

THE IDEE FIXE AS IT MANIFESTS ITSELF IN
CERTAIN OF CONRAD'S CHARACTERS

A THESIS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
Chapter I. Introduction	1
Chapter II. Fixed Idea	4
Chapter III. Conrad's Use of the Fixed Idea	10
Chapter IV. Fixed Ideas in Conrad's Stories of Tragedy.	17
Captain Hagberd	18
Jasper Allen	20
Captain Whalley	24
James Wait	28
Almayer	34
Charles Gould	41
Nostromo	45
Chapter V. Fixed Ideas in Conrad's Stories of Comedy	52
Falk	53
Karain	56
Lord Jim	59
The Secret Sharer	65
Lieutenant Feraud	67
Chapter VI. Conclusion	70

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The critics and biographers of Joseph Conrad mention in their discussions of his works that his characters go through mental struggles and that their decisions are based upon ideas which dominate their lives. The writer became interested in studying these characters from the point of view of the psychologist's definition of the fixed idea.

The purpose of this study is to show that certain of the characters in the novels of Joseph Conrad are outstanding illustrations of people dominated by fixed ideas. It is not the purpose to diagnose the strength or weakness of this idea or to question the sanity of the characters. It is to demonstrate that slowly but surely the life of each person discussed is molded or directed by some dominant idea which colors each event in the life of the character.

The characters chosen for this study are outstanding in the stories from which they are taken. Other characters are mentioned by critics, and Conrad has stated in the books themselves that some of his minor characters are victims of fixed ideas. The writer does not claim to have exhausted the possibilities of Conrad's use of the fixed idea, but she has used some of the outstanding male characters who are dominated by fixed ideas.

The survey method is to be used. Each character will be discussed separately and quotations from the critics will be given first, followed by quotations from Conrad and from the story. Some of the latter will be the individual's own words; others will be descriptions or comments from the other characters. The characters will be grouped according to the nature of the story, comedy or tragedy.

So far as the writer is aware the following are the only other studies made of Conrad's works. These she has read and makes the following reviews.

Lydia M. Budziak has written a study entitled Joseph Conrad as a Novelist in which she discusses Conrad's genius and evaluates his novels and stories. This study is written from the standpoint of literary criticism and illustration. The only quotation which is suitable for the writer's study is:

They [his novels] are a series of studies in temperaments, deduced from slight incidents; studies in emotion with very little to hold together the one or two scraps of action, out of which they are woven. 1

Johnnie Fallow Bozard discusses The Point of View of the Novels of Joseph Conrad from the definitions of point of view given by literary critics. Two types are used: internal and external. Two quotations seem to bear on the present study.

Conrad likes to picture to his readers his characters struggling with some definite catastrophe or idea.

1 Lydia M. Budziak. Joseph Conrad as a Novelist. Master's thesis from St. Louis University, 1930, pp. 51, p. 48.

The plot [Nostromo] is concerned with a working out, within definite limits of time and space, of the perception that material interests tragically circumscribe all human lives. 2

Cora May Overton in The Treatment of Duty in the Writing of Joseph Conrad gives true and false conceptions of duty which manifested themselves in the lives of Conrad's characters. The few quotations which bear directly on this topic will be given in connection with the discussions with which they are associated.³

Kent W. Francis has made a study in which the spirit life is brought out in relation to Conrad's characters and the experiences they have. One quotation from "The Planter of Malata" speaks of the dead man following at the elbow of the character.⁴

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- 2 Johnnie Fallow Bozard. The Point of View of the Novels by Joseph Conrad. Master's Thesis from the University of Virginia, 1930, pp. 73, p. 7.
- 3 Cora May Overton. The Treatment of Duty in the Writing of Joseph Conrad. Master's thesis from the University of Iowa, 1928, pp. 160.
- 4 Kent Wheeler Francis. A Study of Animism in the Writings of Joseph Conrad. Master's thesis University of Iowa, 1930, p. 13.

CHAPTER II

THE IDÉE FIXE

The fixed idea or idée fixe, as it is written in French, is a general term under which may be included imperative and insistent ideas, obsessions, and certain forms of hysteria. All of these terms refer to lesser or greater degrees of the dwelling of the mind upon one object, idea, or situation. The recurrence of a tune, devotion to a religious or political cause, intense love of a person or thing, and the insane man's idea of being persecuted all show varying degrees of this idée fixe. The normal individual, as well as the abnormal person, may have a fixed idea. He may be swayed by his devotion to a cause just as much as a person may be dominated by an insane idea.

The writer gives in the following paragraphs definitions of the fixed idea by various authorities in the field of psychology. It will be noted that these authorities agree upon the fundamental assumption that the fixed idea dominates the personality for a length of time. Some authorities dwell principally upon the abnormal manifestations of fixed ideas, and others take a more general view. The definition adopted for this study was selected because it takes a broader view and gives three types of the fixed idea thus affording a more flexible dealing with certain characters of Conrad's stories

who, according to the critics, are suffering from dominating ideas. Some of these ideas are obsessions, while others are ideas of a more nearly normal mind.

Baldwin defines the fixed idea in terms of the insane.

The fixed idea, when used in the sense of a delusion, refers to a morbid or false conception which dominates the reasoning processes of the patient, and forms an integral part of his insanity. 1

Thompson shows us the varying degrees of the idée fixe.

Besides the casual and frequently recurring ideas there are certain dominant, overvalued, relatively fixed ideas. In its extreme form it is known as fanaticism and when it reaches pathological proportions it is called an obsession. A dominant idea somehow gets to the focus of consciousness and refuses to leave or retract from the focal point. 2

Myers gives a more complete explanation going from the slightest form to the greater manifestations.

The first symptom of disaggregation is thus the idée fixe . . . the persistence of an uncontrolled and unmodifiable group of thoughts or emotions, which from their brooding isolation become special alien and intrusive so that some special idea or image presses into consciousness with undue and painful frequency.

The fixed idea may be little more than an indurated prejudice which hurts when pressed upon. It may be like a hypertrophied center of inflammation which sends its smart and ache abroad through the organism.

Hardly any mind I suppose is wholly free from

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- 1 J. M. Baldwin. Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology. Macmillan Company, London, 1901, Vol. I, p. 388.
 - 2 M. K. Thompson. The Springs of Human Action. D. Appleton Company, 1927, pp. 501, p. 149.

tendencies to certain types of thought or emotion for which we cannot summon any adequate check--useless recurrent brooding over past or anxieties for the future, perhaps traces of old childish experience which have become too firmly fixed ever wholly to disappear. 3

Janet explains these ideas as results of something similar to suggestion.

The most of the more apparent accidents result from 'fixed ideas', that is to say, from erroneous but fixed beliefs, developed by a psychic mechanism analogous to that of suggestion. 4

Bridges gives the varying stages again.

The patient may consider the idea as a normal expression of his personality. The idea harmonizes with other aspects of his mental life. This is called a fixed idea. Fixed ideas occur in mentally healthy persons as well as mentally diseased. Ambition and the desire for revenge are fixed ideas in ordinary life. 5

Taylor explains the subconscious process in the fixed idea.

Then there are the preoccupations in which too vivid memory or fixed idea, instead of periodically driving all others from consciousness, is itself downed in the conflict, dissociated from consciousness uninterruptedly, yet keeps on functioning coconsciously, literally as a subconscious preoccupation. This is the 'subconscious fixed idea' of Janet. 6

The author quoted in the last reference gives a definition used in an experiment.

Any idea which came unsolicited and remained even

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- 3 F. H. Myers. Human Personality. Longmans, Green & Company, New York and London, 1919, pp. 33, 41.
- 4 Pierre Janet. Principles of Psychotherapy. Macmillan Company, 1924, p. 257
- 5 J. W. Bridges. Psychology Normal and Abnormal. D. Appleton & Company, New York and London, 1930, p. 282.
- 6 W. S. Taylor. Morton Prince and Abnormal Psychology. D. Appleton and Company, New York, 1928, pp. 59-60.

when the subject tried to get rid of it.

Cowles gives the following explanation.

There may be every degree of development of these disorders, from the slightest departure from normal intellection to pronounced delusional conceptions. Also, that instead of passing in the typical way from stage to stage the process may be arrested at any point in its progress and remain at a chronic stasis during the remainder of a lifetime. There are some in which the idea is not so 'fixed' as to be always dominant. It can be resisted, more or less successfully, at will.

It might be expected to be nearer the truth to say that insistent and fixed ideas, especially in their milder and often 'corrected' forms, are common to healthy minds and brains, or to those which have no more 'acquired instability' or neurasthenia than would be argued as existing in a melancholia or mania of an ordinary insanity. 8

Morgan gives two definitions which show the different manifestations of the fixed idea. The longer one is the one chosen by the writer as the clearest explanation for the idée fixe, as that term is used in this thesis.

When the fear becomes so dominant that it disrupts the person's whole life, it falls into the group of morbid fears that are called phobias. Morbid fears are closely connected with morbid ideas that become fixed, which the individual may or may not admit to be foolish, but which no amount of reasoning can dispel.

Fixed ideas, impulsive acts, and morbid fears all rest upon the same type of cause and are very likely to be mixed up together in the same individual. 9

The definition to be used in this study is divided into

7 W. S. Taylor. Readings in Abnormal Psychology and Mental Hygiene. D. Appleton & Company, New York, 1926, p. 620.
8 Edward Cowles. "Insistent and Fixed Ideas" in AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGY, Vol. 1, pp. 222, 244.
9 J. J. B. Morgan. The Psychology of the Unadjusted School Child. Macmillan Company, New York, 1924, p. 217.

three parts to show three stages of ideas which may be classed under fixations. The first is the persistent idea.

Persistent is the term used to describe the tendency for certain associations with slight affective value to recur repeatedly. 10

An air from an opera is given as an illustration.

The second part of this explanation covers the fixed idea of the normal person.

The term fixed idea is used to designate those associations which tend to persist to a greater degree than simple persistent ideas, but which are so moderate that they are neither undesirable nor regarded as pathological but which harmonize with other mental associations and ideas of the individual. 11

He then tells us that often they are recognized and wear off.

In other cases the fixed idea becomes a definite part of the person's make up and plays a large part in determining his reactions to different situations. 12

Ambitions are given as an illustration of this.

Conrad's biographer had this part of the definition in mind when he said:

He does draw a type of mind to whom the domination of one idea has a terrible attraction. 13

Morgan gives a third classification which distinguishes between delusion and obsession.

On the other hand a person may have a fixed idea of undesirable affective value, such as the idea

10 J. J. B. Morgan. The Psychology of Abnormal People. Longmans, Green & Company, New York, 1920, pp. 130-132.

11 Ibid. pp. 130-132.

12 Ibid. pp. 130-132.

13 Richard Curle. Joseph Conrad. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1914, p. 93.

that some particular individual dislikes him. If such an impression takes too strong a grip upon the person, especially if it goes beyond the realm of reasonable truth it can be no longer classed as a fixed idea. It then becomes a delusion.

An obsession is an idea which has an undesirable affective tone, which the possessor recognizes as abnormal in strength, which he tries to banish, but which persists until the sufferer develops a feeling of subjection to it. He knows it is foolish but he can't get rid of it. 14

14 J. J. B. Morgan. Op. cit., pp. 130-132.

CHAPTER III

CONRAD'S USE OF THE FIXED IDEA

The critics and biographers of Joseph Conrad agree that his characters were largely dominated by fixed ideas. Some do not use that term and others do, but there remains the fact that they do agree that the characters were dominated by ideas which can not be neglected.

The following quotations taken from many authors and sources show their combined agreement in this.

Hugh Walpole says:

His [Conrad's] theory about these men is that they have, all of them, an idée fixe, that you must search for this patiently, honestly, unsparingly--having found it the soul of the man is revealed to you. 1

Follett states:

Every reader will have noticed in Conrad the enormous number of characters coloured and controlled, for good or evil, by something decisive in the past--oftenest by some loss, some appearance, it may even be of betrayal. 2

The same author in collaboration goes further into detail:

As a result of the inward bent of Mr. Conrad's mind and interest, it follows that no one else has written with so profound a sense of the awful privacy of the soul, the intense, palpitating secrecy which underlies even the most placid and composed phenomena of the everyday world . . .

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- 1 Hugh Walpole. Joseph Conrad. Writers of the Day-Series. Nisbet and Company, Ltd., London, p. 65.
- 2 Wilson Follett. Joseph Conrad. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1915, p. 31.

Every being is at the bottom irrepressible and trying to express itself, every truth is in essence a paradox and struggling for consistency. 3

To be a historian of hearts, in the sense of feeling the mysterious beauty of each individual adventure, is to be almost necessarily a historian of the lonely. Mr. Conrad speaks somewhere of 'the indestructible loneliness that surrounds, envelops, clothes every human soul from cradle to the grave, and, perhaps beyond'. And he chooses from the medley of lives those that are most detached from 'the community of hopes and fears', most cut off, by some agency of race, of inheritance, of character, or simply by chance, from participation in the life of civilized and social man. In the earlier stage of his work his bent was toward the man cut off by his own act; in the later stage it has been toward the man cut off by his own nature. But whether he writes about a disgraced man outlawed from society, or about a profoundly individual and solitary man locked in the unlighted cell of his own temperament, the meaning is always that there is a tragic beauty in our secret process of being ourselves; that the indestructible barriers of self are the most inexorable thing in the world. 4

The secret invisible thing that renders us alien to each other is the thing that Mr. Conrad is always trying to disentangle. When he has traced that thing to its source, and shown how it expresses itself in all the groping and baffled actions of the outward life, he has done his task. 5

Cross gives us:

Conrad's concern, first and last, was with the devious ways of human behavior.

