

Spring 1998

"They Always Leave Us': Lord Jim, Colonialist Discourse, and Conrad's Magic Naturalism

Richard Ruppel

Chapman University, ruppel@chapman.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/english_articles



Part of the [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#), and the [Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ruppel, Richard. "They always leave us': Lord Jim, Colonialist Discourse, and Conrad's Magic Naturalism." *Studies in the Novel*. 30.1 (Spring 1998): 50-62.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Chapman University Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Faculty Articles and Research by an authorized administrator of Chapman University Digital Commons. For more information, please contact laughtin@chapman.edu.

"They Always Leave Us': Lord Jim, Colonialist Discourse, and Conrad's Magic Naturalism

Comments

This is a pre-copy-editing, author-produced PDF of an article accepted for publication in *Studies in the Novel*, volume 30, issue 1, in 1998 following peer review. This article may not exactly replicate the final published version.

Copyright

Johns Hopkins University Press

“They always leave us’: *Lord Jim*, Colonialist Discourse, and Conrad's Magic Naturalism”
***Studies in the Novel*. 30.1 (Spring 1998): 50-62. Richard Ruppel**

Lord Jim is full of thumbnail biographies that give the reader a pleasant sense of overcrowding, as though the book might open out in some new direction at any moment to follow the lives and tribulations of some new set of characters. Captain Elliot, the Master Attendant of the port where the *Patna* is towed and where the infamous crew of the *Patna* winds up, gives the *Patna's* captain a thorough dressing down - "chewed him up very small, so to speak," Marlow says, "and - ah! ejected him" (25).¹ He is near retirement and can say what he likes to whomever he likes. But he has three homely daughters, and his only remaining care is to see them married off. Little Bob Stanton gives up his life as a chief mate in the merchant marine to marry the woman he loves and ends up selling insurance which, as he tells his sea-faring comrades, shrivelled his soul "to the size of a parched pea" after two weeks. He drowns trying to save a lady's maid in the *Sephora* disaster (91). Poor Selvin, Marlow's own chief mate, is "an excellent man all round" but given to jealous rages when his wife's letters are late (95).

Perhaps the most shadowy of these brief biographies is that of the father of Jim's paramour, Jewel. All we know of him is that he left Jewel's mother, and that she was therefore forced to marry the unspeakable Cornelius. Marlow speculates that "convention" might have caused the separation between Jewel's mother and father (168), and this probably means that Jewel's father was white. The strongest indirect evidence of his whiteness, however, can be found in Jewel's unshakeable belief, proved true in the story, that Jim, the white man, will leave her - just as Jewel's father, a white man, left her mother, a non-white woman. When Marlow seeks to convince her that Jim will stay with her forever, she replies "They always leave us" (188). "They" must refer to white men, "us" to non-white women. Jewel's maternal grandfather was also white, and he was married - or not married - to Jewel's maternal grandmother, who was not white. This relationship, too, seems to have ended unhappily - the grandfather, a "brilliantly endowed" man, ended his career "under a cloud" (168-69). Jewel's distrust of any liaison with a white man was therefore quite well founded since both her mother and maternal grandmother had suffered in mixed-race relationships. So when she begs Jim to go away before he has gotten himself firmly established in Patusan, she seeks not only to save his life, but also to save herself

from what must become a doomed, heart-breaking relationship with a white man. This is what Marlow must mean when he guesses that it was Jim's "danger that was foremost in her thoughts - even if she wanted to save herself, too - perhaps unconsciously" (189).

