

## JOSEPH CONRAD: LORD JIM

### Context

Joseph Conrad was born in the Ukraine in 1857. His father was a Polish revolutionary, so Joseph spent his youth with several different relatives in several different places. In 1874, he first went to sea. For the next twenty years he made his living as a sailor, joining the English merchant service in 1878 and eventually becoming a ship captain. In his twenties, after joining the English fleet, Conrad anglicized his Slavic name and learned English. He did not begin to write until he was in his forties. *Lord Jim* is the first of his major novels. It appeared in 1900, the year after *Heart of Darkness*, which is perhaps his best-known work. Conrad was only moderately successful during his lifetime, although he moved in prominent literary circles and was friends with people like Henry James and Ford Madox Ford; with the latter he coauthored several works.

Conrad was writing at the very moment when the Victorian Age was disappearing and the modern era was emerging. Victorian moral codes still influenced the plots of novels, but such principles were no longer absolute. Novelists and poets were beginning to experiment with form. The jumbled time sequence and elaborate narrative frames of *Lord Jim* are part of this movement. As Conrad wrote in the preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*, another of his novels, fiction wanted to "strenuously aspire to the plasticity of sculpture, to the colour of painting, and to the magic suggestiveness of music." *Lord Jim*, with its insistence on the frequent inability of language to communicate straightforwardly, opens itself to new ways of using words. A term as elusive as "inscrutable" may contain within itself the immediately comprehensible essence of the novel's protagonist, while a simple word like "water" may fracture into a multiplicity of meanings, each one available to only a single individual.

The sun hadn't set yet on Victoria's empire, however; in fact, it was at its zenith. While this is one of Conrad's novels least involved in the set of issues surrounding colonialism, *Lord Jim* nevertheless situates itself in a world where national differences are often reduced to the dichotomy of "us" and "them," where the term "us" can encompass a surprisingly heterogeneous group. Both economic and racial versions of the colonial dynamic come into play in this novel.

When Conrad died in 1924, the first World War had come and gone, and modernism dominated literature. The new world was one in which a novel like *Lord Jim*, in which an older set of ideals about heroism do combat with a modern sense of troubled personal identity, could no longer be written with serious intent. Works like *The Great Gatsby* and *The Sound and the Fury*, which feature the same sort of conflict, present the struggle as absurd and futile, and no longer profound. *Lord Jim* comes out of a unique and very specific moment in time.

### Summary

*Lord Jim* is the story of a man named Marlow's struggle to tell and to understand the life story of a man named Jim. Jim is a promising young man who goes to sea as a youth. He rises quickly through the ranks and soon becomes chief mate. Raised on popular sea literature, Jim constantly daydreams about becoming a hero, yet he has never faced any real danger. Finally, his chance comes. He is serving aboard a vessel called the *Patna*, carrying Muslim pilgrims to Mecca, when the ship strikes an underwater object and springs a leak. With a storm approaching, the crew abandons her and her passengers to their fate. Jim, not thinking clearly, abandons the ship with the rest of the crew. The *Patna* does not sink, however, and Jim, along with the rest of the officers, is subjected to an official inquiry by his fellow seamen. It is at this inquiry, where Jim is stripped of his officer's certification, that he first meets Marlow.

Seeing something in Jim that he recognizes, or perhaps fears, in himself, Marlow strikes up a tortured friendship with Jim. Jim tells him his story, and Marlow helps him obtain a series of jobs. The *Patna* incident haunts him, though; each time it is mentioned, Jim flees his current situation, enlisting Marlow's help once again. Finally, with the help of Stein, an expatriate trader, Marlow gets Jim situated as post manager in the remote territory of Patusan. Jim is initially captured by one of the warring factions of the area, but soon escapes and finally becomes a hero by defeating a local bandit. He falls in love with Jewel, the beautiful, half-native stepdaughter of the previous trading post manager, a bitter little man called Cornelius. Jim becomes the spiritual leader of Patusan. Its citizens place their trust in him and rely on him to enforce justice.

One day, Gentleman Brown, a pirate, shows up in Patusan with his crew in search of provisions. A skirmish ensues, and Brown holes up atop a hill. Cornelius, annoyed by Jim's success and his own failures, secretly meets with Brown and a conspiracy, including a dissenting Patusan faction, is formed against Jim. Jim, unaware of the plot, agrees to let Brown leave the area peacefully (Brown guesses at Jim's dishonorable past, and Jim decides it would be still more dishonorable to kill Brown

simply because Brown knows the truth about him). Cornelius guides Brown down an alternate river channel, which leads him to the camp of Dain Waris, the son of Jim's closest ally, Doramin. Brown and his men ambush the camp, killing Dain Waris. Jim, realizing that he has still not been able to escape his initial failure aboard the Patna, ignores Jewel's pleas and goes to Doramin's compound, where the grieving father shoots and kills him.

Much of the novel is concerned with Marlow's attempts to piece together Jim's story from a variety of sources. Finally, he recounts the story to a group of acquaintances. At this point in time, though, Brown has not yet come to Patusan, and the story remains unfinished. Once events are completed, Marlow writes them down in manuscript form, which he then sends to a member of the audience of the first part of the story. The novel fragments time, and Marlow juxtaposes different, non-chronological pieces of Jim's story for maximum effect, all the while seeking to discover the source of his own fascination with Jim and the meaning behind the story.

### Characters

**Jim** - Also known as "Lord Jim," or "Tuan Jim." The hero of our story, Jim is a young man who, inspired by popular literature, goes to sea dreaming of becoming a hero. He gets his chance when the ship he is aboard gets damaged, and fails utterly by abandoning ship with the rest of the crew. Haunted by his failure and stripped of his officer's certificate, he wanders from job to job, finally becoming the manager of a remote trading post. He falls in love with Jewel, a beautiful, half-native girl, and, by defeating a local bandit, becomes leader of the people. His dreams of heroism lead to his failure to kill a marauding white pirate, Gentleman Brown, which in turn leads to the death of Dain Waris, his best friend and son of Doramin, the local chief. Jim allows Doramin to shoot him in retribution.

**Marlow** - The narrator of this story and a ship's captain. Marlow first encounters Jim at the inquiry where Jim loses his certification. Feeling that Jim is "one of us," he takes an interest in him, first helping him find employment as a water clerk and as a trading post manager for Stein, then compulsively piecing together Jim's story and perpetuating it through various retellings. It is Marlow who filters and interprets most of the narrative for the reader.

**Jewel** - Daughter of the Dutch-Malay woman and stepdaughter of Cornelius. She and Jim fall in love, and she makes him promise never to leave her. She is a pragmatic woman and encourages Jim to fight to survive after Dain Waris's death. Marlow encounters her after Jim's death at Stein's, where she, broken and saddened, reminds Marlow that her prediction of Jim's infidelity has come true.

**Stein** - The owner of a large trading post, he sends first Cornelius and then Jim to Patusan. Stein was forced to flee Europe as a young man after becoming involved in revolutionary activities. Having made his way to the East Indies, he has become successful as a trader. A thoughtful, analytical man who immediately "diagnoses" Jim for Marlow, he collects butterflies and beetles.

**Gentleman Brown** - A white pirate who, having barely escaped Spanish officials in the Philippines, comes to Patusan hoping to steal some provisions. He is rather famous in this part of the world, and is used as the stock bad guy whenever locals are telling stories. He is proud, terrified of confinement. He and his men are attacked upon arrival in Patusan by Dain Waris and his band, who have had advance warning of their coming. Although he had initially wanted to conquer and loot Patusan, he realizes he is outnumbered and negotiates with Jim. In those negotiations, Brown shows that he is aware that Jim has a dark past, thereby appealing to Jim's tortured sense of ideals and receiving permission to retreat in safety. Brown has been conspiring with Cornelius and the Rajah Allang, though, and on his way back to his ship, he surprises Dain Waris and his men at their camp. Dain Waris is killed, which will lead to Jim's death. Brown and his men are shipwrecked soon after. Brown is the only survivor, although he dies soon afterward. Marlow visits him on his deathbed and gets part of the story from him. Brown is an important contrast to Jim, as a man who lives a romantic life, but one that is far from moral or idealized. Unlike Jim, Brown is quick to own up to his past and his fears.

**Cornelius** - Husband of the Dutch-Malay woman, he is the previous manager of Stein's Patusan post. A bitter, conniving man, he betrays Jim to Gentleman Brown and causes the death of Dain Waris. He is Jewel's stepfather, and treats her badly, even asking for Jim to give him money in exchange for her.

**Dutch-Malay woman** - A woman with a mysterious past, she is Jewel's mother and Cornelius's wife (although Cornelius is not Jewel's father). As a favor to her, Stein gives Cornelius a post in Patusan. She dies a horrible death with Cornelius, who has always tormented her, trying to break down the door to her room.

Crew of the Patna - Jim's fellow officers aboard the Patna, they immediately begin to try to leave the damaged ship after the collision. A physically repulsive and dishonorable lot, they flee before the inquiry. One of them, the third engineer, dies of a heart attack on board and is found by rescuers. Marlow meets with another of them in a hospital. The man is delirious from the effects of alcoholism and is hallucinating pink toads, but he tells Marlow that he personally watched the Patna sink (the ship did not actually sink). The captain is an enormous, disgusting man who bullies Jim. Jim encounters another of the engineers in the workplace of his first post-Patna employer, which causes him (Jim) to skip town.

Captain Brierly - One of the most decorated and respected ship's captains in the area. He is on the board of inquiry that tries Jim. Secretly, he makes Marlow an offer of money to help Jim run away. Not long after the inquiry, he commits suicide, motivated by some secret shame. He is implicitly contrasted with Jim.

Chester and Robinson - Two disreputable characters who offer Jim, through Marlow, a job taking a wreck of a ship to a desolate island to collect guano. Both have questionable pasts and can be compared with both Jim and Gentleman Brown. The guano-collecting mission, under someone else's command, leaves port and is never heard from again; it is thought to have been wiped out by a hurricane.

French lieutenant - Marlow meets the French lieutenant in a Sydney café many years after the events of the novel. The lieutenant was the man who stayed aboard the damaged Patna as his gunboat towed her back into port. Although his act was heroic, he seems to have been motivated more by duty and professionalism. His prosaic attitude and his failure to describe the mystery of the experience adequately in words disappoints and even disgusts Marlow.

Doramin - Chief of the Bugis; a wise, kind old man and a "war-comrade" of Stein's. Stein gives Jim a silver ring as a token of introduction to Doramin. Doramin saves Jim after his escape from the Rajah Allang, who had been holding him prisoner. Doramin is the father of Dain Waris, Jim's closest friend. When Dain Waris is killed because of Jim's misjudgment, Doramin shoots and kills Jim, who has offered himself up as a sacrifice.