The complete mind Conrad aimed to portray so far as he could understand it . . . What he was after is what is going on within, which may be inner destruction.

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- 3 Helen Follett and Wilson Follett. Contemporary Novelists--
Joseph Conrad, in ATLANTIC MONTHLY, Vol. 119, pp. 233-234
 (February 1917).
- 4 Ibid., p. 235.
- 5 Ibid., p. 236.

illusions as fixed ideas (or delusions) engrossing the mind may become the source of the most tragic emotions. 6

Henry S. Canby speaks in psychological terms:

To say that he [Conrad] strikes below the act and the will into realms of the subconscious, and studies the mechanism as well as the results of emotion, is but to place him, where indeed he belongs, among the many writers who have learned of Henry James or moved in parallels beside him.

For Conrad's tempests blow only to beat upon the mind whose behavior he is studying; his moral problems are raised only that he may study their effect upon man. 7

Seldes states:

His subject, his chief interest, has always been the same because it has never been anything except the gallant and valorous effort of human beings to solve the notable case of conscience which comes to every man at least once in a lifetime, and leaves him with the bitterness of wisdom or the satisfaction of having known life too profoundly ever to be enchanted by it again. 8

Pease tells us:

Yet seldom do we find modern literature engaged upon Conrad's task of illuminating that inner dark whose "cruel battles of hunger and thought" occur when a man strives to be "faithful to that ideal conception of one's own personality that every man sets up for himself secretly!" 9

- 6 Wilbur L. Cross. Four Contemporary Novelists. Macmillan Company, New York, 1920, pp. 35, 37, 47.
- 7 Henry S. Canby. Definitions--Essays in Contemporary Criticism. Conrad and Melville. Harcourt Brace & Company. pp. 261, 266, 267.
- 8 Gilbert Seldes. "A Novelist of Courage" in DIAL, Vol. 69 p. 192, (August, 1920).
- 9 Frank Pease. "Joseph Conrad" in NATION, Vol. 107, p. 511 (November 2, 1918).

H. L. Mencken says:

Conrad penetrates to the motive concealed in it (the overt act), the psychological spring and basis of it, the whole fabric of weakness, habit, and aberration underlying it. 10

Symons gives us:

Always there is some suggestion of a dark region within and around one: the consciousness that "They made a whole that had features, shades of expression, a complicated aspect that could be remembered by the eye, and something else besides, some thing invisible, a directing spirit of perdition that dwells within, like a malevolent soul in a detestible body. 11

Ferguson expresses the opinion:

Conrad cares only about what the action does to the souls of the people engaged in it. The incidents which make or break men's souls he describes in full, from the inside; those which leave the actors unchanged do not interest him. 12

Stephen Gwynn goes into more detail:

It is, I think, true to say that Mr. Conrad's concern is chiefly with those who have retained the castle-building habit, or else (like himself) have followed their dream till at last imagination and reality to some extent grew one.

But in the sea's life to which men are so often drawn by imagination, each adventurer soon finds himself biting into the tough core of reality and men learn there, living constantly in the presence of danger, that imagination may be the deadliest danger of all, affecting not a man's life, but his worth as a man.

Student of the imagination that he is, Mr. Conrad is concerned with all aspects of this faculty,

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- 10 H. L. Mencken. Book of Prefaces. Alfred A. Knopf., Borzoi, New York, p. 46.
- 11 Arthur Symons. "Conrad" in FORUM, Vol. 53, p. 580. (May, 1915).
- 12 Ferguson. "Essays on Suspense" in SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE, Vol. 2, p. 315. (November 14-24, 1925).

its power to prompt action, its power to inhibit, its ignoble no less than its high employment. 13

Dorothy Martin uses the term again:

Potential heroes they [Conrad's characters] become the puppets of their past, writhing before the ever-present vision of that "obscure and awful attribute in themselves", whereby they failed to take the chance life offered. The nobility within themselves, becoming their worst enemy, lets loose within them torments of intolerable self-mistrust, until they are life-long slaves of a fixed idea. 14

Ejorkman declares:

Conrad himself has declared that it is we alone who swayed by the audacity of our minds and the tremors of our hearts, are the sole artisans of all wonder and romance of the world. 15

Sper names the characters:

Across storm-swept arenas where hatred and sympathies either snarl or ache, roving oddities as Almayer, Axel Heyst, Falk, Karain, Lord Jim, Captain Whalley, Captain Anthony, and Captain Lingard are blown hither and yon, like so many Ishmaels wounded by self inflicted arrows, as they fight to win selfhood against an Ironie Power. 16

'This awful activity of mind' is seen at work on every page, torturing familiar words into strange meanings, clutching at cobwebs, in a continual despair before the unknown. 16

Rhys alleges:

He takes the moods, the impressions, the egotism, the sensual crazes, the delicate idolatries of men, and gives them the dramatic interest of an

- 13 Stephen Gwynn. "Novels of Joseph Conrad" in EDINBURGH REVIEW, Vol. 231, pp. 319, 320. (April, 1920).
- 14 Dorothy Martin. "Two Aspects of Conrad" in FREEMAN, Vol. 8, p. 11. (September 12, 1923).
- 15 E. Bjorkman. "Joseph Conrad: Master of Literary Color" in REVIEW OF REVIEWS, Vol. 46, pp. 559-560. (May, 1912).
- 16 Felix Sper. "Cream of Conrad" in POET LORE, Vol. 38, p. 423. (September, 1927).

actual event in the human comedy. 17

Knight expresses the ideas:

Most of his leading characters stand apart from their fellows. Some of them have hearkened to 'the faithful austerity of the sea'; some of them are ship-wrecked; one of them has eaten human flesh; one is a dying negro in a crew of hardy whites; one is a misunderstood Brother of the Coast ensnared, when past his prime, in a hopeless love; one is by extraordinary beauty placed in a perilous eminence; one has deserved contempt by cowardice in a sudden crisis; one is burdened with a silver mine which owns him; one is a commanding personality whose strength is exploited and whose generosity is imposed upon; one seeks to renounce love and hatred and to withdraw from the throng; several hold commands which elevate them above real comradeship. 18

Ruth M. Stauffer again uses the term:

Conrad's men and women are 'haunted by a fixed idea' to use his own phrase. It is Conrad's object to discover 'a complete singleness of motive behind the varied manifestations of a consistent character'. Every link in the series of happenings is chosen to fix our attention upon the temperamental uniqueness that constitutes the individual.

Every story thus becomes the history of one being around which are grouped the other personages of the plot, to further or obstruct the life of the protagonist. 19

The biographer says:

He likes to show us them battling with some definite catastrophe or idea. His people are faced with monstrous propositions . . . It is what I spoke of in my former paragraph--the power of

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- 17 E. Rhys. "Interview with Joseph Conrad" in BOOKMAN, Vol. 56, p. 408. (December 1912).
- 18 Grant C. Knight. The Novel in English, Richard C. Smith, Inc., New York, 1931, p. 312.
- 19 Ruth M. Stauffer. Joseph Conrad his Romantic Idealism. The Four Seas Company, Boston, 1922, p. 48.

the Idée fixe over Conrad's male portraits. 20

The instances in which Conrad has stated his use of the idée fixe in connection with a particular character will be given in the discussion with which it belongs. There are a few statements, however, which belong in this chapter.

Hueffer reports that when he and Conrad were working on Romance, Mr. Conrad said:

You must invent. You have got to make that fellow live perpetually under the shadow of the gallows. 21

Rhys tells us that Conrad said:

I have my psychological aim, first of all. That is quite distinct, and then I look out for some event, some personal adventure, some catastrophe if you like, to motiver my characters. 22

Conrad, himself, says:

I would wish him (the author) to look with a large forgiveness at men's ideas and prejudices which are by no means the outcome of malevolence but depend on their education, their social status, and even their professions. 23

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- 20 Richard Curle. Joseph Conrad. Doubleday Page, & Company, Garden City, New York, 1914, p. 94.
- 21 F. M. Ford. Joseph Conrad--A Personal Remembrance. Little, Brown, & Company. Boston, 1924, p. 43.
- 22 Rhys. Op. cit., p. 404.
- 23 Joseph Conrad. "Books" in LIVING AGE, Vol. 246, p. 503. (August 19, 1905).

CHAPTER IV

FIXED IDEAS IN CONRAD'S STORIES OF TRAGEDY

The tragedies of Joseph Conrad which the writer has chosen were so placed because they illustrate the hopelessness of the situation in the end of the story. The criterion for using such a definition are to be found in Thorndike's Tragedy. In discussing Shakespeare's tragedies Thorndyke says:

The action of a tragedy should represent a conflict of wills, or of will with circumstance, or will with itself, and should therefore be based on the characters of the persons involved. A typical tragedy is concerned with a great personality engaged in a struggle that ends disastrously. 1

In the stories chosen for this chapter we find Captain Hagberd left with his obsession with no possibility of recognizing his son. Jasper Allen has lost his power to "come back" and cannot recover it. Captain Whalley does save "Ivy's money", but admits to himself that he is at the end of his tether. James Wait fights death to the very end when he can no longer speak out loud. Almayer says a few days before his death that he cannot forget. Charles Gould and Nostromo are both slaves of the treasure. Nostromo admits that it had mastered him, but Gould, perhaps the more tragic, fails to state whether or not he realizes his enslavement to a fixed idea.

1 A. H. Thorndike. Tragedy. Houghton, Mifflin Company, New York, 1908, p. 9.

CAPTAIN HAGBERD

The main character in Tomorrow is Captain Hagberd who is a retired sea captain who lives in a little sea coast town alone waiting for his son Harry who has been gone for years. He advertises for him and finally his sureness that the boy will return becomes a feeling that he will be home "tomorrow", always "tomorrow". A young woman who lives nearby humors him in his idea and the old man assures her that Harry will marry her. When Harry does appear, he is not recognized by his father because he should come "tomorrow".

The authorities seem agreed that Captain Hagberd has let his fixed idea become an obsession and perhaps even more than an obsession. Curle says:

Poor old Captain Hagberd in 'Tomorrow' (a man whose idée fixe had degenerated into true insanity) is viewed entirely objectively. 2

Cooper tells us:

Tomorrow pictures a father who has disinherited his son, driven him away from home, and later repented of the act. Through long, lonely years he has comforted himself with the belief that the son will some day return, perhaps tomorrow--and he has brooded upon this hope until it has become a fixed idea, an obsession that the son will come tomorrow. At last the son does come, but since things in this work-a-day world necessarily happen in the future, the father's clouded brain refuses to recognize him, because he has come today, when he should have come tomorrow--the morrow which must always remain in the future. 3

2 Richard Curle. *Op. cit.*, p. 99.

3 F. T. Cooper. "Representative English Story Tellers" in BOOKMAN, Vol. 35, pp. 61-70. (March, 1912).

The story opens with the barber's opinion of the return of the son of Captain Hagberd and he tells how Captain Hagberd has had faith for so long. These first three quotations show how the old man has changed his story.

Seven years before he had seriously answered, 'Next month, I think'. 4

It used to be "next week", now it has come to be "next month", and soon 'twill be "next spring", for all I know. 5

For all one could tell, he had recovered already from the disease of hope; and only Miss Bessie Carvil knew that he said nothing about his son's return because with him it was no longer "next week", "next month", or even "next year". It was "tomorrow". 6

And he would say:

Till our Harry comes home tomorrow. 7

Continuing the author gives us further evidence of the old man's thoughts.

Everything was put off that way, and everything was being prepared likewise for tomorrow,

He advertised still in the Sunday papers for Harry Hagberd.

At the same time he seemed to think that his son was in England--so near Colebrook that he would of course turn up "tomorrow". 8

After Harry came the old man did not recognize him and said:

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- 4 Joseph Conrad. Typhoon. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1925, p. 244.
 5 Ibid., p. 245
 6 Ibid., p. 248
 7 Ibid., p. 250
 8 Ibid., p. 254

"My son Harry", mumbled Captain Hagberd off his guard for once. "He's coming home tomorrow."⁹

His name for this stranger was:

"A grinning information fellow."⁹

Later he shows how fully he is convinced that this fellow has nothing to do with the case.

"He can't be Harry. Harry is coming home tomorrow."¹⁰

"Don't be impatient, my dear. One day more."¹¹

Thus Captain Hagberd represents the type of character who has let his fixed idea get beyond the usual pale of fixed ideas and become an obsession, possibly even more.

JASPER ALLEN

Jasper Allen in Freya of the Seven Isles is the owner of the brig Bonito, and the lover of Freya Neilsen, daughter of a plantation owner in the Malay Archipelago. He and his boat become the victims of the jealousy of the Dutch lieutenant Heemskirk who wrecks the boat. Jasper has identified Freya with the boat which he has fitted for their home. When the boat goes, he feels that his happiness is gone too and he loses the grip on life which he has had before. The girl and Jasper both lose the fight for life and become over powered by

⁹ Ibid., p. 259

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 273

¹¹ Ibid., p. 276

the idea that things are over.