Today, this information about Jewel's origins and her great fear that Jim will desert her because he is white and she is not must be gleaned rather painstakingly from the novel. But Conrad's contemporary readers would have understood her situation and her fear immediately, for the instability of white/non-white romances is a very common trope of late-nineteenth century colonialist fiction. In colonialist stories, the white man always leaves, and the non-white woman often knows that he will. The most representative writer of colonialist fiction from the turn of the century, Rudyard Kipling, has the Indian woman, Ameera, tell the British civil servant, Holden, that he will leave her in, "Without Benefit of Clergy." This is something that she, like Jewel, has learned from her mother. Holden never gets the chance to desert her, however, since Ameera dies of cholera three or four years into their relationship. But Englishmen leave Indian women in other of Kipling's stories, such as "Lisbeth," "Kidnapped," and "Georgie Porgie," and all but one of such inter-racial relationships in his fiction are doomed. (The otherwise undistinguished "Yoked with an Unbeliever" is the one exception.) While researching material from the 1890's for an extended work on popular colonial discourse, I read through hundreds of colonialist short stories in British literary magazines, and not one of the many exotic love stories I came upon ended happily.

The doomed nature of Jim and Jewel's romance is only one of the many colonialist tropes in *Lord Jim*. These tropes are concentrated in the Patusan half of the novel, and they have helped to make readers feel that the two halves are incompatible. Other critics, noted below, have pointed out several of these tropes already, but in the first part of this paper I will categorize them systematically and introduce some that I believe have gone unnoticed. I will conclude with a contribution to the debate surrounding *Lord Jim*'s two part structure, suggesting that Conrad placed Jim in Patusan to give free rein to Jim's romanticism. Patusan, in this reading, becomes a magically naturalistic site, a laboratory where Jim can impose his imagination freely upon his environment. This not only provides Conrad the opportunity to show how potentially destructive the unchecked romantic imagination can be; it also reveals the destructiveness and ultimate

futility of the colonialist's imperial dream, a dream that is one expression of the European, romantic imagination.²

The most formulaic colonialist representations in *Lord Jim* are of non-white peoples and cultures.³ The captain of Jim's voyage to Patusan is the "dapper little half-caste" skipper of one of Stein's brigantines, who has a "face the colour of lemon-peel," a "thin little black moustache drooping on each side of his thick, dark lips," and whose "flowing English seemed to be derived from a dictionary compiled by a lunatic" (146). Since he will ferry Jim from a white world to a non-white world, the fact that he is half-white and half-non-white seems appropriate. The fact that he is a ludicrous but also sinister figure makes him entirely conventional, and so is Marlow's ironic appreciation of his malapropian English. "Half-castes" are often ludicrous or sinister or both in colonialist fiction. Marlow's disgusted description of the "third-class deputy resident," who has heard that Jim is in Patusan and has got hold of some fabulous gem, is also typical, though it is more comically grotesque than usual: He is a "big, fat, greasy, blinking fellow, . . . with turned-out, shiny lips" whom Marlow finds "lying extended on his back in a cane chair, odiously unbuttoned" (170). And it is entirely appropriate that the repulsive and abject Cornelius, also a "half-caste," would connive in but not be the agent of Jim's death. Other examples of so-called "half-castes" in colonialist fiction include the silly and dirty "Miss Vezzis" and her beau, Michele D'Cruze in Kipling's "His Chance in Life," and a vaguely troubling landlord and trader named Horn in Somerset Maugham's short story, "Rain."

Dain Waris represents another trope in colonialist fiction, what I call the faithful, "intermediate native." The prototype is Friday from *Robinson Crusoe*, and his successors persist to this day in popular film. These figures are often lighter-skinned than their fellow countrymen, and they are superior to them in every way. Their most characteristic act is to die fighting for their white masters and/or war-comrades. They often act literally as middle-men between the white protagonists and their countrymen: as foremen, petty officers, or headmen of caravans. Kipling's work is full of them: there is Peroo in "The Bridge-Builders," Bukta in "The Tomb of His Ancestors," and Billy Fish in "The Man Who Would Be King."

Dain Waris is a nearly complete example of the type. Doramin is the most impressive leader in Patusan, and, as Doramin's son, Dain Waris has a pedigree suitable to be the companion of the

white protagonist. Marlow says of him that "his own people said with pride that he knew how to fight like a white man," and Marlow confirms their judgment by adding, "This was true." In colonialist fiction, any judgment of this sort would need to be confirmed in this way by a white onlooker or by the narrative itself. Marlow elaborates on Dain's many "white" qualities:

he had that sort of courage - the courage in the open, I may say - but
he had also a European mind. You meet them sometimes like that,
and are surprised to discover unexpectedly a familiar turn of thought,
an unobscured vision, a tenacity of purpose, a touch of altruism.

