtle and invincible solidarity that binds together the dead to the living. Marlow has known the living Jim but is now on a quest to call forth the dead Jim. Marlow's text/song opens the underworld and sustains this opening as it disjoints time to resuscitate an image of Jim. Marlow calls his own
narrative, “an unhealthy curiosity...the laying of what is the most obstinate ghost of man’s creation...more chilling than the certitude of death” (31); this Orphic narrative leads forth the ghost of Jim while simultaneously obscuring him. Marlow’s oral tale resurrects Jim, but his written account records, like Stein, Jim’s death. Marlow ascends from Patusan and from the underworld of Stein’s home, but he is forever locked in his own text, in the creation and loss of Jim, in the sacred weaving of words that order the chaos—in the Orphic dilemma.
In Lord Jim’s series of confessions—indicative of the sacred and necessary function of tale-telling as truth-producing—Marlow is both compelled to confess to characters like the French Lieutenant and to Stein, and he is sometimes reluctant confessor for a number of characters. Marlow first receives the confession of the engineer of the Patna, then Jim’s confessions in the Malabar House and in Marlow’s room. Brierly’s interview and subsequent suicide is a form of confession. Brierly’s subordinate from the Ossa confesses to Marlow, and Brown also confesses to him from his deathbed. Confessions are rituals evocative of religious redemption. Because of the Christian undertones, the ritual of confession reiterates the mythic substructure of the novel and reiterates as well the theme of the artist as a producer, or weaver, of truth.

Michel Foucault, in his History of Sexuality, describes the dynamics of confession as reconstitution, as a “production of truth” (Foucault, 65) and a constitution of subjectivity. “The confession,” he states, “is a ritual discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement” (Foucault, 61):

It is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence...of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistances it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it.... (Foucault, 61-62) The modifications in the interlocutor of a Christian disposition involve redemption and self-constitution. Both Jim and the engineer suffer from guilt and desire some form of redemption.
Brierly wants to redeem faith in the honor of his profession and reputation. The first mate of the *Ossa* confesses to Marlow out of guilt over misjudging Brierly. Brown confesses to Marlow for purposes of exultation rather than redemption. Marlow confesses to the “priest”-like French Lieutenant in an effort to redeem Jim, and to the reader in an effort to make the reader understand Jim.

Through these acts of confession, the tale gains more truth—or at least the appearance of it—and yet at the same time more subjectivity. The subjectivity of the confessing character is reconstituted and truth is affirmed and produced. Marlow’s own tale is in this way corroborated and his subjectivity confirmed. When one character is compelled to confess, the interlocutor is compelled to comprehend, to understand, especially in the case of Marlow and Jim. The reader is likewise compelled according to the ritual of confession to understand Marlow and the tale he confesses, even though this understanding opens the reader up to a truth that is ultimately “unchartable.” The subjectivity of each successive confessor is at the heart of Conrad’s impressionism, undermining any objective reality or interpretation of the series of events that determine Jim’s fate, and yet forcing us—both consciously and unconsciously (Frederick Karl notes that literary impressionism uses verbal modes that “are connected to the release of the unconscious” [133])—to participate in the reality of the confessor’s subjectivity. Conrad draws the reader into his text as a participant, the interlocutor who hears a series of confessions, including Marlow’s, and whose final judgment of Jim will be determined by both conscious and unconscious variables that are secreted by Conrad’s enigmatic text.

Marlow’s ambivalent feelings about Jim’s Romantic condition are reflected in his “struggle to understand and to communicate” (Fraser, 42), to absorb and to recount Jim’s confessions and tale:

One of the reasons for the interrogative and retrospective aspects of Marlow’s narration in *Lord Jim* is the duty imposed upon Marlow by Jim to ‘understand,’ and the more Marlow demonstrates his struggle to comprehend, the more clearly the reader perceives his commitment. Thus, Marlow tells us that “I cannot say that I had ever seen him
distinctly—not even to this day, after I had my last view of him; but it seemed to me that the less I understood the more I was bound to him in the name of that doubt which is the inseparable part of our knowledge.” (Fraser, 42).

Like Marlow, the less the reader easily understands about Jim, the more the reader is similarly bound in solidarity to try to do so. Likewise, the less the reader understands Marlow, the more he is bound to attempt to do so. Marlow and Jim form a composite hero amid a complicated overlapping of doubles. To understand one, the reader must understand the other—indeed, all the others, who in contradictory fragments reflect an heroic self that can never again be viewed whole.