Curle gives an explanation of Jasper's experience:

Jasper is one of Conrad's finest figures of a man--clean-cut throughout, a capital and enthusiastic seaman, a man whose simple and straightforward nature has been fired with the passionate romance of a great love. His devotion to Freya is as much a part of his existence as the very beat of his heart, and the tragic gloom of this story is darkened by the dreadful collapse of all his active faculties in the shock of irretrievable disaster. Unless we realize clearly that beneath that blow his sanity has actually given way we cannot but rebel against the last stages of his psychology. But, indeed, the truth is that when Heemskirk managed to run the Bonito on a reef, something vital snapped within the taut and eager brain of Jasper Allen. 12

The plans that Jasper and Freya made seemed to fill his mind to the exclusion of everything else. We see the idea growing.

And, mind, the brig was the home to be--their home--the floating paradise which he was gradually fitting out like a yacht to sail his life blissfully away in with Freya. 13

But Jasper was elevated in the true sense of the word ever since the day, when after they had been gazing at the brig in one of those decisive silences that alone establish a perfect communion between creatures gifted with speech, he proposed that she should share the ownership of that treasure with him. Indeed, he presented the brig to her altogether. But then his heart was in the brig since the day he bought her in Manila from a certain middle aged Peruvian. 14

But no, nothing less than the best gold-leaf could be gorgeous enough for the future abode of his Freya. His feelings for the brig and for the girl were as indissolubly united in his

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- 12 Richard Curle. Op. cit., pp. 128-129.
 13 Joseph Conrad. Twixt Land and Sea, three stories. Freya of the Seven Isles is the third one. Doubleday, Page & Company, New York, 1924, p. 152
 14 Ibid., p. 156

heart as you may fuse two precious metals together in one crucible. 15

As the story progresses this idea expands and he becomes more sure that the whole of his life is tied^{up} in the brig and the girl.

No wonder that in possession of a craft like that and the promise of a girl like Freya, Jasper lived in a state of perpetual elation, fit, perhaps for the seventh heaven, but not exactly safe in a world like ours. 16

She was just splendid, whatever she did or said, and there was an end of it for him. And then to console him he had the brig which seemed pervaded by the spirit of Freya, since whatever he did on board was always done under the supreme sanction of his love. 17

Nothing, nothing could happen to the brig, he cried as if the flame of his heart could light up the dark nights of uncharted seas, and the image of Freya serve for an unerring beacon amongst hidden shoals, as if the winds had to wait on his future, the stars fight for it in their courses; as if the magic of his possession had the power to float a ship on a drop of dew or sail her through the eye of a needle-- simply because it was her magnificent lot to be the servant of a love so full of grace as to make all the ways of the earth safe, resplendent, and easy. 18

After Heemskirk has taken the brig, Jasper had more time than ever to meditate.

Dependent on things as all men are, Jasper loved his vessel--the house of his dreams. He lent to her something of Freya's soul. Her deck was the foothold of their love. The possession of his brig appeased his passion in a soothing certitude

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- 15 Ibid., p. 158.
 16 Ibid., p. 163.
 17 Ibid., p. 167.
 18 Ibid., p. 174

of happiness already conquered. 19

The thought that he was parted from her (brig) --for the first time since they came together --shook the apparently careless fortitude of his character to its very foundations, which were so deep. 20

To see her, his cherished possession, animated by something of his Freya's soul, the only foothold of two lives on the wide earth, the security of his passion, the companion of his adventure, the power to snatch the calm, adorable Freya to his breast, and carry her off to the end of the world; to see this beautiful thing embodying worthily his pride and his love, to see her captive at the end of a tow rope was not indeed a pleasant experience. It had something nightmarish in it, as, for instance, the dream of a wild-bird loaded with chains. 21

After the boats had landed and Jasper knew his fate as well as the fate of his boat, he lets his fixed idea get the better of him and make it impossible for him to "come back".

Day after day he would traverse the length of the town, follow the coast, and reaching the point of land opposite that part of the reef on which his brig lay stranded, look steadily across the water at her beloved form, once the home of an exulting hope, and now, in her inclined, desolated immobility, towering above the lonely sea-horizon, a symbol of despair. 22

His soul, kept quiet in the stress of a love by the unflinching Freya's influence, was like a still but everwound string. The shock had started it vibrating, and the string had snapped. He had waited for two years in a perfectly intoxicated confidence for a day that now would never come to a man disarmed for life by the loss of the brig, and, it seemed to him, made unfit for love to which he had no foothold to offer.

19 Ibid., p. 210
 20 Ibid., p. 215
 21 Ibid., p. 218
 22 Ibid., p. 229

While Jasper, fading daily into a mere shadow of a man, strode brusquely all along the 'front' with horribly lively eyes and a faint, fixed smile on his lips, to spend the day on a lonely spit of sand looking eagerly at her (wreck), as though he had expected some shape on board to rise up and make some sort of sign to him over decaying bulwarks. 23

When Freya's father called, he explained his situation in these words:

If I had been a man I would have carried her off, but she made a child, a happy child of me. Tell her that the day the only thing I had belonging to me in the world perished on this reef I discovered that I had no power over her. 24

And Freya who understood her Jasper told her father:

"Perhaps," she says to herself, looking straight away--her eyes were nearly as hollow as his-- "perhaps it is true. Yes! I would never allow him any power over me." 25

CAPTAIN WHALLEY

Captain Whalley, the chief character in The End of the Tether, has been rich and independent, but his wife has died and his daughter, Ivy, has married and settled down in Australia. His money has gone to help her because her husband is a hopeless invalid. The part that is left goes in a bank smash and the only thing left to do is to sell his barque, Fair Maid. With the money from that he buys an interest in Sofala owned by Mr. Massey. After he has been on her for some

- 23 Ibid., 232
 24 Ibid., 236
 25 Ibid., 237

time, he realizes he is going blind. He keeps on at his post telling no one. Mr. Massey guesses but lets him alone, and finally makes the captain guilty of a wreck by using iron to change the pointer of the compass. The ship is lost and Captain Whalley goes with her rather than to face the charge. The insurance money will help Ivy.

The critics show this man to be less selfish than Almayer but guided by the same sense of fatherly love and protection for his child. Curle says that his love for his daughter is the one thing remaining to him from his chances in life.²⁶ Mencken lists Captain Whalley with the group about which he says: "They are destroyed and made mock of by the blind incomprehensible forces that beset them."²⁷ Walpole says he is beaten by the "very leftiness of his character."²⁸

In the first of the story Captain Whalley tells his daughter that all he has is for her and her children. He expresses the feeling that he is spared by a merciful dispensation so he can help and that the five hundred pounds which he received for the Fair Maid would enable him to be able always to help her. The money seemed to him to be hers which was merely backing him. He speaks of himself as her investment and intends to keep the five hundred for her to be used merely as a loan.

He was not to lose any of her money whatever

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- 26 Richard Curle. Op. cit., p. 51.
 27 H. L. Mencken. Book of Prefaces. Alfred Knopf, Borzoi, New York, p. 12.
 28 Hugh Walpole. Joseph Conrad. Writers of the Day Series, Nisbet & Company, Ltd., London, p. 56.

else had to go--a little dignity--some of his self-respect. 29

The explanation to others was always the same. His money was not his own. His life is necessary. He says:

I wanted to keep up my importance--because there was poor Ivy away there--my daughter. 30

When Massey asks for more money, Captain Whalley is sincere in saying he has none of his own. The description shows how fully he was convinced that he had nothing:

He had nothing of his own--even his own past of honor, of truth, of just pride, was gone. All his spotless life had fallen into the abyss. He had said his last goodbye to it. . . . But what belonged to her, that he meant to save. Only a little money. He would take it to her in his own hands--this last gift of a man that had lasted too long. And an immense and fierce impulse, the very passion of paternity, flamed up with all the unquenched vigor of his worthless life in a desire to see her face. 31

He told Mr. Van Wyk about the blindness and when Van Wyk asked if he could keep it up until the end of that particular voyage:

Captain Whalley got up and stood erect, very stately, with the great white beard lying like a silver breastplate over the awful secret of his heart. Yes; that was the only hope there was for him of ever seeing her again, of securing the money the last he could do for her, before he crept away somewhere--useless, a burden, a reproach to himself. His voice faltered. 32

'Think of it! Never see her any more: the only human being besides myself now on earth that

- 29 Joseph Conrad. Youth. Doubleday Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1924, p. 214.
 30 Ibid., p. 300.
 31 Ibid., pp. 319, 320.
 32 Ibid., p. 302

can remember my wife. She's just like her mother. Lucky the poor woman is where there are no tears shed over those they loved on earth and that remain to pray not to be led into temptation--because, I suppose, the blessed know the secret of grace in God's dealings with his created children." 33

The fear of being found out comes on him almost blinding his trust:

This necessity of every moment brought home to Captain Whalley's heart the humiliation of his falsehood. He had drifted into it from paternal love, from incredulity, from boundless trust in divine justice meted out to men's feelings on this earth. He would give his poor Ivy the benefit of another month's work, perhaps the affliction was only temporary. Surely God would not rob his child of his power to help, and cast him naked into a night without end. He had caught at every hope; and when the evidence of his misfortune was stronger than hope, he tried not to believe the manifest thing.

.....
Sometimes he was seized with a sudden vertigo and an overwhelming terror; and then the image of his daughter appeared. Her, too, he had never seen so clearly before. Was it possible that he should ever be unable to do anything whatever for her? Nothing. And not see her any more? Never.

Why? The punishment was too great for a little presumption, for a little pride. At last he came to cling to his deception with a fierce determination to carry it out to the end, to save her money intact, and behold her once more with his own eyes. 34

His plans come to us:

The ship had been the best friend of his decline. He had sent all the money he had made by and in the Sofla to his daughter. His thought lingered on the name. How often he and his wife had talked over the cot of the child in the big stern-cabin of the Condor; she would grow up, she would marry she would love them, they would live near her and look at her happiness--it would go on without end.

33 Ibid., p. 304

34 Ibid., p. 324

Well, his wife was dead, to the child he had given all he had to give; he wished he could come near her, see her face once, live in the sound of her voice, that could make the darkness of the living grave ready for him supportable. He had been starved of love too long. He imagined her tenderness. 35

When the wreck came, Captain Whalley thought first of the money and then of the reason for the wreck and then both together and the name for the story comes out for he was indeed at the "end of his tether". He, by going down with the ship, saves "Ivy's money" and his pride.

In the letter which came to his daughter after his death he explains all:

I am trying hard to save for you all the money that is left; I have only kept it to serve you better. It is yours. It shall not be lost; it shall not be touched. There's five hundred pounds. Of what I have earned I have kept nothing back till now. For the future, if I live, I must keep back some--a little--to bring me to you. I must come to you. I must see you once more! 36

JAMES WAIT

James Wait is the central figure in The Nigger of the Narcissus. From the time he enters the ship he dominates the life on board. He is dying from consumption but clings to life with a tenacity which results in his fixed idea. The sailors help even when they curse this man who demands so much.

The fear of the Nigger is given by some authorities as an

35 Ibid., p. 327.

36 Ibid., p. 328.

idea which becomes composite. All agree that James Wait lived in perpetual agony because he knew his death was inevitable. Cross says that Wait is haunted by the fear which he pretends to elude "down to the moment his eyes blaze and go out".³⁷ Knight tells us that when dead he is "The most powerful member of the crew".³⁸ Fellett states:

But James Wait is not the hero of the tale; he is only 'the center of the ship's collective psychology and the pivot of the action', a grotesque symbol of that death which is the elbow companion of sailors, in whose presence they eat and sleep peacefully, in whose face they fling jests. Making death his accomplice, James Wait heightens the emptiness, the veiled menace, of the narrow circle of the horizon which the ship drags with her through a changeless infinity of days, forcing so the men of the fore-castle into a closer fellowship of necessity. 39

Cooper paints a picture for us in sombre colors:

And in the center of the picture the inert figure of a sickly malingering negro stands out, as clear cut as a carved ebony idol against a background of ivory, mysterious, ominous, the embodiment of fate. 40

Mrs. Conrad gives us an insight into the thoughts of her husband as the book was received by the public.