Physically, Dain Waris also matches the type, for he is "Of small stature, but admirably well proportioned, [with] a proud carriage, a polished, easy bearing, a temperament like a clear flame" (160).

He is the perfect second. After Sherif Ali is defeated, Dain helps Jim appoint new head-men of the surrounding villages (166). If Jim were not such a thoroughly altruistic ruler in Patusan, we might suspect that Jim uses Dain's knowledge and connections in this way to consolidate his own power. This is the way white men make use of faithful subordinates in colonialist fiction. When Gentleman Brown and his men first descend on Patusan, Dain is in charge and would like to attack them - an example, one may suppose, of his "unobscured," European vision - but the other Patusan leaders overrule him. We do not blame him, of course, but the resulting tragedy is therefore as much Dain's failure as Jim's. Had he shown more decisive leadership the community would have been safe. Faithful intermediates are almost never shown in positions of absolute authority, however, so it is no wonder that most readers place the blame for the resultant tragedy exclusively on Jim.

The cruel, corrupt, and contemptible Oriental despot is another persistent trope (one that the American press continues to apply to leaders of so-called third-world countries that defy the United States). Literary examples in Conrad's time include those who appear in stories and novels by Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling, and later in Edgar Rice Burrough's *Tarzan* series. Both the trope of the faithful intermediate and the Oriental despot were also represented in the non-fiction of the time. Conrad would have encountered them regularly in his morning newspaper.

The Rajah Tanku Allang meets the qualifications of the Oriental despot as fully as Dain Waris meets those of the faithful intermediate. Indeed, Conrad seems to have delighted in exaggerating the figure until the Rajah very nearly becomes a parody of the trope. Marlow introduces him as "a dirty, little, used-up old man with evil eyes and a weak mouth, who swallowed an opium pill every two hours, and in defiance of common decency wore his hair uncovered and falling in wild, stringy locks about his wizened, grimy face." The Rajah holds court in "a ruinous barn with a rotten bamboo floor, through the cracks of which you could see . . . the heaps of refuse and garbage of all kinds lying under the house" (140). His soldiers have been waylaying and robbing people, so Jim makes a state visit to read him a lecture in public morality. "A shaking fury seemed to enter [the Rajah's] old, frail body," after Jim mentions one incident of extortion. "He writhed weirdly on his mat, gesticulating with his hands and feet, tossing the tangled strings of his mop - an impotent incarnation of rage" (153). Before Jim temporarily sets things right in Patusan, the Rajah's "cruelty and rapacity had no other bounds than his cowardice He struck at [Doramin] through his subjects, and thought himself pathetically in the right" (157). Oriental rulers were inevitably like this in turn-of-the-century stories and in the popular press; they indulged in every vice, ruled incompetently, and imposed extortionate taxes on their long-suffering people.

Words like "inert," "static," and "unchanging" nearly always adhere to late-nineteenth century descriptions of Eastern and African nations and cultures. While the West moves along with the great sweep of history, Africa and the East remain apart from that movement, unable even to look forward. Only contact with the West will allow them to progress socially, economically, politically, or, the missionaries would say, spiritually. Conrad provides the reader with a sense of going *backward* in time in his two African stories, "Outpost of Progress" and *Heart of Darkness*. In his Malay fiction, however, the impression is more of *stasis*. In *Lord Jim*, when Marlow is about to leave Jim and Patusan for the last time, he tells us that he is leaving a world that will never change to join a world in motion. He was going back to England, he says, "to the world where events move, men change, light flickers, life flows in a clear stream But as to what I was leaving behind, I cannot imagine any alteration" (200).⁴