Dain Waris - Doramin's son and Jim's best friend. The two are soul mates, and Dain Waris serves as Jim's second-in-command. He leads the initial attack on Gentleman Brown, but is not entirely successful, lacking Jim's charisma as a leader of men. He is killed when Cornelius leads Brown down the river channel behind his camp, after Jim foolishly frees Brown and his men.

Bugis - A group of traders from Celebes who immigrate to Patusan many years before Jim arrives there. They are constantly embroiled in conflict with the Rajah Allang, who wants to shut down their trading activities and enjoy a monopoly for himself. Doramin is their chief.

Tamb'ltam - A Malay who came to Patusan and was enslaved by the Rajah Allang. Freed by Doramin, he becomes Jim's loyal servant and adviser. He escapes with Jewel after Jim's death and is the one to give Marlow the most complete account of Jim's final days.

Rajah Allang - Also known as Tunku Allang. The corrupt, unofficial ruler of Patusan; the uncle of the legitimate but underage and possibly mentally-incompetent Sultan. He tries to enforce a monopoly on trade in the area. Allang captures Jim upon his arrival in Patusan. He also secretly allies with Gentleman Brown against Jim.

Sherif Ali - A fanatic Muslim bandit who terrorizes Patusan from a stronghold in the hills. Jim defeats Ali to become a hero in Patusan.

## Chapters 1 and 2

### Summary

Jim is a popular, if somewhat mysterious, young man working as a water-clerk (a merchant's agent who sells provisions to ships' captains at ports of call) in various Eastern (meaning Southeast Asian and Pacific island) seaports. He is described as assertive, attractive, and possessing "Ability in the abstract," yet he also is prone to leaving jobs without notice, and, we are told, works as a water-clerk only because he is "a seaman in exile from the sea." A brief biographical sketch is given of Jim's early life: the son of an English country parson, he is sent to a merchant marine academy after "a course of light holiday literature" leads him to declare his interest in the sea. Quickly proving his merit, he soon sets out to sea on training ships, where he spends free time lost in daydreams, "liv[ing] in his mind the sea-life of light literature." His fantasies typically involve acts of heroism: rescuing people, putting down mutinies, conquering savages. One winter's day he is aboard a training ship in port, fantasizing about becoming a hero, when a commotion arises on deck. A collision has occurred nearby, and a boat is launched from his ship to rescue survivors. Jim is not

one of the rescuers aboard the ship's boat, and his disappointment is bitter. His captain consoles him, telling him to be quicker next time.

After two years of training, Jim goes to sea aboard the first of a series of merchant ships. His abilities lead to quick promotion, and he soon finds himself "chief mate of a fine ship," although he is still very young and has not yet been truly tested by the sea. His first encounter with "the anger of the sea" causes him to be injured by a falling spar. Disabled, he spends days in his bunk as the storm rages, not fantasizing about heroics but instead confronting the brutal nature of pain, fear, and physical existence. He is left behind, still lamed, at the next port of call, where he spends some time recuperating, then engages as chief mate on the *Patna*, a decaying steamer ferrying a boatload of Muslim pilgrims to Mecca and commanded by a crazed German skipper. The *Patna* leaves port and turns into the open ocean. The voyage begins in a mood of eerie calm and isolation, the sea flat, the white crew "isolated from the human cargo" of pilgrims.

#### **Commentary**

The opening chapters of *Lord Jim* make reference to three distinct moments in time: the apparent present time of Jim's employment as a water-clerk, a continuous span of years in the past from the time he leaves home to his shipping aboard the *Patna*, and a moment that seems to be in the future, when he will leave the seaside and venture into the Malay forest. The as-yet-unnamed narrator, whom we will meet in Chapter 4, seems to have a nearly omnipotent knowledge of Jim's story; he hints that we will see him transform from "just Jim" to "Tuan Jim," or "Lord Jim," although he offers no clues as to how this will occur. For the time being, the narrator instead invokes a series of literary paradigms within which Jim's story may or may not fit. First, the story begins in medias res, or in the middle of things, in the interlude between the two major episodes of the novel. This is the classic opening strategy of novels within the epic genre. Will Jim's story prove to be an epic, perhaps like Homer's *Odyssey*, another work which begins with a displaced sailor far from home? The marked interest in only one individual--Jim--and the lack of any secondary characters means that this will not be a classical epic, since classical epic is typically more interested in sweeping social events involving groups of people. The sketch of Jim's early life and education suggest that *Lord Jim* may share features with biography, or perhaps *bildungsroman* (a genre which looks at the education and maturation of an individual). The *bildungsroman* often seeks to trace an individual's development through his or her reading, which is certainly the case here, although Jim is reading light popular literature rather than the more serious tomes usually cited in this genre. The reiterated attention to Jim's propensity for daydreaming and the emphasis on his innate "Ability" are, in their way, tropes of Romanticism, a mode that requires imagination and inborn genius above all else in its heroes. Finally, too, there is a certain pre-modernist aspect to Jim's introduction. Like Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, Jim derives many of his ideas from popular literature and culture. Conrad's language, too, with its density of abstract terms (the "keen perception of the Intolerable," for example) and local allusions (Rangoon, Penang, Batavia), can be difficult in the same way as the language of Virginia Woolf or William Faulkner.

Above all, the narrator makes the suggestion that there is a fundamental void at the heart of this text. Much is left unexplained, and that which is explained is seemingly accidental; for example, Jim only ships on the *Patna* because he has been injured aboard another ship and left behind far from home. Conrad also invokes the problematic historical circumstances of colonialism by situating his hero in a part of the world where nearly every square foot of land has been claimed by a European power, and by putting him in the employ of men who "love. . . short passages, good deck-chairs, large native crews, and the distinction of being white." This section of the novel ends with the image of a small island of whiteness aboard a ship full of dark-skinned Muslims, isolated in the middle of a human ocean as well as a literal one. While Jim and the rest of the *Patna*'s crew are placed in a position of seeming superiority as the ship's officers, they are nevertheless economically dependent on the hordes below the deck, just as many European countries were at the time economically reliant on the natural resources of their colonies.

### **Chapters 3 - 5**

#### **Summary**

The *Patna* continues toward Mecca through an impossibly still night. The passengers are asleep and Jim is on watch, imagining heroic deeds as usual. The ship's captain, a tremendously obese and violent "New South Wales German," argues with the second engineer, who is drunk. A sudden impact shakes the ship, pitching the engineer forward and nearly knocking Jim and the captain off their feet. The impact is followed only by silence and a rumbling shake of the ship.

The narrative suddenly skips ahead a month to a courtroom, where an inquest is being held. Jim is on the stand recounting the events of that night. He recalls that he was sent below to examine the ship for damage following the impact, which, it is mentioned, is thought to have been with a floating shipwreck. Jim tells the court that he found the hold filling with water and that he then realized that there must be "a big hole below the waterline." On his way to examine the bulkhead, which divides sections of the hold, he encountered the second engineer, who had broken his arm falling from a ladder. Jim enters into a detailed, impressionistic account of subsequent events, but he is quickly cut off by the court, which wants only "yes or no" answers in their search for the "facts." As he testifies, Jim notices "a white man who [sits] apart from the others, with his face worn and clouded, but with quiet eyes," who is watching him intently. Jim senses that the man understands his predicament (of which we, the readers, are not yet fully aware; why is this inquest being held?). We find out that this man is Marlow, who will narrate a good bit of the story, and who will "later on, many times, in distant parts of the world. . .show. . .himself willing to remember Jim, to remember him at length, in detail and audibly." In other words, Marlow is to be the keeper of Jim's story.

The narrative shifts again, to Marlow, on a verandah after dinner, recounting Jim's story to a group of silent listeners. Marlow admits to his audience that he's not sure why he attended the inquiry, except for the fact that the Patna "affair" (with which the reader is still not fully acquainted) had become "notorious" in the maritime community of that part of the world, and everyone who could come to the trial. Marlow tells his listeners that he himself saw the rescued crew of the Patna arrive in port and report to the harbor office to make a deposition. He digresses for a moment, detailing the repulsive appearance of the crew, particularly the captain, who was wearing someone else's pajamas, and then digresses still further to offer an account of his acquaintance with the harbor master's clerk, which has no real relevance to the story except to reveal something of Marlow's character: he once gave the clerk a generous tip, he says, because the man's "childlike belief in the sacred right to perquisites quite touched [his] heart." Marlow looked on as the Patna's crew argued with the harbor master, and it is then that he first noticed Jim, who stood out from the rest of the debased bunch. Marlow immediately fixed on Jim as "one of us," a tag that will be repeated throughout the novel. The crew, after disputing with the harbor master for a few moments longer, disappeared into a series of rickshaws. The second engineer, with his broken arm, went to the hospital, where Marlow, going to see an injured member of his own crew, encountered him a few days later. Another member of the Patna's crew, a man with a long, drooping mustache, was also in the hospital, in the throes of delirium and hallucinations after a long drinking binge that began when he reached port. Marlow interrogated him, and was told by the man that he saw the Patna go down with his own eyes. He then rambles on about the reptiles on board the ship and the pink toads that are under his hospital bed. Marlow was asked by one of the doctors, as he left the hospital, if the man's testimony would be material to the inquiry. Marlow tells him it would not.

#### **Commentary**

The narrative continues to play games with time, jumping between the collision on board the Patna, the inquiry into the collision, and events between the crew's rescue and the inquiry. Note that a great deal of information is still not available to the reader: What did the ship hit? Why did the crew need to be rescued? Why is an inquiry being held into the crew's behavior? And, most critically, who is Marlow, and why is he so interested in Jim? The reader is put in the same position as the crew of the Patna following the impact: something important has just happened, but we're not sure what it is, and the consequences are entirely unclear. Jim theorizes that the Patna has an enormous gouge "below the waterline," but he is unable to see the damage threatening his ship, as it is hidden at the bottom of a dark, flooded compartment below the deck. Just as it is only the flooding that is apparent to Jim, it is only the aftermath of a major, still-unknown event that is visible to the reader: an injured man, a man who has drunk himself into hallucinations, and a trial, for a crime still a mystery to us.