Glancing at my copy in which we pasted some early cuttings, I came upon a review from the ARMY AND NAVY GAZETTE, 19th of February, 1897. I found that Conrad had underlined these words: 'In the main the story deals with the curious effect produced upon the crew of the Narcissus by the

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- 37 Wilbur L. Cross. Four Contemporary Novelists. Macmillan, Company, New York, 1930, p. 40.
- 38 Grant C. Knight. The Novel in English. R. R. Smith Inc. New York, 1931, p. 208.
- 39 Wilson Fellett. Joseph Conrad. Doubleday, Page & Company, 1915, p. 41.
- 40 F. T. Cooper. "The Sustained Effort and Recent Novels" in BOOKMAN, Vol. 18, p. 311.

nigger, who is the hero of the story, and this in itself is a psychological study of great value and interest. 41

Curle says the Nigger "dominates the whole life of the ship", and gives this picture:

This picture of a dying man, supported in his horrible fear of death by the shadowy splendor of his own presence and by a sort of spurious dignity, is subtle and grimly pathetic. Wait has the arrogant superiority of an educated negro, and the sly cunning of a primeval race. He knows to the very last ounce how to make his own disease the object of pity and concession, and yet in making it he is terrified by the thought of extinction. 42

Conrad in his preface entitled "To My Readers in America" explains James Wait:

A nigger in the British Forecastle is a lonely being. He has no chums. Yet James Wait, afraid of death and making her his accomplice was an impostor of some character--mastering our compassion, scornful of our sentimentalism, triumphing over our suspicions. 43

Two quotations show the first mention of the seriousness of the disease:

"Much you care for a dying man . . . Leave me alone. It won't be for long. I'll soon die . . . It's coming right enough." 44

It was just what they had expected, and hated to hear, that idea of a stalking death, thrust at them many times a day like a beast and like a menace by this obnoxious nigger. He seemed to take a pride in that death which, so far, had attended only upon the ease of his life; he was overhearing about it, as if no one else in the world had ever

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- 41 Mrs. Jessie Conrad. Joseph Conrad as I Knew Him. Doubleday, Page & Company, 1926, p. 107.
- 42 Richard Curle. Op. cit., pp. 32, 121-122.
- 43 Joseph Conrad. The Nigger of the Narcissus. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1923, pp. 173. p. ix.
- 44 Ibid., p. 35.

been intimate with such a companion; he paraded it unceasingly before us with an affectionate persistence that made its presence indubitable, and at the same time incredible. No man could be suspected of such a monstrous friendship. Was he a reality--or was he a sham--this ever-expected visitor of Jimmy's? 45

He would talk of that coming death as though it had been already there, as if it had been walking the deck outside, as if it would presently come in to sleep in the only empty bunk; as if it had sat by his side at every meal. It interfered daily with our occupations, with our leisure, with our amusements. 46

The crew report their feelings:

Jimmy's hateful accomplice seemed to have blown his impure breath undreamt-of subtleties into our hearts. We were disturbed and cowardly. 47

He became the tormenter of all our moments; he was worse than a nightmare. You couldn't see that there was anything wrong with him; a nigger does not show. He was not very fat certainly--but then he was no leaner than other niggers we had known. 48

He fascinated us. He would never let doubt die. He overshadowed the ship. Invulnerable in his promise of speedy corruption he trampled on our self-respect; he demonstrated to us daily our want of moral courage; he tainted our lives. Had we been a miserable gang of wretched immortals, unhallowed alike by hope and fear, he could not have lorded it over us with a more pitiless assertion of his sublime privilege. 49

When they realized something of the situation, they all helped him to play the game of feigned sickness to the last. After Donikin had said, on page 111, "You invented this 'ere dodge. Yer ain't sick--are yer?" and Jimmy had answered with

45 Ibid., p. 36.

46 Ibid., p. 36.

47 Ibid., p. 41.

48 Ibid., p. 44.

49 Ibid., p. 46.

firmness that he was not, Donikin closed one eye and whispered, "Ye 'ave done this afore 'aven'tchee?" Jimmy took his chance and replied, "Last ship--yes. I was out of sorts on the passage. See? It was easy."

His final stagger to prove his fitness is championed by the captain:

He staggered a pace or two; Captain Allistoun watched him with a quiet penetrating gaze; Belfast ran to his support. He did not appear to be aware of anyone near him; he stood silent for a moment, battling single-handed with a legion of nameless terrors, amidst the eager looks of excited men who watched him far off, utterly alone in the impenetrable solitude of his fear.

"I've been better this last week . . . I am well . . . I was going back to duty . . . tomorrow-- now if you like--Captain."

"No." 50

The Captain tells him, "You have been shamming sick . . ." "Why--Why, anybody can see that," and then demands that he be given a chance to play this game of shamming sick pretending that he is punishing him. The explanation comes from the captain:

"When I saw him standing there, three parts dead and so scared--black amongst that gaping lot--no grit to face what's coming to us all--the notion came to me all at once, before I could think, sorry for him--like you would be for a sick brute. If ever a creature was in a mortal funk to die! . . . I thought I would let him go out in his own way. Kind of impulse." 51

The weaker he became the more Jimmy wished to keep up his deception.

50 Ibid., p. 119.

51 Ibid., p. 127.

"Jimmy's steadfastness to his untruthful attitude in the face of the inevitable truth had the proportions of a colossal enigma--of a manifest action grand and incomprehensible that at times inspired a wondering awe; and there was also, to many, something droll in fooling him thus to the top of his bent." 52

His obstinate non-recognition of the only certitude whose approach we could watch from day to day was as disquieting as the failure of some law of nature. . . He was unique and fascinating as only something inhuman could be; he seemed to shout his denials already from beyond the awful border. 53

He seemed unwilling to move, as if distrustful of his own solidity. The slightest gesture must have disclosed to him (it could not surely have been otherwise) his bodily weakness, and caused a pang of mental suffering. 54

He basked in the warmth of our interest. His eyes gleamed ironically, and in a weak voice he reproached us with our cowardice. He would say, 'If you fellows had stuck out for me I would be now on deck.' We hung our heads. 'Yes, but if you think I am going to let them put me in irons just to show you sport . . . Well, no . . . It ruins my health, this lying up, it does. You don't care!' We were as abashed as if it had been true. His superb impudence carried all before it. We would not have dared to revolt. We didn't want to, really. We wanted to keep him alive till home--to the end of the voyage. 55

His last fight for the hold on life is told:

James Wait rallied again. He lifted his head and turned bravely at Donikin, who saw a strange face, an unknown face, a fantastic and grimacing mask of despair and fury. Its lips moved rapidly; and hollow, meaning, whistling sounds filled the cabin with a vague mutter full of menace, complaint and desolation, like a far-off murmur of a rising wind. Wait shook his head; rolled his eyes; he denied, cursed, threatened--and not

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- 52 Ibid., p. 138.
 53 Ibid., p. 139.
 54 Ibid., p. 140.
 55 Ibid., p. 141.

a word had the strength to pass beyond the sorrowful pout of those black lips. It was incomprehensible and disturbing; a gibberish of emotions, a frantic dumb show of speech pleading for impossible things, promising a shadowy vengeance. 56

The last quotation shows how Jimmy's idea controlled the group to the last:

Jimmy's death, after all, came as a tremendous surprise. We did not know till then how much faith we had put in his delusions. We had taken his chances of life so much at his own valuation that his death, like the death of an old belief, shook the foundations of our society. A common bond was gone. 57

ALMAYER

Almayer, the outstanding character in Almayer's Folly, is a white trader of Sambir. He has been there many years with the hope of much business which would allow him to return to civilization with his daughter, Nina. His wife, a native girl who was educated in the white man's country, becomes his enemy because she, from bitter experience, knows what will be the result if he takes the girl. Nina herself has been to school and knows the experience of the native girl at the hands of white women. She falls in love with Dain Maroola, a fine native, and goes with him despite her father's feelings. Almayer dies trying to forget what to him was the unfeeling treachery of his daughter.

56 Ibid., p. 151.

57 Ibid., p. 155.

The critics say that Almayer lived with only one thought, that he might get hold of riches and enter his land with his daughter on his arm. Colbron says the daughter's choice brings "grief that amounts to horror, the soul of the white man dies within him"⁵⁸. Curle lists Almayer with his group of fixed ideas.⁵⁹ Gynn speaks of Almayer "still under the obsession of his long nurtured dream of piled up guilders and of triumphal departure from the defeated alienland, and triumphal entry into civilization of Amsterdam with his daughter on his arm"⁶⁰. Ruth Stauffer says that Conrad makes us feel "that this dreamer loves his dream more than his daughter . . . He cuts away the one creature that gives value to his life, because she is false, not to him but to his dream."⁶¹

From the beginning of the story the reader understands that the man lives for the chance to take his daughter to the white man's land:

Almayer's thoughts were often busy with gold; gold he had failed to secure; gold others had secured--dishonestly, of course--or gold he meant to secure yet, through his own honest exertions, for himself and Nina.

.....
 They would live in Europe, he and his daughter. They would be rich and respected. Nobody would think of her mixed blood in the presence of her great beauty and of his immense wealth. Witnessing her triumphs he would grow young again, he would

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- 58 Grace I. Colbron. "Joseph Conrad's Women" in *BOOKMAN*, Vol. 38, p. 478. (January 1914).
 59 Richard Curle. *Op. cit.*, pp. 94, 127.
 60 Stephen Gynn. "Novels of Joseph Conrad" in *EDINBURGH REVIEW*, Vol. 251, p. 321.
 61 Ruth M. Stauffer. *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

forget the twenty-five years of heart-breaking struggle on this coast where he felt like a prisoner. 62

He tells Nina:

"And then, we shall be happy, you and I. Live rich and respected far from here, and forget this life, and all this struggle, and all this misery." 63

While Nina was away at school he planned to go to see her, always expecting some favorable fortune. He didn't want to meet her emptyhanded.

On the night of the opening of the story he meets his first feeling of dread because she responds to his joke about kidnapping in such a way that he felt as if she wanted to be kidnapped, and the author says: "A nameless fear" crept into his heart making him shiver.

Almayer became so absorbed in his plans that he lost sight of Nina when Dain appeared and failed to see the signs of her love. When Dain is reported dead, he still sees only his own loss and fails to understand her attitude. He chides her as unfeeling:

"You never cared; you saw me struggle, and work, and strive, unmoved; and my suffering you could never see. No, never. You have no heart, and you have no mind, or you would have understood that it was for you, for your happiness I was working. I wanted to be rich; I wanted to get away from here. I wanted to see white men bowing low before the power of your beauty and your wealth. Old as I am I wished to seek a strange land, a civilization to which I am stranger, so as to find a new life in the contemplation of

62 Joseph Conrad. Almayer's Folly. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1926, p. 3.

63 Ibid., p. 18.

your high fortunes, of your triumphs, of your happiness. For that I bore patiently the burden of work, of disappointment, of humiliation amongst these savages here, and I had it in my grasp." 64

On the next page he continues:

"Have you no feeling? Have you lived without hope? I that loved you so."

And now his heart was filled only with a great tenderness and love for his daughter. He wanted to see her miserable, and to share with her his despair; but he wanted it only as all weak natures long for a companionship in misfortune with beings innocent of its cause. If she suffered herself she would understand and pity him; but now she would not, or could not, find one word of comfort or love for him in his dire extremity. The sense of his absolute loneliness came home to his heart with a force that made him shudder. He swayed and fell forward with his face on the table, his arms stretched out, extended and rigid. 65

His wife sums up his attitude:

"To keep the daughter whom he loves he would strike into your heart and mine without hesitation." 66

He follows the girl and her lover to their hiding place and begs her to return to him. He seems utterly unable to see why she refuses. The author says: "he felt a deadly cold creep into his heart." He struggles with his love for her which is genuine and the idea of wealth. The *idée fixe* triumphs:

"I cannot," he muttered to himself. After a long pause he spoke again a little lower, but in an unsteady voice. "It would be too great a disgrace

64 Ibid., p. 101.

65 Ibid., p. 102.

66 Ibid., p. 136.

I am a white man." He broke down completely there, and went on tearfully. "I am a white man, and of good family. Very good family," he repeated, weeping bitterly. "It would be a disgrace . . . all over the island . . . the only white man on the coast. No, it cannot be . . . white men finding my daughter with this Malay. My daughter!" he cried aloud, with a ring of despair in his voice.

* * * * *

"I will never forgive you, Nina--never! If you were to come back to me now, the memory of this night would poison all my life. I shall try to forget. I have no daughter. There used to be a half-caste woman in my house, but she is going even now!" 67

He continues to tell her he will never forgive her. Nevertheless he makes such a show of forgetting that he defeats his end and remembers. He burns the house; he covers all the prints of her feet as she walked to the boat to go with Dain. He had lost his faith and the means of his life's struggle and yet he thought he could forget and he mentioned it much. The girl understanding life tells him: "You speak so because you love me," and "You will never forget me." 68

After her departure, we see him "forgetting".

"Forget," muttered Almayor, and that word started before him a sequence of events, a detailed programme of things to do. He knew perfectly what was to be done now. First this, then that, and then forgetfulness would come easy. Very easy. He had a fixed idea that if he could not forget before he died he would remember to all eternity. Certain things had to be taken out of his life, stamped out of sight, destroyed, forgotten. For a long time he stood in deep thought, lost in the alarming possibilities of unconquerable memory, with the fear of death and eternity before him. "Eternity!" he said aloud, and the sound

67 Ibid., p. 184.

68 Ibid., p. 193.

of the word called him out of his reverie. 69

Every vestige of Nina's existence had been destroyed; and now with every sunrise he asked himself whether the longed-for oblivion would come before sunset, whether it would come before he died? He wanted to live only long enough to be able to forget, and the tenacity of his memory filled him with dread and horror of death; for should it come before he could accomplish the purpose of his life he would have to remember it forever.

In the dim light of the rooms with their closed shutters, in the bright sunshine of the veranda, wherever he went, whichever way he turned, he saw the small figure of a little maiden with a pretty olive face, with long black hair, her little pink robe slipping off her shoulders, her big eyes looking up at him in the tender trustfulness of a petted child.

.....
 Ali did not see anything, but he also was aware of the presence of a child in the house. He knew his master spoke to a child from certain expressions and words his master used. Master spoke to the child at times tenderly, then he would weep over it, laugh at it, scold it, beg of it to go away; curse it. 70

A few days before his death Almayer told his friend Ford that he could not forget, but there is recorded after his death that:

On the upturned face there was that serene look which follows the sudden relief from anguish and pain, and it testified silently before the cloudless heaven that the man lying there under the gaze of indifferent eyes had been permitted to forget before he died. 71

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- 69 Ibid., pp. 198-199.
 70 Ibid., pp. 201-202.
 71 Ibid., p. 208.