Jim's transforming influence in Patusan and his relationship with his people there make him

the heir of the historical Rajah Brooke of Sarawak as well as Daniel Dravot (the man who would be king), Case, the evil trader and de facto ruler of the island in Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Beach of Falesa," and the infamous Mr. Kurtz. Unlike these other [fictional] imperialists, however, Jim's influence is entirely benign. After he defeats the Sheriff, he curtails the evil graspings of the Rajah, ends all the internecine warfare that characterized Patusan before his arrival, and even settles domestic disputes. His success, Jim tells Marlow, was "immense," and the power he gained over the lives of what became "his" people, Marlow adds in confirmation, was also immense:

the seal of success upon his words, the conquered ground for the soles of his feet, the blind trust of men, . . . the solitude of his achievement. . . . I can't with mere words convey to you the impression of his total and utter isolation. I know, of course, he was in every sense alone of his kind there, but the unsuspected qualities of his nature had brought him in such close touch with his surroundings that this isolation seemed only the effect of his power. His loneliness added to his stature. There was nothing within sight to compare him with. (166)

Jim's ability to lead, to judge, and to administrate came to him, Marlow tells us, "like keen scent to a well-bred hound" (152). Jim's splendid isolation in the East, the deep respect verging on adulation that he inspires in the people of Patusan, and his intuitive ability to impose order make him a recognizable type of the conquering European, another in a long line of Crusoes, who, after settling and defending their islands, become the lords of "their" people. Even his failure confirms this, for when he dies there is no power that can replace him, and Patusan presumably falls back into chaos.

Of course, colonialist discourse included several other possible types of the European within the colonial equation. Jim did not need to end up a success in Patusan. His early exposure to the East, as Tracy Seely points out in her fine, recent article on the novel, leads to his decision to join the crew of the *Patna*, and this is, as she puts it, his "first great leap from the life he has sworn to uphold".⁵ By taking a berth on the *Patna*, he joins the men who have been corrupted by the East, who have gone soft and who seek soft berths in ships with large native crews that will do all the

hard work. The alcoholic chief engineer describes himself as "an old stager" (32), and this is the term used in colonialist discourse for men who have spent so much time in the East that they may know it too well. Their racial identity has been affected by their contact. The engineer therefore represented what should have been a pointed example to Jim, but Jim is not the sort to discover in himself the infirmities of others. His jump from the *Patna*, in fact, might have saved him from becoming one of "them" instead of "one of us." The final stage in this kind of degeneration might lead to the white man taking a non-white wife, moving away from European settlements, becoming an alcoholic or opium addict, and even changing his religion. These were the men who were said to have "gone native," examples of whom in literature include Captain Randall of "The Beach of Falesa," McIntosh Jellaludin, from Kipling's "To Be Filed for Reference," and, once again, Kurtz, who is distinctive in that he remains a powerful and effective imperialist at the same time that he "goes native."

One final way that *Lord Jim* conforms to the conventions of traditional adventure fiction is in its treatment of women. Adventure fiction has been more-or-less misogynistic since its inception. In *Robinson Crusoe*, for example, the only human contact Crusoe seems to yearn for is *male*; Friday doesn't satisfy his needs completely because he isn't white, not because he isn't female. In the end, Crusoe's brief marriage is purely incidental. (Defoe has him marry a woman after his return to England, and then he kills her off, all in one sentence. This is Crusoe's only romantic encounter with a woman in a book that covers the first sixty-seven years of his life.) English women, as many readers have pointed out, are treated like the so-called natives of colonialist fiction:⁶ they are childish, unreliable, and incompetent, and they need men to protect them. But sometimes men need protection *from* them, for they are often the source of all the trouble in the story. In *Heart of Darkness*, one woman, Kurtz's Intended, drives Kurtz to seek riches in the Belgian Congo, where he meets another woman, his African mistress, who helps complete his degeneration **and**, therefore, his doom. Even Marlow himself is sent "out there" nearly to his death by his excellent aunt, a foolishly idealistic woman who doesn't have the foggiest notion of the world into which she is sending her favorite nephew.

Lord Jim is no exception in this regard. Marlow is explicit when he excludes women from his audience. As he tells the story of Jim's romance, he wonders "how the world can look to them

[that is, to women] - whether it has the shape and substance *we* know, the air *we* breathe!" (169).