The inquiry introduces Marlow (he's a spectator), and also serves to highlight his curious interest in Jim by way of contrast. The inquiry is interested in "fact," so much so that the magistrate presiding tells Jim to curtail his explanations and reminiscences and get to the point. "Yes or no" answers are what the court wants, but perhaps, as Marlow's presence suggests, the issues at hand require a more subtle form of inquiry. Marlow fixates on Jim's status as "one of us," but what does this phrase mean? Marlow and Jim are both sailors, but so are the men who seem to have Jim on trial (as we will find out later, in fact, this is a hearing to revoke the officers' certificates of the crew, not a criminal trial). Marlow initially offers us the explanation that he is interested in Jim because he is "outwardly so typical of that good, stupid kind we like to feel marching right and left of us in life"; in other words, he claims to pity Jim in a way, and to feel an urge to protect him. Later, though,

Marlow gives a more complicated reason for his interest, saying that he "would have trusted the deck [of his ship] to that youngster on the strength of a single glance, and gone to sleep with both eyes [shut]--and, by Jove! it wouldn't have been safe." He preliminarily concludes that Jim fascinates him because "he look[s] as genuine as a new sovereign, but there [is] some infernal alloy in his metal." What does this mean, and why does Marlow so deeply identify with Jim? We still don't know why it wouldn't be safe to trust Jim with a ship (after all, we've just heard about his great "Ability") nor why Jim should be considered "infernal." Above all, who is this Marlow, and how is it that he has access to every part of Jim's story? Marlow is the consummate storyteller, as we see in the hypothetical setup at the end of Chapter 4 and the beginning of Chapter 5. He reorders the material at hand to maximize suspense and create meaningful juxtapositions and omissions. Most of all, he offers a record of his own involvement with and reaction to Jim's story. Marlow constructs himself as an alternate hero, an intellectual hero who is not only Jim's best reader, but also his best representative, his best hope for a continued place in the world's memory.

Pay attention to Marlow's encounter with the alcoholic crewman from the Patna. This is a novel filled with coincidences and parallel structures, and this is a plot device that will recur. Coincidence is an important idea in this novel. Marlow's eventual ability to piece together all of Jim's story is due to chance meetings, mutual acquaintances, and the similarity in their occupations. He takes an interest in Jim and makes an effort to learn about him over time, but he is aided by sheer luck and some mysterious circumstances, in a part of the world where distances are great and "civilization" is still minimal. What does coincidence mean in *Lord Jim*? It is not evidence of providential design or predestined fate; rather, coincidence highlights Jim's representative quality--he is, in some way, "one of" all of "us." It also emphasizes Jim's inability to escape his past, a fact which will assume great importance in the closing chapters of the novel; despite moving thousands of miles away from white civilization and several years forward in time, Jim is never quite able to escape whatever it is that happened on the Patna. The role of coincidence thus also suggests lingering overtones of Victorian moral codes, under which nothing goes unpunished, nothing is forgiven. Watch for repeating structures and coincidences in the plot, and look particularly for parallels between the two major episodes.

## Chapters 6 and 7

### Summary

Marlow offers his take on the inquiry. The facts of the Patna case were already known with as much certainty as possible, he claims, and the inquiry is merely being held to satisfy some deep psychological need of the community of sailors. Marlow thinks about Captain Brierly, one of the judges at the inquiry. Brierly is a well-regarded, well-known sailor who commands one of the best ships in the East, a man who has been recognized for his feats of heroism and good seamanship. Yet, Marlow tells us, Brierly commits suicide soon after the inquiry into the Patna affair. Brierly's chief mate, whom Marlow encounters later, tells of Brierly's careful preparations before jumping overboard to drown in the middle of a passage. Marlow reflects that the man's suicide, not attributable to any other cause, must have been a result of a self-condemnation provoked by some identification with Jim. Marlow encounters Brierly on the street during the inquiry and has a terse conversation with him. Agreeing with Marlow that Jim is being tormented because he assents to being tormented, Brierly proposes to Marlow that the two put up a fund of money with which Jim can flee, on the condition that Marlow make the offer to Jim. The next day, Marlow finally has occasion to speak to Jim. Leaving court, Jim is just in front of Marlow. Someone outside the court has a dog with them, which trips up the crowd. Another person in the crowd makes reference to the dog, calling it a "cur." Jim whirls around and accuses Marlow of insulting him, thinking it was Marlow who uttered the word (a significant insult, if directed at a person, and, with its implication of cowardice, particularly hurtful to Jim) and that it was directed at him. He also tells Marlow that he's noticed him staring during the inquiry. Marlow points out the dog in the crowd and explains the mistake.

Jim is abashed but defiant; he runs off. Marlow follows him, unsure why he is doing so, and invites him to dine at his hotel. Jim agrees, and the two eat in a dining room full of package tourists. Slowly, Jim begins to talk, first of his torment, then of his shame at his family's knowledge of his trial, then of his desire to be understood by someone, anyone. Marlow will do, he says. Marlow again notes that Jim is "one of us." Jim begins to describe the events following the Patna's collision: going below again, he found that the bulkhead separating the flooded compartment from the rest of the hold was bulging and about to fail. If it were to fail, the ship would surely sink. Jim begins to reflect on "the chance missed," eventually getting to the heart of "the impossible world of romantic

achievements" that could have been his, given this opportunity. Through a series of indirect references by both men, the reader is given to understand that the Patna's officers, sure that the bulkhead would fail and the ship sink, had abandoned the ship, leaving its cargo of pilgrims behind. The officers were picked up a few days later by another vessel, whose captain they told that the Patna had sunk. Apparently, however, the bulkhead did not fail, and the ship did not sink. This is why Jim (along with the other officers in absentia) has been put on trial; he missed his chance to do the heroic thing by staying with the damaged ship, and instead made the worst possible mistake a seaman could make, abandoning a still-floating ship. Jim recalls watching the sleeping pilgrims, aware that, due to a lack of lifeboats, they were all already dead. Paralyzed by some unnameable emotion, he does not wake any of them.

#### **Commentary**

Brierly's story, which begins this section, reinforces Marlow's idea about Jim being "one of us." Although Brierly is one of the most successful merchant seamen in the Pacific, he nevertheless has something in common with Jim, something that drives him to pass the ultimate judgment on himself. The actual act of Brierly's suicide is significant in two ways. First, Brierly's actual jump overboard is not narrated. There is a void where the action should be, as will be the case with the two most significant moments of Jim's life, when we finally get to them. Instead, Brierly's chief mate is only able to describe the events and preparations surrounding Brierly's death. From this description it is obvious that the suicide has been carefully planned, the culmination of many hours of fantasy about the event itself. This is the second significant aspect of the suicide: its analogous relation to Jim's fantasy world of heroic deeds. Like Jim, Brierly rehearses the act in his head, imagining all the circumstances leading up to it and considering himself particularly qualified to undertake this action. Unlike Jim's, though, Brierly's fantasies become reality. The significance of Brierly's death will become even more apparent when Jim resumes the story of what happened on the Patna, when we see him faced with a jump of his own.

The "cur" incident will also have a parallel aboard the Patna, as Jim will reveal in Chapter 8. The scene with the dog also serves as another instance of indecipherability. While the actual use of the word "cur" is directed to the dog outside the courthouse, the inquiry underway within the courthouse represents the community of seamen implicitly accusing Jim of being a "cur." And, as his subsequent conversation with Marlow reveals, his resentment over the implied slur has him at a boiling point. In a novel full of vague words and indirect conversations, this moment also stands out as one where language achieves an unusual sharpness.

Most importantly for us, though, it gives Jim and Marlow a chance to meet. Each has noticed the other. While Marlow is drawn to Jim for deep psychological reasons, Jim is interested in Marlow because he thinks Marlow has been staring at him with undue curiosity and in a condemnatory way. It is a sign of the strong fascination each has with the other that they come together over an insult that wasn't meant to be one. Jim, still convinced that his true self is based in his heroic fantasies, rejects the term "cur," while Marlow, initially put in the position of the giver of the insult, finds himself rushing after Jim to make explanations and amends. Marlow is barely offended when Jim, during the course of their conversation, suggests that the epithet may better apply to Marlow himself. Note, too, that Marlow is often cutting or insensitive to Jim in the course of their conversation.

The entangling of the judging and the judged that takes place over the word "cur" foreshadows the way the two men's stories will become entangled. Jim chooses Marlow as a recipient for his narrative, wanting only to find someone who will "understand." Jim's desire to perpetuate and justify himself through his story calls to mind traditional notions of poetic immortality; if Jim's story lives on, so too, in some way, does Jim. Marlow, though, is not a neutral recipient of the tale. Seeing something in Jim that corresponds to a part of himself, he co-opts it; Lord Jim becomes a story that can say something about Marlow, that is perhaps in the end more Marlow's story than Jim's.

## **Chapters 8 - 12**

### **Summary**

Jim tells Marlow the rest of the story of what happened aboard the Patna: Finding himself amidst a crowd of sleeping pilgrims, he realizes that there will be nowhere near enough room in the lifeboats for everyone. Suddenly one of the passengers grabs him and utters the word "water." Thinking that the man is aware of the flooding belowdecks and worried that his shouting will start a panic, Jim attacks the man to silence him. Only then does he realize that the man is not referring to the flooding but is only asking for a drink for his sick child. Jim hands his water bottle to the man and

goes to the bridge, where the rest of the officers are trying to launch a lifeboat. They ask him for help and abuse him when he inquires about their plans for patching the ship. Jim describes for Marlow the impossibility of shoring up the failing bulkhead below, then enters into an elaborate meditation on his emotions at the time and the perilous position of the ship, floating head-down in a leaden sea. Marlow recalls the testimony of the Patna's two Malay steersmen at the inquiry: when asked what they thought when the white crew left the ship, one replies, "Nothing," while the other says that he thought the white men must have had "secret reasons." The officers continue to abuse Jim as they struggle to launch the boat. Jim laughs insanely as he tells Marlow this part of the story. Jim finally understands the urgency when one of the officers points to the horizon; a squall is approaching, which will surely sink the damaged ship. Nevertheless, Jim is too paralyzed with the thought of the pilgrims sleeping below to help with the lifeboat. The squall draws nearer, and Jim feels a slight swell pass under the ship, which until now has been in a perfectly calm sea. The third engineer drops dead from a heart attack as the officers continue to work. Finally, the lifeboat rips free of the ship, waking many of the passengers below. Several things seem to happen at once: the squall begins to hit, the crew gets into the boat, the third engineer's corpse slumps sideways as Jim stumbles over its legs, and the officers begin to yell for the dead man to join them in the boat, unaware that he has died. The next moment, that of crucial action, is not described in the narrative. Somehow, Jim finds himself in the boat. He, too, has abandoned ship.

The squall hits; the men in the boat struggle to pull away from the sinking Patna. Seeing no lights from the ship, they agree that she has gone down. The men begin to talk of their narrow escape, ridiculing the man they think is the third engineer for his hesitation in jumping. When they discover that it is actually Jim in the boat with them, they accuse him of murdering the engineer by taking his place in the boat. The crew constructs a unified version of events to give to the authorities on shore. Jim ignores them and spends the night clutching a piece of wood, ready to defend himself. At this point in the story, Jim pauses and asks Marlow, "Don't you believe it?" Marlow finds himself declaring his faith in Jim and his account. Jim tortures himself and Marlow for several minutes, examining the alternative possibilities available to him and justifying his course of action. Again he makes Marlow state his belief in the tale and in Jim's motives.