NOSTROMO

The story Nostromo brings out the *idée fixe* in the lives of nearly all of the characters in the story. The two chief characters will be discussed here, Nostromo and Charles Gould.

The story tells how Charles Gould who is travelling in Italy falls in love with a girl who becomes his wife and is known as Doña Emilia. His father has been beaten by the mine and Charles goes to Costaguana to reopen it when he becomes heir. Nostromo is an Italian who is the chief helper in the mine situation. The story shows how the San Tomé mine enters the lives of these two men and shapes their destinies.

The first series of statements of the critics refers to the story as a whole. Cross says that Nostromo shows what will happen when we "let purely material interests dominate the motives of men"⁷². Cunliffe states that the story reveals what will take place in a truly colossal manner when the motive power in human affairs is avarice.⁷³ Ruth M. Stauffer speaks of the "vile" influence of the San Tomé mine that "enslaved and deadened all."⁷⁴ Fellett says that the author "broods upon the power of a fixed idea" in this story.⁷⁵ Fellett further explains this book:

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- 72 Wilbur L. Cross. Op. cit., p. 39.
 73 J. W. Cunliffe. English Literature During the Last Half Century. Macmillan Company, 1919, p. 172.
 74 Ruth M. Stauffer. Joseph Conrad and His Romantic Idealism. The Four Seas Company, Boston, 1922, p. 39.
 75 Wilson Fellett, Op. cit., p. 646.

What it unfolds is not so much the chronology of events as the chronology of an idea: the sinister power of the San Tomé mine over a miscellany of lives. We see that influence first as historical, political, economic, a generalized thing. From chapter to chapter it is brought into sharper focus on the individual lives, until at last it works its will on the single selected victim, the man once most nearly immune. 76

A reviewer says that no other writer of English has felt equally "the shadows cast upon the souls of men by a silvermine". 77

CHARLES GOULD

Charles Gould's fixed idea of materialism shows itself best when discussed in relation to the way it slowly but surely took the place of his great love for his wife.

The reviewers have much to say. Dunbar calls Gould a man "who is obsessed by his futile hopes for the silver mine". 78 Brewster speaks of his double passion--the love for his wife and the desire to make up for the injury done to his father. She further states that the mine "becomes gradually an idol displacing slowly but with inevitable cruelty his affection for his wife". 79

Curle explains the situation the most minutely:

There is for instance, Charles Gould, the husband of Dona Emilia and the owner of the San Tomé concession. Outwardly taciturn, inwardly consumed by a passionate hatred of inefficiency, this silent man, so English amidst the excitable Costaguanoes and yet so subtly a Costaguano himself, pursues his aim with the rigid inevitability of a fanatic. And he is a fanatic, a man of one idea, a man intrepid, dangerous, incapable of turning back. His treatment

76 Fellett. *Op cit.*, p. 102.

77 "Noström" in *NEW REPUBLIC*, Vol. 40, p. 391.

78 D. H. Dunbar. "Books Reviewed--Fact and Fiction" in *CRITIC*, Vol. 46, p. 378.

79 D. Brewster. *Dead Reckonings in Fiction*. Longman's Green & Company, New York, 1924, pp. 117-118.

of his wife is, of course, an integral part of his whole character--she is the victim of his consuming idea. 80

Cora M. Overton says the mine comes to take the place of any duty he owes to himself, to his wife, to his country, or
81
to the race.

Conrad in his preface says:

And Charles Gould, the Idealist creator of Material Interests whom we must leave to his Mine-- from which there is no escape in this world." 82

The father of Charles Gould warned his son of the influence of the mine in a letter quoted on page 55 in which he implored his son never to return to Costaguana. However Charles grew interested and by the time he was twenty, the book on page 59 says: "Charles Gould had in his turn fallen under the spell of the San Tomé mine." Later the author describes him thus: "Charles Gould whose imagination had been
83
permanently affected by the one great fact of the silver mine".
Señor Hirsch is said to be taking leave of "the might and majesty of the San Tomé mine in the person of Charles Gould".
84

Decoud who writes a long letter to his sister describing the persons with whom he has been associated says:

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- 80 Richard Curle. Op. cit., p. 129.
81 Cora M. Overton. The Treatment of Duty in the Writings of Joseph Conrad. Master's Thesis from University of Iowa, 1928, p. 13.
82 Joseph Conrad. Nostromo. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1925, p. xi.
83 Ibid., p. 77.
84 Ibid., p. 204.

She (Decoud's sweetheart) is more to me than his precious mine to the sentimental Englishman. I won't speak of his wife. She may have been sentimental once. The San Tomé mine now stands between those two people. 85

. . . this 'Imperium in Imerico', this wealth producing thing, to which his sentimentalism attaches a strange idea of justice. He holds to it as some men hold to the idea of love or revenge. Unless I am mistaken in the man, it must remain inviolate or perish by an act of his will alone. A passion has crept into his cold and idealistic life. A passion which I can only comprehend intellectually. A passion that is not like the passions we know, we men of another blood. But it is as dangerous as any of ours.

His wife has understood it, too . . . And he defers to her because he trusts her perhaps, but I fancy rather as if he wished to make up for some subtle wrong, for that sentimental unfaithfulness which surrenders her happiness, her life, to the seduction of an idea . . . Mrs. Gould's mission is to save him from the effects of that cold overmastering passion, which she dreads more than if it were an infatuation for another woman. 86

The Goulds had some conversation on the situation. Mrs. Gould expresses a wish that they had left the mine alone to which he replies, "No, it was impossible to leave it alone." 87

Mrs. Gould realizes the situation and does her best to take her place. After a conversation with Decoud she meditates on the turn of affairs.

The fate of the San Tomé mine was lying heavy upon her heart. It was a long time now since she had begun to fear it. It had been an idea. She watched it with misgivings turning into a fetish, and now the fetish had grown into a monstrous and crushing weight. It was as if the inspiration of their early years had left her heart to turn into a wall of silverbricks, erected by the silent work of evil

85 Ibid., pp. 238-239.

86 Ibid., p. 244.

87 Ibid., p. 209.

spirits between her and her husband. He seemed to dwell alone within a circumvallation of precious metal, leaving her outside with her school, her hospital, the sick mothers and the feeble old men, mere insignificant vestiges of the initial inspiration. 88

The author's description calls the state of Gould's mind
a fixed idea.

Mrs. Gould watched his abstraction with dread. It was a domestic and frightful phenomenon that darkened and chilled the house for her like a thundercloud passing over the sun. Charles Gould's fits of abstraction depicted the energetic concentration of a will haunted by a fixed idea. A man haunted by a fixed idea is insane. He is dangerous even if the idea is an idea of justice; for may he not bring the heaven down piteously upon a loved head? 89

Toward the latter part of the story we find Mrs. Gould
pondering even more on the problem:

Incorrigible in his devotion to the great silver mine was the Señor Administrador! Incorrigible in his hard, determined service of material interests to which he had pinned his faith in the triumph of order and justice . . . It was a colossal and lasting success; and love was only a short moment of forgetfulness, a short intoxication, whose delight one remembered with a sense of sadness, as if it had been a deep grief lived through. There was something inherent in the necessities of successful action which carried with it the moral degradation of the idea . . . But she saw clearly the San Tomé mine possessing, consuming, burning up the life of the last of the Castaguana Goulds; mastering the energetic spirit of the son as it had mastered the lamentable weakness of the father. 90

In her consolation of the beloved of Montromo she says:

"Console yourself, child. Very soon he would have forgotten you for his treasure." 91

- 88 Ibid., pp. 221, 222.
89 Ibid., p. 379.
90 Ibid., pp. 521-522.
91 Ibid., p. 561.

NOSTROMO

Nostromo is best studied as a man of action and of exceptional standing in Costaguana, a man who values his good reputation. With that at heart he allows his possession of the treasure to take a place in his life which means his downfall.

Brewster calls our attention to the contrast of the man of character who is also a thief. Walpole says that the heart's desire in Nostromo is "that his merits should be acclaimed before men" and yet he is "devoured by the dragon--lust for treasure". Cooper notes the pride or self importance which is the keynote to the man's character and gives this brief analysis of the book.

It tells how this Nostromo, whose pride and joy, whose whole stock-in-trade in life, is his integrity, his unblemished reputation, becomes a thief,--it is the study of the curse which may come from the secret knowledge of a buried treasure. 94

Cora M. Overton says material wealth has been responsible for a mistaken conception of duty, which in turn caused him to steal. Curle gives two full explanations of the man: 95

He is a person of boundless vanity and resource, and the revelation of his curious, complex character makes, as it were, one of the discreet foundations of the book. For he is a man suffering from a grievance which he never reveals--a grievance against society that takes too much for granted, that cheats him of his reward, that cannot

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- 92 D. Brewster. Op. cit., p. 108.
 - 93 H. Walpole, Op. cit., p. 99.
 - 94 F. T. Cooper. "A Man's Novel and Some Recent Books" in BOOKMAN, Vol. 20, p. 218.
 - 95 Cora M. Overton, Op. cit., p. 97.

adequately recognize all that he has done for it . . . He hides the treasure, indeed, hides it safely and deep in a desert island of the Placid Gulf, but he never reveals its resting place to mortal ears.

But the gnawing worm of discontent follows hard upon these immense material successes. Unable to extract the last ounce of recognition--the delicate flattery of unqualified fame--he feels all the bitterness of failure. He has got nothing out of it, nothing at all, neither glory nor money! Such thoughts open the path to his decline and fall. Brooding over the injustice of society, upon their capacity to take all his abilities, his achievements, and his integrity as a matter of course, he comes to the slow conclusion that he will revenge himself by never revealing the fact that the silver is not really at the bottom of the sea, but hidden deep within the shelving sand of the Great Isabel--never revealing the fact but using his own knowledge to grow rich by stealth. Like Charles Gould, he, too, is the victim of an idée fixe. 96

In the introduction to the story Conrad gives us three quotations explaining the character of Nostromo:

About Nostromo, the second of the two racially and socially contrasted men, both captured by the silver of the San Tomé mine I feel bound to say more. 97

He is content to feel himself a power--within the People. 98

In his mingled love and scorn of life and in the bewildered conviction of having been betrayed, he is still of the People, their undoubted Great Man--with a private history of his own. 99

So Nostromo, Gian'Battista, or Capataz de Cargadores as he is variously called lives and basks in the confidence of

96 Richard Curle. *Op. cit.*, pp. 38-39, 130-131.

97 Joseph Conrad. Nostromo, p. xi.

98 Ibid., p. xii.

99 Ibid., p. xiii.

the people until he feels that he has been used by the People without regard for himself. Then comes the chance to grow rich with the treasure and he succumbs to the secret and finds that the keeping of the treasure hinders his feeling of security in the minds of the People. So he slowly becomes a slave to the silver.

We are told that Nostromo was absolutely above reproach and a terror to all the thieves in town. He is spoken of as "greatly envied". Decoud says he is "one of the leaders of the populace" and "It is known that this Italian has great influence." During the revolution it is said that nobody in town had any real power but the railway engineers and Nostromo. The daughter of Viola states, "Nobody would dare to fire a shot at Gian' Battista. There is no one in this place brave enough to attack Gian' Battista."

Nostromo betrays his feelings by saying, "I shall get
100
something for it some day."

Just before starting with the treasure, Nostromo is cursed by Mrs. Viola because he will not secure the priest to take her dying confession. This curse follows him and he feels its power as the treasure takes its hold on him.

"They have turned your head with praises. They have been paying you with words . . . The very leperos shall laugh at you . . . the great Capataz." 101

100 Ibid., p. 248.

101 Ibid., p. 257.

The charge of the treasure was the beginning of another life for Nostromo. Out of the results of that night ride came the love of the silver and the feeling that the people had not given him all he deserved. These quotations show the development of the idea.

He remained rich in glory and reputation. But since it was no longer possible for him to parade the streets of the town, and be hailed with respect in the usual haunts of his leisure, this sailor felt himself destitute indeed. 102

His fidelity had been taken advantage of . . . And at the end of it all--Nostromo here and Nostromo there--where is Nostromo? Nostromo can do this and that--work all day and ride all night--behold! 103

The word had fixed itself tenaciously in his intelligence. His imagination had seized upon the clear and simple notion of betrayal to account for the dazed feeling of enlightenment as to being done for, of having inadvertently gone out of his existence on an issue in which his personality had not been taken into account. A man betrayed is a man destroyed. Signora Teresa (May God have her soul) had been right. He had never been taken into account. Destroyed! 104

It angered him to be disarmed and skulking and in danger because of the accursed treasure, which was of so little account to the people who had tied it around his neck. 105

He foils the suggestion that the treasure is hidden on the Isabel and later suggests that the Viola family be given charge of the lighthouse. Everything seems to be working his way but he says:

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- 102 Ibid., p. 415.
 103 Ibid., p. 415
 104 Ibid., pp. 419, 420.
 105 Ibid., p. 426.