The moral chaos of the modern age fragments the modern identity, disassembling and isolating the heroic self; can these fragments of identity be reassembled, and solidarity be renewed? Ian Watt poses these questions when he argues that Lord Jim represents, through “the tale of friendship” (Watt, 336), the fragmentation of the modern age. In Jim, Watt sees the youth of a civilization and in Marlow he sees the experience of the modern age. Watt defines the friendship between Jim and Marlow as dominated by “elements of separateness, incompleteness, and misunderstanding which are reflections not only of the personal idiosyncrasies of Jim and Marlow but of some of the characteristic social and intellectual divisions of the modern world” (Watt, 336). Watt acknowledges that Conrad’s impressionist presentation of Jim and Marlow in Lord Jim forces the reader to participate “in its existential realities, realities which are so distinctly representative of the difficulties and doubts of the modern [experience]” (Watt, 337). Lord Jim begins in the past tense and ends in the present tense, a “complex communion of youth and age” (Watt, 319). Jim is a mirror for Marlow, who is a mirror for the reader, and Conrad offers no conclusion to the mystery of existence other than asserting the need for solidarity and the sacred function of the artist in communicating this need, despite the divisions that his text must lay bare—divisions that do not, however, preclude moments of communion, and confession. When Marlow “fulfills the responsibility he assumed early on for Jim with a portrait capturing
without diminishing the contradictions of his character” (Lynn, 29), he also captures the contradictions of his own character, and of the modern character; it is this “responsibility” of self-portraiture (confession) through portraying others that may sum up Conrad’s efforts in Lord Jim at maintaining a positive (Romantic?) emphasis on solidarity in the face of the fragmenting experience of modernity.

Marlow himself is both Romantic and modern in the sense that he, like Conrad, is a modern artist in possession of a certain nostalgia for the Romantic tradition. Strauss notes in Lord Jim the “modern pathos of time and history” (Strauss, 13) and how it contrasts with the Romantic period’s “quest for the lost or forgotten self” (Strauss, 13). In resurrecting Jim, Marlow is resurrecting—confessing to—a lost, Romantic self, escaping time and history only to return repeatedly to that from which he is escaping. Marlow returns to Jim’s past (which is also his own) and then returns to his present, but exactly what Marlow returns with must remain questionable.

Is the knowledge Marlow carries out of Lord Jim a source of renewal, or a burdensome, unspeakable vision about the absence of truth? Critics have given positive responses to both of these questions, but my own inclination has been to emphasize the first position, finding meaning in the heroic and artistic acts of creation in the novel, and in the enigmatic solidarity they make possible.

Commenting on Conrad’s A Personal Record, Gail Fraser gives a sense of this justification of the artist’s creation in positive as opposed to nihilistic terms, recognizing the sacred role of the artist in ordering the chaos of modern experience for mankind:

> the sole moral justification for a ‘spectacular’ world is to be found in man’s ‘unwearied self-forgetful attention to every phase of the living universe reflected in our consciousness,’ the task being ‘to bear true testimony’ actively and without despair.

(Fraser, 71)

Marlow’s tale is not characterized by despair but by the determination to make some meaning out of chaos and by the sacredness of such a purpose. “Confronting the mystery of being,” Andreach
notes, “constitutes a religious experience: the feelings experienced by the limited before the unlimited, before one’s soul or that of another person” (Andreach, 49). Marlow’s tale is his confrontation with the mystery of being. Marlow repeatedly implies that descent is necessary for the construction of his tale. Certainly, Jim’s descents and death are necessary for his Romantic construction of himself and for the legendary quality of the construction of Marlow’s tale. The artist must descend as the mythic hero does to face the death or meaninglessness in himself in order to construct a meaningful tale or existence out of this meaninglessness. Marlow descends and faces the chaos embodied by his past self, Jim, in an artistic gesture that David Lynn has fittingly described as “faint, private, and, nevertheless, heroic” (Lynn, 37).
(xiii) **Conclusion: “Death of the Author” and Orphic Descent**

One last word in conclusion. Lynn’s description of Marlow’s artistic gesture of confession is reminiscent in some ways of what Roland Barthes had to say in his essay “The Death of the Author.” In that essay, Barthes connects writing or recounting to death:

> once a fact is recounted—for intransitive purposes, and no longer to act directly upon reality, i.e., exclusive of any function except that exercise of the symbol itself—this gap appears, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins.

(Barthes, 142)

This statement is of obvious relevance to the pattern of Orphic descent in *Lord Jim*. By the tale’s end, “Jim dead and Patusan dismembered, each surviving only through the narrative, Marlow himself has become incorporeal, no longer even a voice in the darkness, but withdrawn to written testimony for a solitary audience” (Lynn, 37). The “facts” have been recounted, and Marlow disappears into the seams of his written narrative. Barthes calls writing “that neuter, that composite, that obliquity into which our subject flees, the black-and-white where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes” (Barthes, 142). His argument is similar to that of Blanchot in “The Gaze of Orpheus” and also recalls Allon White’s discussion of the rhetoric of enigma, in which he argues that Jim only exists in the seams of Marlow’s narrative as an absence indicative of mystery—an absence that becomes visible through this act of recounting. Like Jim, Marlow also eventually becomes an absence indicative of mystery, lost in the obliquity of Conrad’s text.

The artist and narrator Marlow suffers the death of the author along with the rebirth of the mythic hero through the ritual reenactment of his tale, his link to mankind. Characters such as Jim and Brown become completely the *other*—Eurydices, slain gods who do not
emerge from the darkness—and ultimately Marlow himself must “die” and become other to himself in order for this mythic recounting to happen. The artists in Conrad’s Marlovian trilogy *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* have the Orphic “power that causes the night to open” (Blanchot, 99) for the modern reader, who by meeting the gaze of the unknown, the gaze of Orpheus, may find death and death-in-life, but also redemption and rebirth—all of the contradictions of the modern experience, indeed, along with the promise of an enigmatic connection, “faint” but nevertheless “heroic,” to one’s fellow man.
Works Cited


VITA

Sonya Fay Willie