The men in the lifeboat are picked up by the Avondale, a passing ship, the next morning. They tell the version of the story upon which they agreed during the night; Jim does not dissent, although he feels as if he were "cheating the dead." That he soon finds out that there are no dead, that the Patna has made it into port, is of little account. He admits to Marlow now that he thought he heard shouts after the squall hit, and after the men had declared the ship sunk, although he still attributes the noises to his imagination. Jim recalls learning of the Patna's deliverance upon reaching port. Marlow ponders the question of the disappearing ship's lights, wondering why the men were so quick to assume that they indicated the sinking of the Patna. He recalls Captain Brierly's explanation at the inquest, that the arrival of the squall had caused the ship, dead in the water and listing, to swing about, thus hiding the lights from the men in the lifeboat.

The story of the Patna's rescue comes from Marlow, who has gotten it from official reports and from an old French officer he meets many years later in Sydney. Around the same time the crew were picked up, a French gunboat encountered the Patna and attached a tow line. The old man Marlow meets is the officer from the gunboat who stayed onboard the Patna as she was being towed into harbor. Miraculously, the Patna makes it into port. The French officer recalls the boredom of being aboard the ship and complains that, although he was able to eat, he had no wine. He also recalls the great interest shown by both the passengers and the authorities in the corpse of the third engineer, which he found where it fell after Jim stumbled over it. Marlow is amazed that, so many years later and so far away, he continues to encounter Jim's story.

### **Commentary**

This section presents a number of figures who serve as alternatives to Jim. The first, of course, is Marlow, who continues to be fascinated, repulsed, and personally involved, and who, although he compulsively makes cruel comments to Jim, is nevertheless willing to declare his faith and sympathy again and again. The second contrast is with the dead third engineer. Overcome with horror and fear, the man simply drops dead rather than deal with the situation. While this is certainly not an option valorized in the narrative, it seems to be slightly better than Jim's paralysis and total lack of action. The Malay steersmen also provide perspective on Jim. Both espouse somewhat simplistic conceptions of duty: one believes it his job not to think at all, while the other holds to a naïve faith in the motives of the white officers. Both, of course, do the "right" thing by staying on the ship, but neither, it seems, has any thought of becoming a hero by doing so. They are just doing their job. Whereas neither a sense of duty nor the opportunity to fulfill his fantasies of heroism are enough to keep Jim on board the Patna, the two Malays do what Jim longs to have done

out of a sense of professionalism skewed by their position in the colonial order. Does Conrad essentialize these two as simplistic natives bound by their lack of intelligence to loyalty to the white "master"? Or are these men instead a powerful critique of Jim's professional abilities and his propensity to daydream? The French lieutenant is the most complete and most damning figure of analogy to Jim. He, like the Malays, stays aboard the Patna out of a sense of duty. He doesn't want to be a hero; he only wants to do his job, and if possible be comfortable enough to have a glass of wine with his meal. Yet his experience aboard the ship has left him with a sort of honorable scar, like the saber wound on his temple or the bullet scar on his hand. He and Marlow, strangers otherwise, are somehow drawn to each other and immediately into the story of the Patna. The French lieutenant's actions have not made him a hero, though; as the next chapter reveals, he has not risen far in the French navy, although he is now an old man. There is nothing heroic, it seems, about doing one's duty; perhaps staying on board would not have fulfilled a fantasy for Jim.

Although Jim has filled in most of the story of the Patna in this section, he omits the moment where he jumps into the lifeboat. The narrative's use of ellipsis (or omission) at key moments of decision-making indicates the insecure status of motive and explanation in this world. Jim tries to explain to Marlow why it is okay that he jumped--he would have had to abandon ship sooner or later anyway, the bulkhead was bound to fail, there was nothing he could do alone--but he does not approach the actual moment of his leap. Remember that Captain Brierly's leap overboard is not narrated either. These are the moments around which the text is built, yet they somehow escape the mass of words and explanations that describe them. Another episode that has a parallel in an earlier section of the text is Jim's encounter with the pilgrim asking for water. As he does in the "cur" episode, Jim mistakes the meaning of a single word, assuming it contains a depth of knowledge (about Jim's character in the case of "cur," about the condition of the ship in the case of "water") when really the word is only a simple reference (to a dog, to thirst). If such simple communications can go so awry, the capacity of words to describe complex emotional states and unclear motives must be highly suspect.

This section of the novel, in addition, is one in which Marlow particularly struggles with the fundamental mystery of Jim's actions and his own fascination with them. Marlow even has a difficult time finding a word for what is missing; "magnificent vagueness," "glorious indefiniteness," and "the Irrational" are some of the phrases he offers to describe the meaning at the heart of Jim's experiences. The French lieutenant is equally at a loss for words to denote the inexplicability of the actions of the Patna's crew. Notice that Conrad offers many of the man's phrases in the original French, as if the very act of translation would miss some essential meaning that the French word barely captures. Marlow continues to torment Jim, making sarcastic remarks and throwing his words back at him. His encounter with the French lieutenant, though, suggests just how deeply Jim's story has scarred Marlow; it follows him wherever he goes and leads him into encounters with other "survivors."

## Chapters 13 - 18

### Summary

Marlow concludes his conversation with the French lieutenant. He tells the man the story of the inquiry and subsequent events. Somehow, the man discerns Marlow's interest in Jim and inquires whether Jim, too, ran off rather than stand trial. This leads the lieutenant to meditate on bravery and fear. Like Marlow, he fails to find words for what he is trying to say, and as they take leave of one another, Marlow is struck by the futility of conversation.

Marlow mentions that he has seen Jim recently, working as a water-clerk (see Chapter 1) in the port of Samarang. He also notes that it is through his recommendation that Jim got the job. Marlow digresses briefly to tell the story of Bob Stanton, a sailor he once knew who also spent some time as a water-clerk, who drowned trying to save a woman after a ship collision. Marlow goes back in time to the dinner with Jim at his hotel, recalling that the next day was to be Jim's day of sentencing. That night, Marlow makes Jim the offer he has discussed with Captain Brierly, telling him that if he chooses to flee, Marlow will provide him with money and a job recommendation. Jim refuses. Marlow realizes that Jim has made the ultimate appeal to his (Marlow's) ego: would Marlow behave the way Jim does, in the same situation? Marlow thinks he'd be able to do better. The next morning, Marlow goes to the court to hear the verdict. The court finds the Patna to have been unfit to go to sea, deems her navigation and operation up to the accident proper, declines to speculate as to the cause of the collision, and finds the crew derelict in their duties, revoking their officers' certifications. Leaving the court, Marlow encounters Chester and Captain Robinson, two suspicious characters who have stayed one step ahead of the law for years. They discuss with Marlow a

business scheme in which they want to involve Jim. They want to find a derelict old boat and send it out to a deserted, waterless island to harvest guano (bird droppings), which can then be sold as fertilizer to sugar planters in Australia, and they want Jim to command the boat. Marlow refuses to make Jim the offer, and the men insult Jim, noting that at least the island won't sink.

Aware of Jim's vulnerability to people like Chester and Robinson now that he has been punished, Marlow finds him and takes him back to his hotel room, where he writes letters as Jim struggles with his own thoughts. Marlow admits his responsibility to Jim and thinks about ways to help him. Suddenly Marlow draws back and reveals to the audience that soon Jim will be "loved, trusted, admired, with a legend of strength and prowess forming round his name." He explains why he will not present Chester and Robinson's offer to Jim ("he is too interesting or too unfortunate to be thrown to the dogs"), and notes that their expedition was lost without a trace after a hurricane. The narrative returns to Marlow's hotel room. Jim tells Marlow that he thinks he will have another chance to become a hero, that he's "bound to come upon some sort of chance to get it all back again." Marlow convinces Jim to stay a little longer and persuades him to accept a letter of recommendation for a job. Jim thanks him for giving him a "clean slate."

Marlow receives a letter from Jim's new employer, praising Jim. The man wonders at what Jim has done to need Marlow's protection, but says that Jim is "blooming. . .like a violet" in his new position. Not long afterward, Marlow receives another letter from his friend. Jim has departed suddenly, leaving only a note of apology. In the same batch of mail, there is a letter from Jim, explaining that the second engineer from the Patna turned up and got a job with Jim's employer. The engineer tormented Jim, reminding him of the incident; the anguish forced Jim to leave. Marlow soon runs into Jim, who is now working as a water-clerk in another port. Returning to that port a few months later, he finds that Jim has again quit a promising job, this time because a damaged steamer carrying pilgrims had put in, and the Patna case had again become a subject of conversation. His most recent employer remarks to Marlow that he had told Jim that, although he didn't know what he had done, "the earth wouldn't be big enough to hold his caper."

#### **Commentary**

This section explores the aftermath of Jim's "conviction." Jim believes that he still has the chance to be a hero, but Chester and Robinson's questionable offer and his difficulty in retaining a job suggest otherwise. Jim has been marked in some way by his actions (or lack of action). Marlow hints at a mysterious future for Jim, however, in which he will be wildly successful, although the statement is qualified in an odd way; Marlow says that a legend will develop around Jim "as though he had been the stuff of a hero." Why is Jim just comparable to a hero in the future, rather than actually becoming one? It seems that the moment that has been omitted from the narrative, the moment of Jim's leap overboard, will become the moment that defines his life, and that, for Jim, there can be no such thing as a "clean slate." This is in part a result of his punishment. Tried by a court of his professional peers, Jim has been found to be unfit to keep the certification he earned as a young man; in some way, he's no longer "one of us."

Marlow, however, still thinks that he and Jim do belong to the same fraternity. He helps Jim recover some semblance of a life and continues to follow him with interest. Marlow's interpretive skills are called into question in this section, though, as he declares himself "unenlightened" by his encounter with Jim. He also makes the strange claim that by helping Jim out he "had saved him from starvation--of that peculiar sort that is almost invariably associated with drink." This is a strange claim to make. It doesn't square with what we know of Jim, and it doesn't seem in line with Marlow's opinion of Jim in general. Perhaps Marlow has begun to fear the implications of his own association with Jim, and comments like this one are a way for him to distance himself. Chester and Robinson approach him because of his budding friendship with Jim, after all, and Marlow himself sadly notes that, of he and Jim, "it was yet he, of us two, who had the light." Jim may have been publicly condemned, but it is Marlow who has no chance. Jim seems to be headed for a successful future, while Marlow will be left only to repeat Jim's tale to anyone who will listen.