Like most turn-of-the-century adventure fiction, *Lord Jim* was written primarily about men for a male audience. In this world, women are either obstacles to adventure, objects to be won, or subtle opponents who don't play by the rules. In all of the brief character sketches from the novel referred to at the beginning of this essay, men are made unhappy or even killed by women. Captain Elliot is obsessed by his inability to marry off his unattractive daughters, and he makes himself and his underlings miserable because of his obsession. Bob Stanton gives up his preferred life as a chief mate to marry, and he winds up in the soul-killing business of selling insurance. Then he is killed by an hysterical lady's maid, who takes him down with her when she panics aboard the sinking *Sephora*. Selvin, Marlow's chief mate is reliable in every way. His one fault is that he is driven into jealous rages by a woman whom Marlow describes in this way: "I had a glimpse of her once, and, honestly, I couldn't conceive a man abandoned enough to plunge into sin for the sake of such an unattractive person" (95).

One would think that Jewel would prove an exception, and she does reveal a number of dependable, even manly qualities as she saves Jim from assassination and commands - "very efficient and high-spirited" - in Jim's stockade after the first attack of Brown's men. "Through the whole affair," Marlow adds, "she showed an extraordinary martial ardour." (220). Jim even says, jokingly, of her that Jewel was "the best man of them all" under the stress of Brown's attack (240).⁷ What little we know of Jewel in her relationship with Jim, however, is not very attractive. Her love is jealous and possessive. Marlow learns, to his amazement, that Jewel "mistrusted [Jim's] very slumbers" and believes that some memory of his early disaster, which he has tried, unsuccessfully, to explain to her, will call him back to the white world (192). She hovers over Jim during Marlow's visit like a jealous spirit. "The girl," Marlow tells us, "never went to sleep till we [Marlow and Jim] had separated for the night" (173). After Marlow fails to convince Jewel of Jim's faithfulness, he slinks away, defeated by her passionate ignorance. At the end, Jewel believes (rightly, no doubt) that by committing a kind of honorable suicide, Jim has deserted her. We last see Jewel in Stein's house, poisoning Stein's final years. She will not forgive Jim, and this distresses both Stein and, I guess, most readers. "*Schrecklich*," Stein murmurs. "Terrible! Terrible! What can one do?" Jewel says once again that Jim was false, and

Stein tries once again to appeal to her: "'No! no! no! My poor child! . . . ' He patted her hand lying passively on his sleeve. 'No! no! Not false! True! true! true!' He tried to look into her stony face. 'You don't understand. Ach! Why you do not understand? . . . Terrible'" (213).

When we last see Stein, in the closing paragraph of the novel, we learn that "the poor girl is leading a sort of soundless, inert life in Stein's house." And when we learn that "Stein has aged greatly of late" in the next sentence, we may decide that this aging has something to do with his having been saddled with the implacable Jewel (253). Jewel remains a disturbing and alien intruder at the end, a fitting symbol of the way most women are represented in turn-of-the-century adventure fiction.

As I already noted, the colonialist tropes in the novel are concentrated in the Patusan episode. Even the misogyny, though it can be traced through part one, takes on a colonialist flavor in the second half. Jewel is three-quarters European, and this not only provides us with a sense that her romance will end tragically - Jim will leave her, just as her father left her mother - it also makes her an appropriate match for the white protagonist. Like the faithful intermediate "natives" who are men, the paramours of the whites in colonialist stories are always distinguished from the other so-called "natives." In Africa, they are often queens, or they have Arabian blood, or both. On the Indian sub-continent, they are not dark, but golden skinned, and they have white features. That Jewel is beautiful and light-skinned is therefore to be expected, though the fact that she is a so-called "half-caste" makes her unusual. I have come across few other paramours of white protagonists in colonialist fiction who are partially white. "Half-castes" are normally treated with contempt, not as potential love-matches for whites.