There is something in a treasure that fastens upon a man's mind. He will pray and blaspheme and still persevere, and will curse the day he ever heard of it, and will let his last hour come upon him unawares, still believing that he missed it by a foot. He will never forget it till he is dead--and even then . . . There is no getting away from a treasure that once fastens upon your mind. 106

People assumed that both Decoud and the treasure had been lost together and Nostromo did not say. In his own mind he felt that he was justified:

But he knew the part he had played himself. First a woman then a man abandoned both in their last extremity, for the sake of this accursed treasure. It was paid for by a soul lost and a vanished life. The black stillness of awe was succeeded by a gust of immense pride. There was no one in the world but Gian'Battista, Fidanza, Capataz de Cargadores, the incorruptible and faithful Nostromo, to pay such a price.

He had made up his mind that nothing should be allowed now to rob him of his bargain.

"I must grow rich very slowly," he meditated. 107

The doctor reports to Mrs. Gould the changes in Nostromo.

He is still the great man but he seems to have a new confidence. He goes away on coasting voyages and is making money. He goes to visit the Violas over on the Isabel often and it is said he is courting the elder daughter. One peculiar thing is that old Viola will not allow a visitor on the island after dark and it has been noted that Nostromo scarcely ever comes back before midnight.

The explanation of all this comes to the reader:

106 Ibid., p. 460.
107 Ibid., p. 501.

Nostromo had been growing rich very slowly. It was an effect of his prudence. He could command himself even when thrown off his balance. And to become the slave of a treasure with full self knowledge is an occurrence rare and mentally disturbing. But it was also in a great part because of the difficulty of converting it into a form in which it could become available. The mere act of getting it away from the island piecemeal, little by little, was surrounded by difficulties, by dangers of imminent detection. He had to visit the Great Isabel in secret, between his voyages along the coast, which were the ostensible source of his fortune. The crew of his own schooner were to be feared as if they had been spies upon their dreaded captain. He did not dare stay too long in port. When his coaster was unloaded, he hurried away on another trip for he feared arousing suspicion even by a day's delay. Sometimes during a week's stay or more, he could only manage one visit to the treasure. And that was all. A couple of ingots. He suffered through his fears as much as through his prudence. To do things by stealth humiliated him. And he suffered most from the concentration of his thought upon the treasure.

A transgression, a crime, entering a man's existence, eats it up like a malignant growth, consumes it like a fever. Nostromo had lost his peace; the genuineness of all his qualities was destroyed. He felt it himself, and curdled the silver of the San Tomé. His courage, his magnificence, his leisure, his work everything was as before, only everything was a sham. But the treasure was real. He clung to it with a more than tenacious, mental grip. But he hated the feel of the ingots. Sometimes after putting away a couple of them in his cabin--the fruit of a night expedition to the Great Isabel--he would look fixedly at his fingers, as if surprised they had left no stain on his skin. 108

In the last pages of the book he is termed "slave of the treasure" a number of times. It even came between him and his deep love for the younger of the two Viola girls. He was afraid of being refused the girl he loved and "the shining

spectre of the treasure rose before him, claiming his allegiance in a silence that could not be gainsaid."

One night as he was seeing her:

The specter of the unlawful treasure arose, standing by her side like a figure of silver, pitiless and secret, with a finger on its pale lips. His soul died within him at the vision of himself creeping in presently along the ravine, with the smell of earth, of damp foliage in his nostrils--creeping in, determined in a purpose that numbed his breast, creeping out again loaded with silver, with his ears alert to every sound. It must be done on this very night--that work of a craven slave. 109

At the end, as he is dying, Nostromo says:

"I could have torn myself away from the accursed treasure for her. For that child I would have left boxes and boxes of it--full."

.....
 "The silver has killed me. It has held me. It holds me yet." 110

109 Ibid., p. 542.

110 Ibid., p. 559.

CHAPTER V

FIXED IDEAS IN CONRAD'S STORIES OF COMEDY

The reader of Joseph Conrad may feel at first thought that there is little of comedy in his works. The writer has in mind that the works classed as comedy are not "largely destructive" as the definition of tragedy states. The explanation by Rich seems to give the writer's view.

In comedy our attention is fixed on the things which need correcting, although no sermon is preached. We are not only made to see, but to think over the follies, peculiarities, vanities, insincerities, and other imperfections in life. . . . In Shakespere's comedies, especially, the individual may do bad things, make serious mistakes, but, if his deed is of such a nature that harmony can be restored by his repenting and conforming to the good, the play ends happily, because the thing producing the discord is removed. 1

Philo Buck gives somewhat the same suggestion:

Nearly all great comedy leaves us alert and thoughtful, for it is the gift of a mind that has known the world and fought its way to a partial victory or a momentary truce and the reflection that the conflict is not worth the effort. 2

The characters chosen for this chapter all succeed in having things come out for the best or in a fairly workable way. Falk did not overcome his fixed idea, but he succeeded in winning the girl in spite of it. He became more normal.

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- 1 M. I. Rich. A Study of the Types of Literature. Century Company, New York, 1923, p. 173.
- 2 P. M. Buck. Literary Criticism. Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York, 1930, p. 313.

Karain was selected because his fixed idea was overcome by a charm and he begins anew. Lord Jim, the most discussed of all Conrad's characters, is included because he met his death to prove his courage and by dying with an unflinching look achieved his ambition. The captain in The Secret Sharer was freed from his tragical situation when the fugitive left the boat. Lieutenant Feraud is mentioned here because the last duel was almost a farce and both men go back to life as it was. Feraud, before the last duel, almost lamented because he was reminded by D'Hubert once more and must be true to his idea habit. We feel that he is not so sorry as he thinks when the duel ends as it does.

FALK

Falk is the main character in a story of the same name. He is a Scandanavian who falls passionately in love with the niece of Captain Hermann. Falk owns a tug which does all the towing up and down the river. He acts so queerly that he is the talk of the little village. His love-making is silent; he becomes jealous of a young skipper who also calls on the Hermann family, but who has no intention of being in love with the girl. In the discussion between the two men, Falk tells that he has once eaten human flesh through necessity. This has followed him through life and he feels as if it has made him unlike other men. The young skipper offers to help him

and the story ends with the girl following Falk. The unusual thing is that the girl does not say a word throughout the story but her influence is felt strongly.

The critics agree that Falk is the type of man he is because of the experience of eating human flesh.

He is said to be a "man haunted by the nightmare of cannibalism".³

Weygant uses the word haunted to describe him and says:

He could never forget his cannibalism; it seemed to him an unpardonable sin.⁴

Thompson, after telling us of the flesh eating says that Conrad "centers our attention on how it affected Falk's character".⁵

Ferguson gives the same idea in these words: "and how his ordeal marked him in after life".⁶ Follett says the same thing in another way, "thereafter made himself into a sort of dehumanized monster simply by thinking of himself in monstrous terms".⁷

Cooper goes into more detail:

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- 3 Sara W. Eno. Bulletin of Bibliography. Vol. 9, p. 137.
Copied from BOOKMAN, Vol. 18, p. 211.
- 4 Cornelius Weygant. Schelling Anniversary Papers. Century Company, 1923, p. 377.
- 5 A. R. Thompson. "Humanism of Joseph Conrad" in SEWANEE REVIEW, Vol. 37, p. 206.
- 6 Ferguson. "Essays on Suspense" in SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE, Vol. 2, p. 315. (November 14-26, 1925).
- 7 Wilson Follett. Joseph Conrad. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1915, p. 50.

But Falk is a man haunted by the memory of a revolting deed; he shows it in his face, sombre, taciturn, sinister, and in his manner, his trick of periodically covering his features with both hands and then drawing them downwards with a slow shuddering movement, as though to wipe away a vision of a waking nightmare. 8

The first mention of the peculiarity of Falk's eating is told to us by the inn-keeper on pages 174 and 175. The contempt seems to lie in the fact that a white man ought to eat meat not rice.

"But, see, any damned native that can boil a pot of rice is good enough for Mr. Falk. Rice and a little fish he buys for a few cents from the fishing boats outside is what he lives on."

"It's the most degrading thing. They take a dish up to the wheelhouse for him with a cover on it, and he shuts both doors before he begins to eat. Fact! Must be ashamed of himself." 9

A quotation from the same page gives us the picture of what goes on when any change is attempted by the crew.

"And the rows on board every time a little smell of cooking gets about deck. You wouldn't believe! The other day Da Costa got the cook to fry a steak for him--a turtle steak it was, too, not beef at all--and the fat caught or something. Young Da Costa himself was telling me of it here in this room. 'Mr. Schomberg'--says he--'If I let a cylinder blow off through my negligence Captain Falk couldn't have been more savage. He frightened the cook so that he won't put anything on the fire for me now.'" 10

As Falk tells the young skipper his plans for proposing to the young lady he says seven times that there is something

8 F. T. Cooper. "The Sustained Effort and Some Recent Novels" in BOOKMAN, Vol. 18, p. 311. (November 1, 1903).

9 Joseph Conrad. Typhoon. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1923, pp. 174-175.

10 Ibid., p. 175.

in the way which must be explained to her and her relatives before he can ask her to marry him.

When he goes to propose, the following takes place:

"And suddenly I heard Falk's voice declare that he could not marry a woman unless she knew something in his life that had happened ten years ago. It was an accident. It would affect the domestic arrangements of their home, but, once told, it need not be alluded to again for the rest of their lives. 'I should want my wife to feel for me,' he said. 'It has made me unhappy.' And how could he keep the knowledge of it to himself--he asked us--perhaps through years and years of companionship? What sort of companionship would that be? He had thought it over. A wife must know . . . 'Some people thought,' Falk went on, 'that such an experience changed a man for the rest of his life. He couldn't say. It was hard, awful, and not to be forgotten, but he did not think himself a worse man than before. Only he talked in his sleep now, he believed'. . . At last I began to think he had accidentally killed someone; perhaps a friend--his own father maybe; when he went on to say that probably we were aware that he never touched meat.

"'Imagine to yourselves,' he said in his ordinary voice, 'that I have eaten man.'

'It was a terrible misfortune to do so,' said Falk in a measured undertone.'" 11

Falk was understood by the girl if not by her people and the story ends when she goes with him.

KARAIN

Karain is a chief in a Malay province who is tormented by the ghost of his friend Pata Matra whom he has murdered to save the life of the dead man's sister.

11 Ibid., pp. 217-218.

Curle tells us:

Karain is a chief of mighty prestige in his tiny and obscure corner of the world but he is tormented by a ghost.

And now in the secure and honored position of his new life he is tormented by the silent presence of his friend. 12

Symons offers the following explanation:

There is Karain, "clothed in a vision of unavoidable success", flying before a shadow, comforting himself with the certainty of a charm. 13

Cross says:

Karain, the malay chieftain who is shadowed by the spectre of a friend whom he has shot, is freed from his delusion by a young Englishman, who takes from a pocket one of those gilt sixpences that were struck off in honor of Queen Victoria's jubilee, punches a hole near the rim, and tells him to wear it with a piece of ribbon around his neck as the most potent charm known among white men against evil spirits. 14

The first description of Karain shows his ever present attendant who warded off the spectre.

Karain never moved without that attendant, who stood or squatted close at his back. He had a dislike of an open space behind him. It was more than a dislike--it resembled fear, a nervous pre-occupation of what went on where he could not see . . . And yet more than one of our visitors had assured us that their ruler could not bear to be alone. They said, "Even when he eats and sleeps there is always one on the watch near him who has strength and weapons." 15

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- 12 Richard Curle. Joseph Conrad. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1914, p. 47.
- 13 Arthur Symons. "Conrad" in FORUM, Vol. 53, p. 563. (May 1915).
- 14 Wilbur L. Cross. Four Contemporary Novelists. Macmillan Company, New York, 1930, p. 41.
- 15 Joseph Conrad. Tales of Unrest. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1925, p. 11.

The narrator and his crew see the same things about him:

Meantime we noticed that, even during the most important interviews, Karain would often give a start, and interrupting his discourse, would sweep his arm back with a sudden movement, to feel whether the old fellow was there. 16

Yet at times he would lean forward and appear to listen as for a far-off note of discord, as if expecting to hear some faint voice, the sound of light footsteps; or he would start half up in his seat, as though he had been familiarly touched on the shoulder. He glanced back with apprehension. 17

When he came to the ship for help at last, the crew described him as follows:

Not one of us doubted that we were looking at a fugitive, incredible as it appeared to us . . . But his face showed another kind of fatigue, the tormented weariness, the anger and fear of a struggle against a thought, an idea--against some thing that cannot be grappled, that never rests--a shadow, a nothing, unconquerable and immortal, that preys upon life. 18

The story Karain tells shows how fully the idea had a hold on his mind.

"I left him calling on the edge of the black water . . . I left him standing alone on the beach. I swam . . . he called out after me . . . I swam . . ."

"He cannot come here--therefore I sought you" . . .
"He cannot abide your unbelief and strength". 19

"He has never followed me here! . . . "But since the wise old man, who knew my trouble, has died, I have heard the voice every night" . . . "--and his voice! . . . Near . . . So! In my ear! I felt him near . . . His breath passed over my neck . . . He ran by my side without footsteps whispering, whispering old words--whispering in my ear in his

16 Ibid., p. 12.

17 Ibid., p. 16

18 Ibid., p. 25.

19 Ibid., p. 24.

old voice." 20

"A man was coming towards me across the small clearing . . . It was Matara. He stared at me fiercely with his sunken eyes. The night was cold; the heat suddenly died out of the fire, and he stared at me."