## **Chapters 19 - 23**

### **Summary**

Jim continues to wander from job to job, "fling[ing] away [his] daily bread so as to get [his] hands free to grapple with a ghost" as "an act of prosaic heroism." He becomes well-known as an eccentric in his part of the world; although he runs away every time the Patna is mentioned, everyone knows who he is. After Jim rejects Marlow's suggestion that he go to America, Marlow decides to consult Stein, the proprietor of a large trading company with posts in "out-of-the-way places" where Jim could more easily live in peace. Stein, according to Marlow, is extremely trustworthy and wise. We

learn a little about Stein's past: he escaped Germany as a young man after getting entangled with revolutionaries, then came to the East Indies with a Dutch naturalist. Stein remained in the area with a Scottish trader he had met, who bequeathed him his trading empire and introduced him to a Malay queen. Stein became an adviser to the queen's son, Mohammed Bonso, who was battling several relatives for the throne. He married Bonso's sister and had a child with her, and began to collect beetles and butterflies. Bonso was assassinated, and Stein's wife and child died from a fever. Stein tells Marlow an anecdote about a particular butterfly specimen in his collection. One morning, he was tricked into leaving his compound by an enemy of Bonso's and was ambushed along the road. After feigning death, he attacked and dispatched his attackers with bullets, but a few escaped. Suddenly, he saw a rare butterfly glide past him. Moving quickly, he captured it in his hat, holding a revolver in his other hand in case the bandits should reappear. Stein describes that day as one of the best of his life; he had defeated his enemy, possessed friendship and love, and acquired a butterfly he had long desired.

Marlow tells Stein he has come to him to discuss a "specimen." He recounts Jim's story for Stein, who immediately "diagnose[s]" Jim as "romantic." Stein elaborates on Jim's crisis of self-identity, saying that what Jim needs is to learn "how to live" in a world that he cannot always ignore. Stein says that he himself has had moments in which he has let heroic dreams slip away, and he tells Marlow that he will help him do something "practical" for Jim. Stein suggests that they send Jim to Patusan, a remote territory where he has a trading post. The place will, Marlow says, turn out to offer him "a totally new set of conditions for his imaginative faculty to work upon." Patusan seems to be a place no one visits, whose very name stands in for the hidden and unknown. Stein has used Patusan as an exile for those in need before; he tells Marlow of a Dutch-Malay woman with a troubled history married to an odious trading agent named Cornelius whom he wished to help. He made Cornelius the manager of the Patusan post, but the woman has since died, and the woman's daughter, under the guardianship of Cornelius, is the only obstacle to his replacement by Jim. Stein offers Jim the post, with the understanding that Cornelius and the girl be allowed to stay on in Patusan.

Marlow jumps forward in time, to a moment when he visits Jim in Patusan. Although it is not yet clear how, Jim has become an incredible success, and Marlow is astonished. He reminds himself that he and Stein had only sought to keep Jim out of the way, and that, on his part, he had just wanted to dispose of Jim before returning to Europe for a time. He admits that he had feared the claim that Jim now has on him because of their acquaintance. Marlow digresses for a moment to describe Patusan more fully: it is a small territory thirty miles inland up a river, which the flow of history has largely bypassed. In the seventeenth century, Dutch traders often visited in order to trade for pepper. Somehow, though, the trade stopped, and now the country is a backwater, ruled by a "Sultan [who] is an imbecile youth with two thumbs on his left hand." The de facto ruler of Patusan, however, is the Sultan's uncle, Rajah Allang, a decaying, power-mad opium fiend whom Marlow encounters when he visits Jim. Stein and Marlow offer Jim the Patusan post, which he accepts. Marlow makes him a gift of a revolver, and Stein, wishing to repay his debt to the Scottish trader who launched him, gives Jim letters of introduction and a silver ring, which he is to present to Doramin, an old comrade of Stein's. Jim returns from receiving Stein's commission full of fire, eager to impress upon Marlow the romantic aspects of the situation, particularly the idea of the ring as a token of friendship and recognition. Marlow finds himself "thoroughly sick" of Jim, who is foolish enough to "hurl defiance" at the universe. Jim hurriedly packs his possessions, including a volume of Shakespeare (which surprises Marlow) and ships for Patusan. The captain of the ship that is to carry him tells Marlow, who comes aboard to offer Jim cartridges for the revolver, that he will carry Jim only to the mouth of the river leading to Patusan, since he was fired upon by the natives the last time he tried to ascend the river. Marlow later learns that the man was publicly humiliated and imprisoned by Rajah Allang. The ship is about to depart, so Marlow takes leave of Jim, who is still ecstatic over the "magnificent chance" before him. As Marlow's boat pulls away from the ship, Jim shouts a prediction: "You--shall--hear--of--me."

#### **Commentary**

Stein offers a contrast to both Marlow and Jim. Like Jim, he is, or at least was as a youth, invested in ideas of the heroic, starting out as a revolutionary, then becoming a traveler, a partisan fighter, and finally a conquering capitalist. Despite some self-admitted defeats and the loss of his wife and child, he has constructed a satisfying existence for himself by taking advantage of the opportunities offered him by others (the Dutch naturalist, the Scottish trader). Like Marlow, he feels an immediate sense of identification with Jim. His approach to Jim is quite different from Marlow's, however. While Marlow considers Jim "one of us," Stein sees him, as Marlow suggests he will, as a "specimen," like one of his butterflies. Marlow, and even the members of the court of inquiry, have been considering Jim almost as a sort of mutation--an average man who for some reason displays

the worst that lurks inside of all men. The court of inquiry must cast Jim out, symbolically casting the evil out of themselves. Marlow is fascinated, seeing in Jim his own dark side. Stein, however, "diagnoses" Jim as displaying one among an infinite variety of "maladies" or abnormalities. Stein determines him to be a "romantic," and accordingly sends him to the same place he has sent another damaged romantic, the Dutch-Malay woman.

Patusan is an appropriate place for Jim in more ways than one. Notice the resemblance between the words "Patna" and "Patusan"; we know before he gets there that Jim is destined to repeat in some way the incident aboard the Patna. Patusan, too, is a place where romantic, heroic idealism--the high adventure of the quest for pepper--coexists with pragmatism and harsh reality. The territory was abandoned by history, is difficult to reach, and has degenerated to the point of being ruled by a youth with congenital deformities that would seem to be the result of inbreeding. Jim is thrilled to have another chance, and his hubris is unmistakable: "You--shall--hear--of--me." Marlow and Stein's parting gifts, though, foreshadow the kind of place he will find. The revolver suggests Jim will need to rely, to some extent, on brute force, and the technological superiority of the white man. The ring suggests that Jim is entering a world of suspicion, distrust, and factions, where identity requires physical proof and a man's word is not enough. Both hint that heroic ideals may be irrelevant here.

Ironically, Stein and Marlow are burying Jim the way Chester and Robinson suggested. The only escape for Jim, it seems, is to go somewhere where no one has heard of the Patna. Yet in the echo of the name of the ship in the name of the territory, and in Marlow's repeated incursions to see Jim despite being "sick" of him and wanting to "dispose" of him, it is implied that escape will not be possible, that, no matter what he does, Jim will still be the same man who abandoned the Patna. At this point in the narrative, Marlow's most recent information is that Jim is a total success. Yet Marlow, at the end of Chapter 21, tells his audience that he still awaits "the last word" on Jim. He goes further to say, too, that it may be that the "last word" cannot be trusted, since it will be open to misinterpretation in the minds of its hearers.

## Chapters 24- 27

### Summary

Marlow visits Jim in Patusan two years after Jim's arrival there. He has come to offer Jim the trading post house and the stock of goods as a gift, on behalf of Stein. He finds a village of fishermen on the coast who tell him of the peace that Jim has brought to the area. Marlow's informant refers to Jim as "Tuan Jim," or Lord Jim, and tells him that he brought Jim up the river in a canoe two years ago (when trading ships were still refusing to enter the river because of the hostile natives). Marlow is astounded that Jim's prediction--that he would hear of him--is being fulfilled. He notes that Jim's arrival was a major disruption to the area, since the natives had forgotten what white men were. Jim's unheralded appearance, Marlow's unloaded revolver cradled in his lap, created an opportunity of which Jim was quick to take advantage. The fishermen deliver Jim straight to Rajah Allang. Jim's revolver is unloaded, so he has no way of defending himself, and he agrees to see the Rajah. The Rajah imprisons Jim in a stockade for several days.

Jim takes Marlow to see the Rajah, pointing out where he was imprisoned. He pauses to settle a dispute between the Rajah and some villagers, then continues with his story: While he is a prisoner of Allang's, he is subjected to absurd treatment--asked to fix a broken New England clock, interrogated about Dutch colonial strategy, questioned as to his motives. He manages to escape the stockade fairly easily by leaping over the wall and struggling up a muddy slope after jumping a creek. Upon his escape, Jim rushes to Doramin's compound and presents Stein's silver ring. He is received with warmth, and Doramin's people prepare to repel the Rajah. Doramin, Marlow relates, is the leader of one of the most powerful factions in Patusan, a group of merchants called the Bugis, who had emigrated from Celebes many years ago. Most of the conflict in Patusan stems from Rajah Allang's attempts to enforce a trading monopoly and Doramin's insistence on violating Allang's proclamation. Jim finds the Bugis arguing over the wisdom of allying themselves with Sherif Ali, an Arab religious zealot who, along with his band of tribesmen from the interior, has been decimating the countryside around Patusan. Some of the Bugis want to join with Ali to overthrow Allang.

Jim meets Dain Waris, Doramin's son, who is to become his best friend. It soon occurs to Jim that he has an opportunity to make peace in Patusan and thus make a name for himself. Jim proposes that the Bugis organize an attack on Ali. Dain Waris is immediately enthusiastic, and the plan moves forward. Jim oversees the transfer of Doramin's meager artillery to a hilltop, from which the attack is launched and Ali defeated. Marlow remarks at the trust the Bugis placed in Jim in following him into battle. An old man tells Marlow that many think Jim possesses supernatural powers. Jim seems

even more "symbolic" to Marlow than ever. In recounting the attack, Jim mentions the valor of his servant, Tamb'ltam, a refugee from Allang who has devoted himself to Jim. In triumphing over Sherif Ali, Jim has finally become a hero, and the people of Patusan await his command.

#### Commentary

It is appropriate that Marlow remarks on how "symbolic" Jim seems to him at this moment. From this point onward, Jim begins to recede from the text. The temporal progression of the narrative becomes ever more convoluted, as Marlow has to work harder and harder to piece together the story. Jim no longer spends entire chapters struggling to express his inner anguish. Instead, the narrative is composed of his polished--if somewhat slangy--accounts of his actions, interspersed with small set-piece landscapes. It appears that Jim's hubris has been enabling, not fatal. Marlow feels distant from Jim; if Jim was once "one of us," Marlow has no claim to being "one of them," a person like the new Jim. Marlow suggests that nothing can touch Jim now, since he has escaped from the shadow of the Patna incident. Jim's legend is beginning to bloat, though, as he revels in the unlimited trust of his people and whispers of his supernatural abilities spread. He seems to be in peril even while on top of his world.