With its exotic romance, its stage Malays in predictable relationships with the conquering European protagonist, and its setting in a timeless East, the Patusan episode reads like any number of colonialist stories from the period, in this case a colonialist story which happens to have gotten itself attached to an extraordinary, modernist novel. Much of the critical response to the novel since its publication has been to fault it for possessing two incompatible halves or to defend it by pointing out the essential connections between the two. In his extended analysis of the two part structure of the novel in *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century*, Ian Watt suggests that the two halves *must* be very different from each other because the close analysis Conrad employs

in part one would have had a corrosive effect on part two. Events in Patusan, he writes, "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*. In the second part of *Lord Jim*, Conrad is not dealing with realities that can stand up to three-dimensional scrutiny."⁸

My own feeling is that once we have dispensed with the colonialist tropes that make the Patusan episode *sound* so much like an uninspired and rather depressing adventure story, we may be able to see its connection with part one more clearly. We might see the second half as an example of what I will call "magic naturalism." I mean "naturalism" in the technical sense that Conrad has created a particular character and given him a particular set of experiences, and now he places him in Patusan to show how someone with Jim's experiences and personality will react to this new set of circumstances. In this reading, Patusan becomes a laboratory created by the colonialist discourse of the late-nineteenth century, and it is "magical" because, within the terms and conventions of that discourse, it is a place where Jim's romantic imagination can have free rein. This may be something like what Conrad meant when he told Garnett that, in the second half of the novel, he had wanted "to obtain a lurid light out (of) the very events."⁹ I take it he meant that he was trying to put Jim into relief by placing him in a world of colonialist melodrama, or what, in *Rule of Darkness*, Patrick Brantlinger calls the world of the Imperial Gothic¹⁰.

As an unself-conscious romantic egoist, Jim is always trying to impose his dreams upon an unimpressed, and unimpressible world. He must do this or he will die, either literally or, as Marlow suggests, figuratively, in some alcoholic oblivion. ("I [Marlow] was concerned with the way he would go out. It would have hurt me if, for instance, he had taken to drink" (137), if he had followed, in other words, the path of the *Patna's* chief engineer). Jim himself says that leaving Patusan would be a kind of death for him, "harder than dying" (151). By placing him in Patusan, Conrad has given Jim a magical chance to recreate the world in his own image,¹¹ and he succeeds. He gains entry through the use of a ring of friendship, "like something you read of in books" (143). The "girl" he finds there loves him unconditionally, and she becomes a reflection of himself:

she had learned a good bit of English from Jim, and she spoke it most amusingly, with his own clipping, boyish intonation. . . . She lived so completely in his contemplation that she had acquired something of his outward aspect, something that recalled him in her movements, in the way she stretched her arm, turned her head, directed her glances.

(172)

In this fantasy world, Tamb' Itam is his shadow, a vigilant guardian spirit. The young and powerful Dain Waris becomes his war-comrad, and he is the perfect ally to help Jim impose his vision on Patusan, for Dain "shows intelligent sympathy with Jim's aspirations" (160). Sherif Ali is his fierce opponent, but when Jim puts his shoulder to the Sherif's fortress, he demolishes it in a moment, almost magically - Jim's followers insist that it *was* magic. The storming of the stockade is precisely like one of his boyhood dreams, a dream that comes true, that Jim succeeds in imposing on the world.

Lord Jim is like *Peter Pan* in this sense. Its hero is a boy who refuses to grow up and who finds a place where he never has to, where he never has to compromise his romantic egoism. He is sent to what Jacques Darras has called "an enchanted place" of the "chivalric commercial order," "a kind of wonderland, . . . where children like Lord Jim can pretend to be heroes."¹² (I would merely eliminate the word "pretend" from this ironic indictment, for Lord Jim lives completely in his imagination, and he is far too earnest to pretend.) Marlow describes him as "boyish" throughout, and when Stein says of Jim that he is young, Marlow confirms that he is "The youngest human being now in existence" (134). When his evil double shows up, however, his dream-world disintegrates almost as magically as the Sherif's stockade. Brown represents the other side of Jim's character; his fierce egoism is a mirror of Jim's own. In *Lord Jim*, Brown's selfish egoism and Jim's romantic egoism prove to be two sides to the same coin; they are equally destructive. Brown cannot really see Patusan when he paddles up the river; he can only see it as loot, as the gratification of his monstrous ego. Jim sounds remarkably like Brown early after his arrival in Patusan, when he cries that he will "make them all dance to his own tune yet, . . . in a menacing, boasting strain" (178-79). Later, because of his extraordinary egoism, Jim cannot really see Jewel when she appeals to him at the end; he can only see himself. (We are prepared