"I walked all that night, all next day, and in the evening made up a big blaze and sat down--to wait for him . . . I heard him in the bushes here and there, whispering, whispering."

"He ran by my side, without footsteps, whispering, whispering--invincible and heard." 21

"But we were two; he warded off the blows" . . .
 "And no one could see him; no one knew--I dared tell no one. At times he would leave me, but not for long; then he would return and whisper or stare. My heart was torn with a strange fear, but could not die." 22

The old sword bearer died and this person came without regard for time or place except when Karain was with his white friends. He begged for help, or for a chance to go with them. One officer bethought himself of a box of curies. He found a coin with a hole in the center and gave it to Karain explaining its potency as a charm. Karain, as he leaves says:

"No he is not there waiting. I do not hear him. No! . . . He has departed forever." 23

LORD JIM

Lord Jim, a son of a clergyman, who has infinite faith in himself becomes the mate on the vessel Patna. On a calm night

- 20 Ibid., pp. 24-25.
 21 Ibid., p. 41.
 22 Ibid., p. 42.
 23 Ibid., p. 51.

the ship passes over a derelict. This would usually be fatal to a boat and the officers expected to lose their ship. They become frightened and man a life boat. Suddenly Jim, who has been watching them with contempt, jumps. All he can ever say later is, "I jumped." He feels that he must atone for the rest of his life. He moves from one place to another going when his connection with the "Patna case" is discovered. Eventually he becomes almost a deity in a small settlement in the East. He dies as bravely as he could wish. The story is all told by a narrator named Marlow.

The critics agree that Jim was determined not to "jump" again. Cooper says that the story is an epic of "A man's re-²⁴habilitation after being proved a coward". Cunliffe states that Lord Jim is a "man whom one act of cowardice drove far-²⁵ther and farther from civilization". Symons alleges that as Jim is killed he "remembers why he is letting himself be killed,²⁶ and in that remembrance tastes heaven". Ruth Stauffer speaks²⁷ of Jim "eating his heart out with a sense of lost honor".

Armstrong tells us:

The story of Lord Jim consists simply of Jim's valiant struggle to live down his early act of seeming cowardice when he leaped from the sinking Patna and her load of helpless pilgrims. ²⁸

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- 24 F. T. Cooper. Some English Story Tellers. Henry Holt & Company, New York, 1918, p. 21.
- 25 J. W. Cunliffe. English Literature During the Last Half Century. Macmillan Company, 1919, p. 170.
- 26 Arthur Symons. Op. cit. p. 581.
- 27 Ruth M. Stauffer. Joseph Conrad and His Romantic Idealism. The Four Seas Company, Boston, 1922, p. 48.
- 28 Martin Armstrong. "Joseph Conrad" in LIVING AGE, Vol. 320, p. 514.

One reviewer sums it like this:

The book is all Jim--there is nothing else that counts. He will never face that part of him that made "the mistake", but he knows he has to expiate it. The "mistake" dogs him. 29

Curle lists Jim with his group who are dominated by fixed ideas. In three places he refers to Jim as the "slave" of an idea. He says:

But it is certainly true, that he does become the victim of an idée fixe--the idée fixe of recovering his lost honor. 30

Besides the contention of the critics we have Conrad's words from the preface of the book.

It was only then that I perceived that the pilgrim ship episode was a good starting point for a free and wandering tale; that it was an event, too, which could conceivably colour the whole 'sentiment of existence' in a simple and sensitive character. 31

The first reference shows us what Jim would do whenever the Patna case came up.

Jim had always good wages and as much humoring as would have bought the fidelity of a fiend. Nevertheless, with black ingratitude he would throw up the job suddenly and depart. To his employers the reasons he gave were obviously inadequate . . .

To the white man in the waterside business and to the captains of ships he was just Jim--nothing more. He had, of course, another name, but he was anxious that it should not be pronounced. His incognito, which had as many holes as a sieve, was not meant to hide a personality but a fact. When the fact broke through the incognito, he would leave suddenly

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- 29 Book Review. "Lord Jim--Review" in BOOKMAN, Vol. 13, p.187.
 30 Richard Curle. Op. Cit., p. 35, 192.
 31 Joseph Conrad. Lord Jim--A Romance. Doubleday, Page, & Company, Garden City, New York, 1920, p. viii.

the seaport where he happened to be at the time and go to another--generally farther east. 32

The next references show Jim's imagination of his own courage, before the incident.

On the lower deck in the babel of two hundred voices he would forget himself, and beforehand live in his mind the sea life of light literature. He saw himself saving people from sinking ships, cutting away masts in a hurricane, swimming through surf with a line . . .

He confronted savages on tropical shores, quelled mutinies on the high seas, and in a small boat upon the ocean kept up the hearts of despairing men--always an example of devotion to duty and as unflinching as a hero in a book. 33

When all men flinched, then, he felt sure--he alone would know how to deal with the spurious menace of wind and sea. 34

When he tells his story of the trouble to Marlow, we see what actually took place in Jim's heart.

"He had been taken unawares--he whispered to himself a maldiction upon the waters and the firmament, upon the ship, upon the men. Everything had betrayed him."

"I had jumped . . ." "He checked himself, averted his gaze . . ." "It seems," he added . . .

"I knew nothing about it till I looked up," he explained hastily. And that's possible too . . . He didn't know. It had happened somehow. It would never happen again." 35

"I wished I could die," he cried. "There was no going back. It was as if I had jumped into a well--into an everlasting deep hole . . ." 36

32 Ibid., p. 2.

33 Ibid., p. 4.

34 Ibid., p. 7.

35 Ibid., p. 88.

36 Ibid., p. 103.

After his first unceremonious leave from a position we hear from Marlow:

"Would you believe it? One chance in a hundred! But it is always that hundredth chance! The little second engineer of the Patna had turned up in a more or less destitute state and got a temporary job of looking after the machinery of the mill. 'I couldn't stand the familiarity of the little beast,' Jim wrote."

"Did the fellow blab--or what?" I asked. He looked up at me with a troubled smile. 'Oh, no! he didn't. He made it a kind of confidential business between us. He was most damnably mysterious whenever I came over to the mill; he would wink at me in a respectful manner--as much as to say, 'We know what we know.'" 37

The next place was left as abruptly. Upon being asked by Marlow if there had been mention of the Patna case, the owner of the place answered:

"'Captain O'Brien of the Sarah W. Granger, a large noisy, old man with a stick--he was sitting listening to us in his arm chair here--he let drive suddenly with his stick at the floor, and roars out, 'Skunks!' . . . Made us all jump. 'It's a disgrace to nature'--that's what it is. I would despise being seen in the same room with one of these men.'" 38

After Jim takes his place in the far East, he still remembers and Marlow tells him:

"'It is not I or the world who remember,' I shouted. 'It is you--you who remember.'" 39

Jim talks about his new life and the fact that he wishes to stay the rest of his life because as he says, "I have not forgotten why I came here." He has become the idol of the

37 Ibid., p. 175.

38 Ibid., p. 179.

39 Ibid., p. 220.

natives and yet:

"I talk about being done with it--with the bally thing at the back of my head--forgetting-- Hang me if I know! I can think of it quietly. After all, what has it proved? Nothing. I suppose you don't think so . . ."

"No matter," he said. "I am satisfied . . . nearly. I've got to look only at the face of the first man that comes along, to regain my honor." 40

His wife does not understand and her query shows the force of his idea,

"What is it? What is it?--He says he has been afraid. How can I believe this! Am I a mad woman to believe this? You all remember something! You all go back to it. What is it? You tell me! What is this thing? Is it alive?" 41

She tries to make him fight at the last when he has made up his mind to give up his life for the honor which he now knows he must vindicate. The next references show how completely Jim fulfilled his own idea of absolutism.

"He hath taken it upon his own head," a voice said aloud. He heard this and turned to the crowd. "Yes. Upon my head." . . . Jim waited awhile before Dermain and then said gently, "I am come in sorrow!" He waited again. "I am come, ready and unarmed," he repeated."

"They say that the white man sent right and left at all those faces a proud and unflinching glance. Then, with his hands over his lips, fell forward, dead." 42

40 Ibid., p. 286.

41 Ibid., p. 295.

42 Ibid., pp. 290-291.

THE SECRET SHARER

The Captain in The Secret Sharer rescues a murderer and harbors him in his cabin and helps him to escape. No one knows about the strange passenger. The captain comes to feel that the man is his secret shadow.

The critics agree that the captain and the passenger seem to be the same person so far as the captain's mental life is concerned. Christopher Morley says the captain "comes to believe that the fugitive who has come aboard by night represents a kind of incarnation of his own weakness"⁴³. Fellett says the fugitive seems to have become the captain's other self and goes farther saying:

But the unearthly and dreamlike reality of the whispered consultations of these two is as nothing to the reality of secrets buried in the consciousness too deep for even whispered consultation. 44

Curle calls the story "a marvelous creation in atmosphere and in the psychology of the hunted"⁴⁵. Brewster states that the young captain has "an agonizing sense of spiritual remoteness"⁴⁶ from his crew.

In the course of the story the captain calls the strange passenger his double thirteen times. He speaks of a mysterious

- 43 Christopher Morley. "A Word about Joseph Conrad" in MENTOR, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 25. (March, 1935).
- 44 Helen and Wilson Fellett. "Contemporary Novelists" in ATLANTIC MONTHLY, Vol. 119, p. 233. (February, 1917).
- 45 Richard Curle. Op. cit., p. 63.
- 46 D. Brewster. Dead Reckonings in Fiction. Longman's Green & Company, New York and London, 1924, p. 102.

connection between them, and says:

It was in the night, as though I had been faced by my own reflection in the depths of a sombre and immense mirror. 47

The comments telling what another person would have seen ear out the same contention.

The strange captain having a quiet confabulation by the wheel with his own ghost. 48

Anybody bold enough to open it (door) stealthily would have been treated to the uncanny sight of a double captain busy talking in whispers with his other self. 49

As the time progresses the captain feels more and more of his kinship between the passenger and himself.

And then with his face hidden he must have looked exactly as I used to in that bed. I gazed upon my other self for a while before drawing across carefully the two green serge curtains which ran on a brass rod. 50

I sat there, fagged out, looking at the curtains, trying to clear my mind of the confused sensation of being in two places at once, greatly bothered by an exasperating knocking in my head. 51

And all the time the dual working of my mind distracted me almost to the point of insanity. I was constantly watching myself, my secret self, as dependent on my actions as my own personality, sleeping in that bed, behind that door which faced me as I sat at the head of the table. 52

When the other captain comes seeking the refuge, the captain says he was so connected with the other man that he felt

47 Joseph Conrad. 'Twixt Land and Sea. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1924, p. 101.

48 Ibid., p. 103.

49 Ibid., p. 105.

50 Ibid., p. 111.

51. Ibid., p. 112.

52 Ibid., p. 113.

as it was he himself who was being charged as unfit for mate of the vessel. He says on page 120 that he thought the other captain was a bit disconcerted by a feeling of some similarity between the man for whom he was seeking and that one to whom he was talking.

In one place the captain entertains a doubt.

It would not be true to say I had a shock, but an irresistible doubt of his bodily existence flitted through my mind. Can it be, I asked myself, that he is not visible to other eyes than mine? 53

As he enters his cabin he says:

On opening the door I had a back view of my very own self looking at a chart. 54

After the man is safely disposed of the captain still feels the kinship and says:

I saw myself wandering barefooted, bareheaded, the sun beating upon my dark poll. 55

LIEUTENANT FERAUD

"The Duel" is a story of the Napoleonic wars and concerns two men, D'Hubert and Feraud. At the opening of the story both are lieutenants in the French army. A disagreement over the fact that D'Hubert calls Feraud out of a lady's presence because his superior officer had commanded that he see Feraud leads to a duel. This in turn causes a series of duels lasting over a period of years. D'Hubert is everlastingly pursued

53 Ibid., p. 130.

54 Ibid., p. 137.

55 Ibid., p. 136.

by challenges from Feraud. Finally he succeeds by strategy in saving both their lives and ending the challenges.

Curle lists Lieutenant Feraud in his list of persons obsessed by an idée fixe. 56

In the story Lieutenant Feraud begins his fixed idea by making up his mind in the first place that D'Habert should pay for so untimely a visit.

"I mean," screamed suddenly Lieutenant Feraud, "to put off your ears to teach you to disturb me with the general's orders when I am talking to a lady!" 57

We see how he feels after the duel.

He [Feraud] wants you to know that this affair is by no means at an end. He intends to send you his seconds directly he has regained his strength --providing, of course, the army is not in the field at the time. 58

Later in the day, his [Feraud's] exasperation growing upon him, he was heard in a public place saying sardonically, "that it would be the luckiest thing for Lieutenant D'Habert, because the next time of meeting he need not hope to get off with the mere trifle of three weeks in bed." 59

After a few months and a promotion Feraud is of the same opinion.

Directly the pressure of professional occupation had been eased Captain Feraud took measures to arrange a meeting without loss of time. . . "If I don't look sharp he will take care to get himself promoted over the heads of a dozen better men than himself." 60

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- 56 Richard Curle. Op. cit., p. 94.
 57 Joseph Conrad. A Set of Six. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1925, pp. 175-176.
 58 Ibid., p. 189.
 59 Ibid., p. 195.
 60 Ibid., p. 204.