Conrad uses the two new relationships described in this section to scrutinize some of the tropes of colonial literature. Tamb'ltam is the quintessential loyal servant, and Dain Waris is the ultimate "other" onto which a nearly homoerotic racial essentialism is projected. His relationship with Jim is described as "one of those strange, profound, rare friendships between brown and white in which the very difference of race seems to draw two human beings closer by some mystic element of sympathy." This is Conrad at his most disingenuous. Patusan seems to be populated by two kinds of individuals: "noble savages," like Dain Waris, whose astounding abilities and moral character lead to him being called a "white man" by his own people; and dissolute, dirty, scheming representatives of a decaying humanity, like Allang. The extremes in these two caricatures, especially when compared with the subtle meditations on character and the wide variety of people "like us" in the first section of the book, seem to function as a subtle critique of representations of colonial subjects. At times, Conrad can be too subtle, though; he has occasionally been accused of racist discourse himself. The juxtaposition of extremes and the replay of stereotypes suggest, however, that Conrad is fully knowledgeable of his literary actions and means to be subversive.

#### Chapters 28 -33

##### Summary

Following the defeat of Sherif Ali, Jim becomes the virtual ruler of Patusan. Marlow notes that there seems to be little that Jim cannot do. Marlow recounts an interview with Doramin and his wife, in which Doramin confesses to Marlow that he wishes to see his son, Dain Waris, ruler of Patusan. Doramin is also concerned that Jim's rise to power, while beneficial to the Bugis, will attract the attention of white men to Patusan. Doramin's wife, meanwhile, interrogates Marlow about Jim's past. She wants to know why he left the civilization with which he was familiar to come to a tiny backwater. Marlow can't really answer her, and Doramin is obviously concerned by this. Pondering "the unanswerable why of Jim's fate" brings Marlow to tell of Jim's "love." Jim has fallen in love, it seems, with the daughter of the Dutch-Malay woman. Until now, this daughter has eked out a meager existence in the home of her stepfather, Cornelius. Marlow describes her as beautiful, and, more importantly, as, like her mother, "lacking the saving dullness" necessary to accept her situation. Jim calls her Jewel. Marlow is struck by the atmosphere of both domestic happiness and high romance surrounding the pair. He recalls visiting a nearby region and encountering a corrupt colonial official, who has heard of Jim and Jewel and has misinterpreted what Jewel actually is. The official tells Marlow that he has heard of a white man who possesses an enormous emerald, which he keeps concealed on the body of a woman, young and pure, who stays with him at all times. The official asks Marlow to let Jim know that he has friends who would be interested in buying the emerald.

Marlow recalls that he has seen very little of Jewel, but that she seems unusually anxious about Jim. Tamb'ltam, too, seems to be overly protective. Marlow notes that Cornelius is always skulking about Jim rather ominously, and he reflects that Jim has been generous in giving the man his freedom, and perhaps rather reckless in not taking proper precautions to protect himself. Jim stayed with Cornelius upon his initial escape from Rajah Allang, and his mistreatment of Jewel has led Jim to be very careful toward the man, lest he inadvertently make her situation worse. Cornelius is apparently quite bitter at having married Jewel's mother and being sent to such a backwater. He considers it his right to abuse the girl and to steal from the stock of goods consigned to him by Stein. Soon after his escape from the Rajah, Jim begins to hear rumors that plans are

being made to assassinate him. Cornelius offers to smuggle him out of the country for eighty dollars. Jewel offers her help as an advisor. Finally, things come to a head. Jim wakes up one night to find Jewel at his side, his revolver in her hand. She leads him to a shed in the yard, where he discovers men lying in wait for him. Pleased at finally encountering "real danger," he shoots one of them and forces the others to leap into the river. As he is telling Marlow the story of that night, Jim points out his own valor, then once again challenges Marlow's evaluation of his (Jim's) worthiness, noting that no one in Patusan would believe the story of the Patna. Jim speaks of his desire to remain always in Patusan.

Marlow leaves Jim and goes up through the dark courtyard to the house. He is confronted by Jewel, who seems to have something to say to him but is unable to speak. Finally, Marlow is made to understand that she thinks he has come to take Jim away. He tells her that this is not the case. She tells him that she does not want to "die weeping," as her mother did. Jewel recalls the night of her mother's death, the woman breathing her last while Jewel barred the door with her body against a raging Cornelius. She tells Marlow that Jim has sworn never to leave her, but that she is unable to believe him entirely, since her father and other men have made and broken the same promise. She demands that Marlow tell her what the thing is to which Jim often refers, the thing that made him afraid and that he can never forget. Searching for the proper phrase, Marlow finally tells her that it is the fact that he is "not good enough" that Jim can never forget. In a rage, Jewel calls Marlow a liar, informing him that Jim said the same thing. Marlow tries sheepishly to backtrack, saying that no one is good enough. She refuses to listen, though, and the conversation breaks off as footsteps approach.

### Commentary

This section fills in the events that occur after Jim's defeat of Sherif Ali. More importantly, though, it offers the chance for Jim to develop himself as a romantic hero. Much of the action and almost all of the conversations in these chapters take place at night. The picturesque aspects of Patusan are emphasized: the full moon rising over the hills, the stars twinkling, torches burning in the dark. Patusan has clearly become something of a paradise for Jim. He wants to remain there forever, and he finally feels as if he has been freed from the taint of the Patna incident, through his own valor and noble intentions. He even tells Marlow that the people of Patusan wouldn't believe the story of the Patna, so convinced are they of his essential character. But, just as the darkness of the night hides some of the essential squalor of Patusan--the ramshackle buildings, the fetid mud--so too does the overlay of romance hide the fundamental problem with Jim. He may have the love of a remarkable woman and the trust of an entire people, but he still feels compelled to justify himself and confront Marlow over Marlow's faith in his character ("[Y]ou wouldn't like to have me aboard your own ship--hey?"). Marlow's presence in Patusan is contaminating in some way, since he can testify to Jim's previous failure, yet it is also essential, for Marlow is still the one who must preserve Jim's story. The narrative remains distant from Jim. Marlow gathers information through conversations with other people (Doramin, Jewel) and by making assumptions based on observations; why, for instance, is Tamb'ltam always lurking just outside Marlow's room? Jim is trapped in a horrible paradox. He is somehow "too good" for Patusan; therefore, his presence there must indicate a dark secret that makes it impossible for him to live in the outside world. Those closest to him suspect a problem, and demand answers of Marlow.

Once again, too, a problem arises concerning language and knowledge. Marlow notes that "three hundred miles beyond the end of telegraph cables and mail-boat lines, the haggard utilitarian lies of our civilization wither and die, to be replaced by pure exercises of imagination." Although he has become a man of public action, Jim is still an inscrutable figure. Those around him wonder about his past, while spectacular rumors circulate outside of Patusan. The corrupt official Marlow encounters has taken the name "Jewel" literally, assuming that Jim is in possession of a large gemstone rather than a loving companion. Again, as with the "cur" and "water" incidents much earlier in the text, language--a single word--is subjected to interpretation. The interpreter, in this case the official, makes the same mistake Jim has made previously: he projects his own interests and his own view of the world onto another's language, and in the process language preserves and asserts its own essential inscrutability. Separated from those who give it life, language becomes subject to "pure exercises of imagination." The narrative's distance from Jim, combined with increasingly frequent glimpses of Marlow retelling this story at a much later date, calls into question whether any "truth" lies behind this story. The claim that "[r]omance ha[s] singled Jim for its own" suggests that there is something fundamentally obscure and fictionalized about the account being given to us.

## Chapters 34 - 36

### Summary

Marlow, preparing to leave Patusan, visits the grave of the Dutch-Malay woman. In the darkness and silence, he fancies himself the last man on earth and remarks on the forgotten, lost nature of Patusan. Cornelius appears and begins to talk. Marlow, noting regretfully that he seems to be "doomed to be the recipient of confidences," has no choice but to listen. Cornelius tries to justify his treatment of Jim, citing his fear of Rajah Allang and his need to play both sides to save himself. Marlow tells Cornelius that Jim has forgiven him, although Marlow knows that Cornelius actively hates Jim and that Jim does not trust Cornelius. Cornelius rages at Jim, questioning his intentions toward Patusan, and at Jewel, comparing her to her late mother. He then asks Marlow to talk to Jim for him. Cornelius wants a monetary gift in exchange for his continued guardianship of the girl after Jim returns home. Astounded at the man's vulgarity, Marlow informs him that Jim will not be leaving Patusan. Cornelius erupts in a fit of anger and frustration.

Marlow leaves Patusan the next morning. Jim accompanies him down the river to the coast, as they journey by canoe "through the very heart of untouched wilderness." They alight at the coastal village, where two of the fishermen ask for an audience with Jim. He and Marlow take leave of one another; for the first time, Jim speaks of the intense strain he feels at trying to "go on forever holding up [his] end, to feel sure that nothing" of his past can come back to spoil his success. Marlow tells him they will not meet again, unless Jim leaves Patusan. Marlow departs for his ship, while Jim takes up with the fishermen. Drawing away from shore, Jim's white-clad figure remains visible long after other details have vanished.

Marlow ends his storytelling session here. At this time, he has no further knowledge of Jim, and the story seems destined to remain incomplete. The narrative skips ahead two years, when one of Marlow's audience receives a packet from Marlow containing a sheaf of documents. This man, who remains unnamed, is the greatest doubter of Marlow's take on Jim's story, but he is also the most interested, and the most polemical; he declared that for Jim to dedicate his life to the non-white inhabitants of Patusan was like ""selling your soul to a brute."" (The use of triple quotes here is remarkable for its rarity, for the simple reason that it is correct, and because it is uniquely evocative of Conrad's dense, layered narratives.) The packet contains a letter from Marlow explaining that the enclosed papers represent the best he has been able to do in piecing together the rest of Jim's story. It also contains a letter from Jim, in which he continues to try to justify himself and his plans to Marlow; a very old letter with moral advice from Jim's father, the parson; and a manuscript, written by Marlow, detailing the rest of Jim's adventures. Marlow tells the packet's recipient that he "affirm[s] nothing" of the truth or the meaningfulness of his account, that perhaps Jim's final message is, in fact, in the words that Jim had wished to send to the outside world, nothing.

### Commentary

Marlow's interpretation of Jim shifts dramatically during this section. As he is leaving Patusan, he sees Jim, standing on the beach, as "the heart of a vast enigma." In the letter to his friend, however, he declares that Jim is no longer the "white speck at the heart of an immense mystery" but "of full stature, standing disregarded. . .with a stern and romantic aspect, but always mute, dark--under a cloud." Marlow's initial evaluation, that Jim stands at the center of an enigma, suggests that the vagueness and difficulty that surround him can be interpreted--after all, mysteries and enigmas have implied solutions, if only one is capable of finding them. If Jim is already of "full stature," though, and is merely "mute" and clouded, then perhaps the vagueness and confusion surrounding him are all there is to know. Jim's story gains a few layers of distance in this section, too, becoming not a direct account but a patchwork put together by Marlow from different sources. Marlow is no longer telling the story in person, either. It comes to the nameless reader from a distance, as a written text. No longer can the audience interrogate Marlow; he's not there. Jim's story becomes more of a fictional construct, more of an attempt to impose meaning on a series of events that may not have any intrinsic meaning. Marlow tells his friend that "[i]t is impossible to see [Jim] clearly." "There shall be no message," he says, "unless such as each of us can interpret for himself from the language of facts, that are so often more enigmatic than the craftiest arrangement of words." This statement highlights the doubled confusion in Marlow's story: not only is his set of "facts" vague and open to subjective manipulation, but language--that which conveys the facts--is also "crafty" and arranged. This is why Marlow sends the remainder of Jim's story to the person who has shown the most doubt in the exalted meaning Marlow ascribes to it; the nameless recipient of Marlow's package will be the one least likely to find in Jim's story something that's not there.