for this by the description of Jewel that gives her Jim's voice and gestures - when he looks at Jewel, he really *does* see another version of himself.) Instead of trying to understand Jewel's perspective and feelings, he can only work through the final terms of his own dream, of his own redemption. He was "blind," Jewel tells Marlow later, "and deaf and without pity" (212).

But Conrad's Patusan tale is not only a naturalistic illustration of the selfish destructiveness of all naively-held ideals. It is also an implicit condemnation of even the most benign imperialistic ventures, for all of the best intentioned conquests are carried out in the name of high ideals. All are a form of *cultural* romanticism: efforts to impose the conquering nation's vision of an ideal world on people who do not necessarily share that perspective. Jim was fortunate in that he was able to impose much of his vision on Doramin, the greatest power in Patusan, through his son, Dain Waris. But those who did not share that vision, such as the Rajah and his followers, did not go away. They merely acquiesced in the new order and waited for *Jim* to go away. For they knew, and Doramin and his wife knew, and Jewel knew, that "*They* always leave us," and when they do the colonized people are often worse off than they were before. As Andrea White notes in her recent book on Conrad, the ideal may seem noble, but the ideal, in Conrad's world, can never be achieved.¹³

What follows is from Daphna's book: *Joseph Conrad and the Modern Temper*. Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan. Oxford: Clarendon P.: 1991. Work into your notes, at least.

For the section on *Lord Jim*: "C. first attempts to break away from the modern temper through a regression into the heroic-mythical frame of reference within which the protagonists of *Lord Jim*, *The Rescue*, and *Nostramo* operate. The characters in these novels - insulated in remote exotic settings, away from modern Western civilization - are offered a sanctuary, a space where the heroic-mythical mode of discourse is a viable ethical and aesthetic alternative to the modern outlook." 5.

Also for *Lord Jim*: Daphna suggests that Jim's degradation is a move from epic to novel. "The epic hero is 'a fully finished and completed beinghopelessly ready-made. He is all there, from beginning to end he coincides with himself, he is absolutely equal to himself. He is, furthermore, completely externalized, there is not the slightest gap between his authentic essence and his external manifestation.' 27. "The 'novelization' of the discourse is related to the failure

of the protagonist." 27. Myth, which obtains to epic and not to the novel, is an attempt to lend meaning to the universe (of course), and magic belongs to myth. Ergo, the ring in *Lord Jim*, the silver in *Nostramo*, Hassim's ring in *The Rescue*, when each of these works is "demythologized," loses its power. D. distinguishes b/w first and second generation critics of LJ. First c's posit "a stable ethical code by which Jim's story is to be judged." 35. The second gen. critics say meaning of the novel is the Absence of Meaning. 35. D. thinks, on the contrary, that the retreat into Patusan is a regression into a mythical mode of discourse. [This dovetails nicely with my position on magical naturalism.]

D. goes on to discuss Guerard, Moser, and Berthoud's def. of Jim as a romantic egoist. This approach implies a firm distinction b/w reality and dream, a distinction, D. argues, that doesn't really exist in the novel. Here it is:

"Jim is leading a fictional life. Like other Conrad characters . . . he constructs his identity in a literary context, viewing himself as a protagonist in an imaginary story. The ethical code he must obey is embedded in the generic conventions of the narrative (the courage of the hero in impossible circumstances), and Jim's self-assigned role in the fiction provides him with a psychological and a moral point of reference. His decision to become a seaman was occasioned by 'a course of light holiday literature' (5), and his image of himself as a seaman is nurtured on adventure stories." The word "unflinching" is used both in his early dreams and in his pose as he faces death, and this shows Jim to inhabit a mythical narrative 37-8. D. goes on to suggest that this isn't "pathological." Here we part company. It's all a matter of degree. C. certainly suggests that we all have to live with a certain number of flattering illusions, but Jim's illusions are selfish and destructive to the people around him. Later, 44, she repeats that Jim's failure is his inability to live fully in the myth: "Jim's weakness is not, as has been argued by critics, his tendency to live in a fictional realm, but his inability to bring himself to a total surrender to the fiction." 45. To get back to D, Jim's heroic fantasy fails him during the Patna disaster, so he seeks another way to create a heroic narrative, and he succeeds in Patusan. Even Marlow himself is drawn into this: "it is not only the local myth, spun by the natives, which invests Jim with supernatural powers (242, 266-7, 270). M., too, observes that Jim is 'in complete accord with his surroundings - with the life of the forest and with the life of men' (175)." 42. The universe even

responds appropriately, sending bad weather to preside over his death.

Jim is almost literally reborn in Patusan. Nice point, esp. as he emerges from the mud and claims he has fallen asleep. 43. D. calls the Genesis story a prototext: Jim names Jewel. Cornelius is the snake, but Brown becomes the true Satan, and only after meeting Jim. (And Jim carries his own snake within himself. See above on his unwillingness to embrace the fiction unconditionally. This isn't true. Dying in his final confrontation with Doramin is a perfect close to his narrative.)

NOTES

-
1. All references to *Lord Jim* in the body of the essay are to the Norton Critical Edition, ed. by Thomas Moser (New York: Norton, 1968).
 2. Padmoni Mongia was the first to link Jim's romantic imagination and his imperial role in Patusan in "Narrative Strategy and Imperialism in Conrad's *Lord Jim*": "[Jim's] urge for heroic fulfillment can only be satisfied once he becomes Stein's agent in Patusan To fulfill one's romantic nature, then, the colonial world appears to be necessary"(179). *Studies in the Novel* 24 (Spring, 1992): 173-86.
 3. Norman Sherry (*Conrad's Eastern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1967) has discovered many sources in travel books for both the incidents and characters of the Patusan episode, but since travel books - as well as fiction, newspapers, official reports, and scholarly books and journals - all drew upon and contributed to the creation and maintenance of colonialist discourse, it seems appropriate to refer to Conrad's Eastern World as primarily a textual creation. See the Introduction to Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).
 4. I am not the first to notice the colonialist implications of this passage. In *Conrad and Imperialism*, Benita Parry notes that Marlow's "ultimate vision of Patusan is realised in a configuration of negatives; it is timeless, immobile, a land without a past . . . where the old trees and old mankind exist in their original dusk of being" (96). *Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers*. (London: Macmillan, 1983).
 5. Tracy Seely, "Conrad's Modernist Romance: *Lord Jim*," *ELH* 59 (1992): 495-511.

6. See, for example, Marianna Torgovnick's *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives*, especially "Taking Tarzan Seriously" (22-72) and "Traveling with Conrad" (141-58). (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990).

7. In "'The White Man's Jewel': Writing the Body in Conrad's *Lord Jim*" (*The Texas Review* 12 (Fall/Winter, 1991): 46-54), Catherine A. Civello notes this and other passages to show how Conrad's presentation of Jewel reflects his phallogentrism. Civello sees the book's misogyny as a reflection of Conrad's time and his own psychology, and this is probably true, but I would add that it seems to have been intrinsic to the adventure genre itself.

8. Ian Watt, *Conrad in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1979).

9. Letter to Garnett, dated Nov. 12, 1900. Reproduced in the Norton Critical *Lord Jim*, p. 304.

10. Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell U P, 1988). See Chapter 8: "Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in the British Adventure Novel, 1880-1914."

11. Mongia notes that Patusan "offers a region where Jim can be all that he has dreamt of becoming" (181).

12. Jacques Darras, *Joseph Conrad and the West: Signs of Empire* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 27.

13. Andrea White, *Joseph Conrad and the Adventure Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1993), p. 104.