"I've been thinking it over calmly," he said gazing at them with bloodshot, tired eyes. "I see I must get rid of that intriguing personage!" 61

The following references show how he kept this up to the end of the duels.

"You will oblige me greatly by telling General D'Hubert at the first opportunity that his advancement saves him for a time from a pretty hot encounter. I was only waiting for him to turn up here."

"I cannot consider General D'Hubert's existence of any account either for the glory or safety of France," he snapped viciously. "You don't pretend, perhaps, to know him better than I do--I who have met him half a dozen times on the ground--do you?" 62

After the last duel in which D'Hubert who has no wish to kill or be killed wins by a strategy and so gains the right to hold on the life of Feraud, we find Feraud still of the opinion that D'Hubert and his politics show no value whatever.

"The thought of that sublime hero Napoleon chained to a rock in the middle of a savage ocean makes life of so little value that I would receive with positive joy your instructions to blow my brains out." 63

61 Ibid., p. 215.
 62 Ibid., p. 218.
 63 Ibid., p. 265.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the writer of this discussion has been to show that Joseph Conrad depicted characters in which the "fixed idea" becomes a definite part of the person's make-up and plays a large part in determining his reactions to different situations¹, and his final destiny.

Critics have been cited who agree that Conrad's characters show the effect of "associations which tend to persist to a greater degree than persistent ideas"². The writer concludes that the critics agree with her contention because five critics use the term "fixed idea" in referring to Conrad's characters. Other critics use expressions similar in meaning such as:

Characters coloured and controlled . . . by something decisive in the past. ³

Strikes . . . into the realm of the subconscious, and studies the mechanism as well as the results of emotion. ⁴

Gallant and valorous effort of human beings to solve the notable case of conscience. ⁵

Task of illuminating that inner dark whose cruel battles of hunger and thought. ⁶

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- 1 J. J. B. Morgan. The Psychology of Abnormal People. Longman's, Green, & Co., New York, 1930, p. 132.
 - 2 Ibid., p. 132.
 - 3 W. Follett. Joseph Conrad. Doubleday, Page, & Co., Garden City, New York, 1915, p. 31.
 - 4 H. S. Canby. Definitions--Essays in Contemporary Criticism Harcourt Brace & Company, p. 261.
 - 5 G. Seldes. "A Novelist of Courage" in DIAL, Vol. 69, p. 128.
 - 6 F. Pease. "Joseph Conrad" in NATION, Vol. 107, p. 511. (November 2, 1918).

Penetrates to the motive concealed in the psychological spring. 7

What action does to the souls. 8

Wounded by self inflicted arrows 9

Delicate idolatries of men. 10

The critic mentioned the greatest number of times is Conrad's friend and biographer, Richard Curle. The book, Joseph Conrad of which Curle is the author was satisfactory to Conrad. In a letter to Curle he said:

"I have been touched deeply in places by the sympathetic understanding of my work you show all along."¹¹

Hugh Walpole is the only critic the writer has found who questions the contention. After stating that Conrad believes his characters to have fixed ideas and that the soul of the man is so revealed, he asks the question: "Is the soul of man revealed by the fixed idea?"¹² He thinks that perhaps these characters wish to be alone and the fixed idea is the only part of their mental make-up which the probing finger finds. Our definition does not say that victims of fixed ideas lack other ideas. It merely says that it plays a large part which

7 H. L. Mencken. Book of Prefaces. Alfred A. Knopf, Borsari, New York, p. 46.

8 Ferguson. "Essays on Suspense" in SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE, Vol. 2, p. 315. (November 14-24, 1925).

9 F. Sper. "Cream of Conrad" in POET LORE, Vol. 33, p. 423 (September, 1927).

10 E. Rhys. "Interview with Joseph Conrad" in BOOKMAN, Vol. 56, p. 405. (December, 1912).

11 R. Curle. Letters to a Friend. Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1928, Letter of January 7, 1914.

12 H. Walpole. Joseph Conrad. Writers of the Day Series, Nisbet and Company, Ltd., London, p.65.

would leave room for Mr. Walpole's question. The characters Verloc and Decoud whom Mr. Walpole uses as illustration are not discussed in this thesis so his quotations are not given here.

Falk suffered from a fixed idea about eating meat because according to our critics he was "haunted by a nightmare of cannibalism"¹³, "haunted by the memory of a revolting deed"¹⁴, and could never "forget his cannibalism"¹⁵. His fellow characters say that he must be ashamed of himself and tell of his savage actions where meat is fried on his ship. Falk himself speaks of "something in his life . . . that would affect domestic arrangements", which has "made me unhappy" and was "awful--not to be forgotten"¹⁶, and was "a terrible misfortune". He kept aloof from his fellows when he ate and he seemed to feel inferior when he tried to explain his proposal. This would indicate that his life and actions were much concerned with his memory of the "not to be forgotten" experience.¹⁷

Karain is characterized by the critics as "tormented by a ghost" and "shadowed by a spectre"¹⁸. One man says he "flys

- ¹³ Sara W. Eno. Bulletin of Bibliography. F. K. Faxon, Editor, Vol. 9, p. 211.
¹⁴ F. T. Cooper. "The Sustained Effort and Recent Novels", in BOOKMAN, Vol. 18, p. 211. (November 1, 1903).
¹⁵ C. Weygant. "The Art of Joseph Conrad" in Shelling Anniversary Papers, The Century Company, 1913, p. 377.
¹⁶ J. Conrad. Typhoon. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1923, p. 217.
¹⁷ Ibid., p. 218.
¹⁸ R. Curle. Joseph Conrad. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1914, p. 47.
¹⁹ W. Cross. Four Contemporary Novelists. Macmillan Company, New York, 1930, p. 41.

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before a shadow". Other characters in the story tell vividly of the ever presence of the attendant and Karain's reliance upon him. When he arrived at the ship for help, the sailors report that "his face showed . . . the tormented weariness, the anger and fear of a struggle against a thought, an idea".²¹ Karain, himself, told how he had been pursued since his friend's murder and at what length he had gone to attempt an escape. He also said the spectre could not pursue him on the ship of the white men. The new idea, the charm, took the place of the old, and he left saying, "He has departed forever".²² This indicates that one idea of safety has replaced an idea of fear which had necessitated the attendant and caused terror when the attendant died.

Lord Jim appeals to the reader because he was so determined to prove his courage. The critics speak of the "one act that drove him farther and farther",²³ of his struggle to "live down his early act",²⁴ of his mistake which "dogs him",²⁵ and of his tasting "heaven" when he remembers why he is killed.²⁶ Curle lists him with a group dominated by fixed ideas. Conrad says

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- 20 A. Symens. "Conrad" in FORUM, Vol. 53, p. 583. (May, 1915).
- 21 J. Conrad. Tales of Unrest. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1925, p. 23.
- 22 Ibid., p. 51.
- 23 J. W. Cunliffe. English Literature During the Last Half Century. Macmillan Company, 1919, Chapter 9.
- 24 M. L. Armstrong. "Joseph Conrad" in LIVING AGE, Vol. 320, p. 515. (March 15, 1924).
- 25 "Lord Jim"--Review in BOOKMAN, Vol 13, p. 187.
- 26 Symens. Op. cit., p. 581.

in his preface that he attempted to show that "one event could conceivably colour the whole 'sentiment of existence'". Jim explained his changes of residence because some one mentioned his misfortune. He told Marlow he remembered why he came to his inland home, and he went unflinchingly to his death to prove his courage. The description of his death shows that he felt his attainment. To lose one's estimate of his own courage, to refuse to stay where it is known, and to meet the death which will prove it when life is sweet is to be guided through life by one idea.

The captain in The Secret Sharer believed that the fugitive represented a kind of "incarnation of his own weakness" according to one critic. Another says there was an agreement of the two consciousnesses too deep for even the whispered conversations. The captain called the man his double, his other self, his secret self, and "my very own self". At the last when the man was gone he felt that he could see himself on the land to which the man had gone. He felt as if others could see the double and sense his feeling of duality. It made his relations with members of his crew strained. He admitted that he felt different and could not be himself.

Lieutenant Feraud is listed in Curle's paragraph of those

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- 27 Joseph Conrad. Lord Jim--A Romance. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1920, p. viii.
- 28 C. Morley. "A Word about Joseph Conrad" in MENTOR, Vol. 13, No. 2, p. 25. (March, 1925).
- 29 Joseph Conrad. Twixt Land and Sea. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1924, Canterbury Edition, p. 137.

who have fixed ideas. He allowed the irritation over a mere trifle to become a hatred. Everytime D'Hubert was mentioned he felt constrained to boast or issue another challenge. He could not allow a time to pass; and his life was not happy in the last days, altho' he lived, because he had not accomplished his purpose.

Captain Hagberd is shown by both Cooper and Curle to have been a man who allowed his mind to dwell upon the return of his son until his idea of "tomorrow" had become fixed. The other characters in the story show how this grew from "next year" until it became "tomorrow". The fact that he did not recognize the son when he did arrive puts the idea into the realm of obsessions. He buys things to use when Harry arrives; he tells it everywhere; and apparently he is merely waiting until "tomorrow".

Jasper Allen, so the story tells us, loved his girl and his brig and they were indissolubly united in his heart. We are told the brig seemed "pervaded with the spirit of Freya",³⁰ and whatever he did on board was done "with the supreme sanction of his love".³¹ He is said to have lent to the brig "something of Freya's soul"³² and the deck is termed "The foothold of their love".³³ "His feelings for the brig and for the girl were as indissolubly united in his heart as you may fuse two

30 Ibid., p. 167.

31 Ibid., p. 167.

32 Ibid., p. 210.

33 Ibid., p. 174.

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precious metals together in one crucible". When the brig was gone, the right to Freya was gone. He held the two as one and could not separate them. He felt unfit for one without the other. If this idea had not been so strong, he would have built another home and held to Freya.

Curle tells us that everything Captain Whalley did was for Ivy. The one thing remaining in his life was his chance to help the daughter whom he loved. He sold the ship and invested the money for her. From then on it was Ivy's money and he felt he had none of his own. He told his employer he could invest no more because he did not have it. He explained his working after blindness because of paternal love and a feeling that God would not let Ivy's money suffer. The death which he stepped into of his own accord is done to protect the same money.

The Higger of the Narcissus, James Wait, was haunted by his fear of death which he parades before the whole crew. Conrad in the introduction speaks of the fact that Wait makes Death his accomplice. He talked of it constantly and chided the crew for being careless with him. As the reality of Death approached, he pretended to have feigned sickness. We are told this was not his first attempt to win care by constant mention of death; he has done the same on other ships. He lost no opportunity to show how much he loved life and yet how really personable he made death. He feigned his illness only to keep

his idea alive, and he refused to give in when all sound was denied him.

Almayer is listed by Curle with those who have fixed ideas. He is said to "love his dream" and to be under the "obsession of his long nurtured dream". He planned to make his fortune to take Hina away and became so engrossed he failed to see her interests lay elsewhere. He upbraided her, and it all sums up in what "I" wanted to do. His wife says he would strike deep to keep his daughter. The big show of forgetting indicates how deeply engrossed he is, and how much he really cares. Conrad uses the words "fixed idea" in describing his attitude.

Charles Gould is said to be "obsessed by his futile hopes for the silver mine" and the mine is called his idol. Curle mentions that his wife is the victim of a consuming idea. Conrad says we could leave him to his mine from which there is no escape; and Conrad uses the term "fixed idea" in a description of him. His wife watched the growth of the idea and she feared it and "she saw clearly the San Tomé mine possessing,

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- 35 R. M. Stauffer. Joseph Conrad and His Romantic Idealism. The Four Seas Company, Boston, 1922, p. 72.
- 36 S. Gynn. "Novels of Joseph Conrad" in EDINBURGH REVIEW, Vol. 231, p. 321. (April, 1920).
- 37 Joseph Conrad. Almayer's Folly. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, p. 198.
- 38 O. H. Dunbar. "Books Reviewed--Fact and Fiction--Hustrome" in CRITIC, Vol. 46, p. 378.
- 39 D. Brewster. Dead Reckonings in Fiction. Longman's Green and Company, New York, 1924, Chapter 5.
- 40 Joseph Conrad. Hustrome. Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York, 1925, p. 379.

consuming, burning up the life of the last of the Castaguana
⁴¹
 Gouls".

Nostromo is said by one writer to be "devoured by the
⁴²
 dragon--lust for treasure". Curle lists him with those who
 have fixed ideas, and Conrad says he and Gould were "both cap-
⁴³
 tured by the silver mine". Mrs. Gould tells the girl he would
 have forgotten her for his treasure. He is described as "slave
⁴⁴
 of the treasure". He tells of the spectre which rose between
 him and the girl. His last words are: "The silver has killed
⁴⁵
 me. It has held me. It holds me yet". Conrad in a descrip-
 tion tells us; "There is no getting away from a treasure that
⁴⁶
 once fastens upon your mind?"

Each character cited in the preceding chapters and summed
 in these paragraphs is shown to have been a victim of a fixed
 idea.

41 Ibid., p. 522.

42 H. Walpole. Op. cit., p. 99.

43 J. Conrad. Nostromo. Op. cit., p. xi.

44 Ibid., p. 523.

45 Ibid., p. 542.

46 Ibid., p. 460.

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