Once again in this section, people approach Marlow seeking to access Jim. Marlow is, of course, the sole point of connection between "just Jim" and "Lord Jim," the only person who has contact with him in both his Patna and his Patusan days. Jim may feel secure in his new little world, but the fact that people are constantly turning to Marlow for information should make him nervous.

## Chapters 37 and 38

### Summary

Marlow's narrative begins by describing an encounter with a dying pirate, Gentleman Brown. Marlow tells us that Brown's story will fill in the gaps of a narrative he has gotten from a visit to Stein's many months before. Arriving at Stein's, Marlow recognizes a Bugis whom he had occasionally seen at Jim's. Entering Stein's house, Marlow finds Tamb'ltam, and asks him if Jim is there. Tamb'ltam looks distraught and says, cryptically, "He would not fight." Stein takes Marlow to see Jewel, who is also at his house. The people from Patusan arrived two days ago, according to their host. Jewel, quietly and calmly, reminds Marlow that she had predicted that Jim would leave her, as all men do. She gives Marlow a brief sketch of events, an account that is not shared with the reader. She is too distraught to talk more, and, when Marlow encounters her later in the day, he upsets her still further by pointing out that her distrust of Jim probably contributed to whatever has happened. Stein reassures her that Jim was true, and tells her he will try to explain it to her someday. Marlow leaves Stein's house in the company of Tamb'ltam, who completes Jewel's narrative (again, the information about what happened to Jim is not shared with the reader).

Marlow begins to tell the story of Jim's final fate by relating the history of Gentleman Brown, a successful pirate who has become the representative ruffian of the area. Brown is dying, sheltered in the hovel of a dissolute white man in Bangkok who worships Brown's legend and feels privileged to let him die in his home. Brown tells Marlow that he had a run of bad luck, beginning with his capture at the hands of a Spanish patrol boat while smuggling guns. He managed to bribe his way into an escape, stealing another ship to replace his, which had been disabled by his captors. Unfortunately, the stolen ship had very little in the way of fresh water or provisions on board, and Brown feared entering port in a stolen vessel. Dying of hunger, he recalls hearing of the remote territory of Patusan. He and his crew anchor off the fishing village and make their way upriver in a boat from their ship. The fishermen have managed to get a warning to the people of Patusan, though, and Brown and his crew are attacked the moment they land. They are forced to retreat to a small hilltop, where they dig in.

### Commentary

Marlow's interview with Gentleman Brown is similar in structure to his interview with the alcoholic second engineer of the Patna. These two morally, mentally, and physically corrupted men serve as conduits for parts of Jim's story. Brown is another figure who can be viewed as an alternate to Jim. His life is patterned on romantic tales and abstract ideas of heroics, albeit rather immoral ones. He, too, is largely motivated by fear of being held responsible for his earlier actions, as the next chapters will show. But there is a realism to Brown's struggle to realize his mental image of himself, a realism that Jim's story lacks. Brown is a small-time bandit, a blackmailer of poor villagers; his mistress dies almost immediately after he steals her away from her missionary husband; he himself is constantly subjected to the exigencies of everyday life--thirst, hunger, illness; and he dies horribly, choking to death in a Bangkok slum. Brown's fate is an important contrast to Jim's, which will become clear in a few chapters. Brown represents the real-life version of romantic tales. His life story is the generic bastard child that occurs when romance tries to become reality. Jim's story will end tragically, but aesthetically. Jim's attempt to make heroic tales come to life is not as successful as Brown's, though. Brown has always been a man of action, while Jim is still marked by his failure to act heroically aboard the Patna. Perhaps this accounts for the differing fates of their stories: Brown becomes the very type of the South Pacific ruffian, known even to those back "home" in Europe, while Jim is only of interest to a coterie of sympathetic individuals, who must struggle to piece together the final chapter of his history, and who still find his tale essentially indecipherable. Jewel's reaction to Marlow and his comments to her compromise his claim to Jim's memory. Marlow has often been cruel to Jim in their conversations, but his harshness in the face of Jewel's grief seems extreme. Jewel predicted Jim's eventual infidelity based on her own life experience and that of her mother. She seems intelligent and credible, and in the end she turns out to be right: Jim does abandon her in favor of something else, something he perceives to be better, an ideal. Stein immediately aligns himself with Marlow in his interpretation of Jim's actions (which, remember, are still mysterious to the reader). Jewel suggests that there is an alternative story here, one in which the worst thing may not be the failure to realize a heroic ideal but instead may be the betrayal of

the people closest to one. Her take on the situation finds the actions that will be detailed in the succeeding chapters selfish rather than unselfishly honest, and her version of the story, if it were told, would consider Dain Waris's fate, not Jim's, to be the tragic outcome. That Marlow privileges the account he gets from Gentleman Brown rather than the versions from Jewel or Tamb'ltam is suggestive. On the other hand, Marlow, again, is the only person in the novel who has known Jim both in his moment of greatest failure and at his time of greatest triumph, so perhaps he is the only individual who has the necessary perspective to judge Jim truly.

## Chapters 39 - 42

### Summary

Dain Waris leads the initial attack against Gentleman Brown and his men. Unfortunately, he is not able to rally his people effectively enough to rout the pirate, and Jim, who could provide the inspiration and leadership needed, is away in the countryside. A council of war is held, at which everyone's personal motives get in the way of agreement; Doramin wishes to protect his son, and Rajah Allang, who is pretending to cooperate, is secretly working to form an alliance with Brown to bring Jim down. The Rajah's representative contacts Cornelius and arranges for him to serve as a go-between with Brown. Cornelius is a little too persuasive as to the friendliness of the Rajah, the charms of Patusan, and the ease with which he claims Jim can be defeated. Brown decides to stay and fight, not just for supplies and a chance to escape, but to try to seize the territory for himself. Meanwhile, Dain Waris has sent canoes downstream to seal Brown's avenue of escape and reinforcement. Brown dallies with Cornelius and the Rajah, buying time and always intending to double-cross them. One of Brown's men shoots a villager from a great distance. The pirate hopes that this will evoke fear among the people of Patusan, and that they will overestimate his strength. As night falls, one of Brown's men sneaks down to their beached boat to get some tobacco that has been left there. He is not cautious enough, however, and he is shot by a relative of the villager who was killed earlier in the day. Brown and his men have to listen to the dying moans of their comrade for several hours; it is not until the tide comes in, drowning him and carrying him off, that his screams cease.

Cornelius and Brown talk again. Drums begin to beat in the village, and fires are lit. Cornelius tells Brown that this is a sign that Jim has returned, and that Jim will surely come to talk to him face to face. He recommends that Brown have one of his men shoot Jim from a position of cover. This action, he says, will give Brown the psychological edge and enable him to defeat the Bugis. The next morning, Jim indeed approaches Brown's stronghold. He and Brown speak warily. Jim asks him what has brought him to Patusan; Brown replies simply, "Hunger," and redirects the question toward Jim. Jim is startled. Brown asks him to remember that they are both white men, and then requests that his men either be ambushed directly or allowed to leave, rather than left to starve and suffer like "rat[s] in a trap." He admits to Jim that his greatest fear is of prison, and that this fear is what has motivated him his entire life, even at this very moment. Marlow, listening to the story at Brown's deathbed, wonders how much of Brown's account is the truth. Jim, bothered by something, says little to Brown, but promises him "a clear road [out] or else a clear fight" and leaves. Cornelius rages at Brown for not shooting Jim when he had the chance.

Jim goes directly to Doramin to recommend that Brown be allowed to escape unharmed. Doramin is reluctant. Jim appeals to the people, reminding them that he has never led them wrong. Doramin still hesitates, and Jim declares that, if they are to fight, he will not lead. Dain Waris will have to command.

### Commentary

Gentleman Brown does the one thing nearly every other character in this novel is afraid to do: he asks Jim what it was that he hoped to gain by coming to Patusan. Brown is honest about his own motives and fears, and Jim realizes that he has been living a lie. Brown speaks the truth about Jim; to have him killed would seem like just another attempt at deceit. In recommending that Brown be let go, Jim does what is honorable for his personal reputation, not what is best for Patusan. In part, Brown defeats Jim by speaking the "truth" about him; in part, Jim defeats himself by adhering to a false ideal. In offering to defer to Dain Waris, Jim is exercising the only option available to him that compromises neither himself nor Patusan. No heroic action is possible.

Marlow questions the veracity of Brown's account of his conversation with Jim. This is an implicit reminder to the reader to question Marlow's account, to remember that we are receiving the story just as Marlow does--in fragments. More obviously, however, Marlow is upset because Brown has appealed to Jim on the basis of being "one of us"; through their conversation runs "a vein of subtle reference to their common blood, an assumption of common experience; a sickening suggestion of

common guilt. . ." This, of course, is exactly the foundation on which Marlow has premised his own identification with Jim. Now it seems to link Marlow, through Jim, to Brown.

Issues of racial dynamics also arise in this section. Dain Waris is unable to defeat Brown initially because he does not possess the mystique of the white man, according to the narrative. The people of Patusan seem to have a faith in Jim that is naïve in the extreme, based solely on his status as a white man. When Jim returns from the countryside, things immediately return to normal despite the continued presence of Brown and his men on the hilltop. On the other hand, it is Cornelius who behaves the most despicably in this section of the novel, and Doramin who will turn out to be right. Also, it is Brown who tells this part of the story, and therefore it is his opinions that we are receiving. Nevertheless, Jim is being asked to choose between the people of Patusan and a fellow white man, and the situation is certainly racially charged.

## Chapters 43 -45

### Summary

Swayed by the people's faith in Jim and his own fear of risking his son Dain Waris, Doramin agrees to let Gentleman Brown and his men escape. Preparations are made. Jewel begs an exhausted Jim not to take active command. He tells her that every life in Patusan is his responsibility now, since the people have placed their trust in his opinion. Tamb'ltam is sent downriver to notify Dain Waris that Brown is to be allowed to pass. He takes with him Stein's silver ring as a token of his identity. Jim sends Cornelius to Brown with a note informing him that he will be allowed to go. Cornelius delivers the note, then tells Brown that an armed party headed by Dain Waris, the very man who ambushed Brown initially, waits downstream. Cornelius also tells Brown that there is an alternate river channel that will take him directly behind Dain Waris's camp, and that he, Cornelius, can guide Brown's men down it.

Two hours before dawn, in a thick fog, Brown and his men head down the river. Jim calls out that he will try to send them some food. Unbeknownst to those ashore, Cornelius accompanies Brown. When they reach the alternate channel, Cornelius takes over the navigation. Meanwhile, Tamb'ltam reaches Dain Waris's camp with news of the truce. He gives Dain Waris the silver ring, which Dain Waris slips on his finger. A moment later, Gentleman Brown lands his boat behind the camp to take his revenge "upon the world." He and his men open fire. Many fall dead, including Dain Waris, who takes a bullet in the forehead. Brown and his men leave as quickly as they came.

Tamb'ltam, who has not been hurt, rushes to his canoe to get the news to Doramin and Jim. At the water's edge, he finds Cornelius struggling to launch a boat and escape. Tamb'ltam strikes him twice, killing him. Marlow digresses for a moment to report that a ship's boat was picked up a month after the massacre in the middle of the Indian Ocean. On board were Brown and two of his men, who claimed that they had been transporting a cargo of sugar when their ship sprung a leak and sunk. The two men died aboard the rescue vehicle; Brown has survived to tell Marlow this story. Returning to the main narrative, Marlow recounts Tamb'ltam's arrival back in Patusan. He finds Jewel, who immediately fears Doramin's wrath for the death of his son. Next he carries the news to Jim, who prepares to go fight. Tamb'ltam reluctantly informs him that he is no longer safe among the people of Patusan. This realization hits Jim hard. Tamb'ltam and Jewel urge Jim to fight for his life. Jim seems not to hear them and orders that the gates of his compound be opened and his men dismissed. Dain Waris's body is brought to Doramin's courtyard. Stein's silver ring is found on his finger. Doramin lets out a bellow and the crowd begins to murmur, realizing that the ring could only have come from Jim. Jim prepares to leave his house. Jewel reminds him of his promise not to leave her, and he tells her that he would no longer be worth having if he didn't leave. He departs for Doramin's. Tamb'ltam recalls the frightful aspect of the sky, and Marlow notes that a cyclone passed near Patusan on that very day.

Jim arrives at Doramin's. Approaching the old man, he declares himself sorrowful and unarmed. Doramin stands, sending the silver ring rolling toward Jim. Doramin shoots Jim through the heart, and Jim falls dead. Marlow ends the narrative reiterating the dark, romantic nature of Jim's life and his "extraordinary success." Yet, for Marlow, Jim remains "inscrutable at heart," and the meaning of the narrative is still in question.

### Commentary

It is Marlow, not Jim, who has the last word on Jim's life, noting simply that "[h]e is gone, inscrutable at heart." The word "heart" has been associated with Jim over and over again. He is described both as having a core, or "heart," that is in some way unknowable or confusing, and also as being at the "heart" of some vast puzzle. The doubled use of this word points back to some of the earlier incidents of confusion over language ("cur," "water," "jewel") and the failure of language to

have a definitive meaning. Jim's life has no definitive meaning either. The two "hearts" associated with Jim are also suggestive of one of the fundamental problems of the novel: is Jim in fact representative of something larger than himself? Is there an "us" that he is "one of"? Whether he is at the heart of the inscrutable or merely inscrutable at heart is the fundamental question Marlow must answer. By deferring to Stein, and speaking of Stein's approaching end, and by finishing the narrative in a manuscript rather than in another session of storytelling, Marlow avoids the question. Perhaps it is a question that cannot be answered at all; as Marlow notes, some days Jim seems very real to him, some days Jim seems not to have existed at all.

As Marlow notes, Jim has "[gone] away from a living woman to celebrate his pitiless wedding with a shadowy ideal of conduct." Marlow thus assigns Jim's story to the realm of romance. The ending of *Lord Jim* suggests more of a fatal collision between romance and realism than any sort of viable, pure romance, though. Jim's choice of the "shadowy ideal of conduct" has led to the deaths of Dain Waris and other men, and to the destruction of Jewel's world. Had Jim not dwelt so fixedly on his failure in the Patna incident, he would have ordered the deaths of Brown and his men, and all would have been well in Patusan. On the other hand, had Jim not dwelt so fixedly on the Patna, he would never have come to Patusan, and arguably not only he but also the people of Patusan are better off for his presence. Idealism and notions of heroism lead to nothing but paradox and sadness. This novel has more in common with Hemingway's tales of damaged and disillusioned men or T.S. Eliot's narratives of the forlorn and impotent than it does with earlier works in which moral upstandingness leads to death with honor, if not a happy ending complete with riches and beautiful women. That this section contains more of the trappings of traditional swashbuckling romance (the ring as token, the hero going to his death, the heartbroken heroine) is meant to highlight the contrast. The ending is a mixed one: Jim dies, with a curious mixture of honor and shame, in a manner at least somewhat similar to an old-fashioned hero, while Marlow, like one of Hemingway's protagonists, is left alive, sadder but not necessarily wiser.

This is also a section heavier in symbolism than most. The fog which envelops Brown and his men as they head downriver contrasts with the extreme clarity with which Marlow last sees Jim, on the beach with the fishermen. It is also indicative of the amorphous morality of both Brown's and Jim's actions. Brown, after all, thinks he has been double-crossed, based on the information Cornelius has given him. Jim, as we have already seen, is caught in a bind. The night of the Patna's accident was crystal-clear and still; nothing should have obscured Jim's decision-making then. Because he failed then, yet has held on to his ideals, situations no longer have clear solutions. Brown, too, although he seems to be acting logically, is also punished, by being shipwrecked soon afterward and dying a long, drawn-out death. Weather, though, is the primary vehicle for symbolic content. When the fog clears off, Tamb'ltam reports, the sky is in turmoil. Marlow attributes this to a cyclone passing nearby. This is another moment when romance and realism are at odds. In a romantic world, the cyclone would have descended upon Patusan at the moment of Jim's death, symbolizing the disorder in the world that led to the destruction of our hero. In a realistic world, weather would be ordinary and meaningless. The cyclone's close approach suggests a failure of both models; somehow, Jim's death must be given import, yet the issues surrounding it are too muddled and romance too outmoded for the full symbolic performance to occur. This cyclone should be contrasted to the squall that hits the Patna, as well as to the rumored hurricane that wipes out Chester and Robinson's guano-collecting expedition to the Walpole Reef. Here, finally, the storm--the symbol of higher powers or order--fails to impose its meaning.

### Analysis

*Lord Jim* is remarkable for its elaborately woven scheme of narration, which is similar in many ways to that of *The Good Soldier*, a novel written by Conrad's friend and collaborator Ford Madox Ford. The narrative comes to the reader primarily through Marlow, a world-weary sea captain who identifies deeply with Jim's fallibilities. Marlow has complete control over the story, though, and he exercises his power in increasingly complicated ways. Time is broken up: in a single paragraph of narration, Marlow will reference the past, the present, and the future. By manipulating the flow of the narrative, Marlow is able to create juxtapositions and contrasts that highlight particular aspects of the story. He is a master at withholding information: Jim's final fate becomes a matter for discussion eight chapters before the reader learns what that fate actually is. This creates suspense, of course, but it also allows Marlow to shape the reader's eventual reaction when he or she does receive the relevant information. Marlow also offers the reader narrative blocks from a variety of sources, of differing degrees of reliability. Much of the story has come from Jim, but significant sections have come from other characters or have been pieced together by Marlow based on inference. Information is conveyed by letters, midnight conversations, deathbed interviews,

forwarded manuscripts, and, most significantly, in the form of a tale told to an audience of listeners. The narrative occasionally breaks to show Marlow telling Jim's story to a group of acquaintances at a much later date. Temporally, this scene of storytelling takes place after Jim's arrival in Patusan but before the arrival of Gentleman Brown and Jim's eventual defeat. Marlow must thus leave the story unfinished for a time. He completes it by sending a manuscript to one member of his audience. This shift from an oral mode of storytelling to a written form of narrative is significant. A storyteller has the power to shape his material to match his audience's response; a writer, on the other hand, who works in solitude, must offer his distant reader a predetermined message.

Marlow constantly ponders the "message"--the meaning of Jim's story. His language is dense with terms like "inscrutable" and "inexplicable," words that denote imprecision and indecipherability, but which also possess a certain quality of uncertainty in themselves, as words. He struggles to name things, and is often reduced to wondering if there even is a meaning to Jim's story and his fascination with it. Sometimes he concludes that the meaning is an "enigma"; sometimes he decides there is no meaning to be found at all. Words are constantly being contested in this novel; at least three major episodes center around the misinterpretation of a single spoken word. This uncertainty about language is the key feature of Conrad's style. Conrad is the master of a high, elegiac language that seems to contain depths of profundity nearly inexpressible in words. As one who did not learn English until he was in his twenties, he must certainly have been aware of each and every word he used, and each must have been carefully chosen. His language is often deliberately difficult, and in that quality his prose shares some of the features of modernism. But his diction also matches, in its linguistic difficulty, the thematic and interpretive difficulty of his material. This synthesis between form and content is powerful, making Conrad's prose a thing of tortured beauty.

Even more tortured is the analysis of idealism and heroism that lies at the center of Lord Jim. Jim is a young man who enters the world motivated primarily by fantasies of daring and noble deeds lifted from cheap novels. His ideals break down, however, in the face of real danger; they are, in fact, untenable when applied to any form of reality. This naïve idealism seems absurd when it leads to Jim's refusal to forget the Patna incident, but it leads to real tragedy when he allows it to guide his conduct when Patusan is threatened. What is honorable behavior in this world? Captain Brierly, who is presented as the prime example of success both professionally and in terms of character, can't live with himself and commits suicide. Gentleman Brown, one of the most self-possessed and self-scrutinizing of men, is nothing but a petty bandit. All these men are connected by being what Marlow calls "one of us," but what does that term mean? Ideals are a troublesome burden, and each character reveals to some degree a fear that he will be confronted with a situation in which he must choose between ideals of conduct and a happy outcome.

Like many of Conrad's works, Lord Jim is set in a colonial world. The critique of colonialism is much less central here, however, than in a novel like Heart of Darkness. Colonialism is most important as a backdrop to the action and the moral struggles. In this world, the rules of "home" (i.e. European society) do not necessarily apply, particularly when one is dealing with men who aren't white. National affiliations are much more tenuous, too. Other allegiances--the idea of being "one of us" versus "one of them," for example--take their place, altering expectations of honorable behavior. Most of all, though, Lord Jim is a novel about storytelling, and in the confusion and convolutions of its narrative form are reflected the ambiguities of its ideals and its setting.