

The “Fabulous Value of the Bargain”: Conspiracy and Performance in *Lord Jim*

*Hong-Shu Teng**

Abstract

This paper will discuss conspiracy and performance in Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim*. It argues that Patusan provides Jim with “the fabulous value of the bargain” which enables him to rehabilitate through political and territorial conquest. Moreover, this paper will show that Jim’s case provides Marlow and the privileged man with an opportunity to conspiratorially reconfigure their metropolitan vision.

Section One will discuss the conspiracies among Jim, Brown, the Patusan inhabitants. While “the white men” conspiratorially perform their stereotypical identity as the mighty “lord,” the Patusan people also counter-perform—they perform their docile identity in order to defeat “the white men”. Section Two will then focus on the conspiracy between Marlow and the privileged man. It will show that it is through the dissemination of Jim’s story that Marlow re-evaluates Jim’s overseas conquest and thus endorses Jim’s “heroic” role.

Keywords: Joseph Conrad, conspiracy, performance

* Assistant Professor, Section for Foreign Languages and Literature Teaching, Feng Chia University.

Edward Said has argued that the European perception of other races “transformed itself from being textual and contemplative into being administrative, economic, and even military”: the “fundamental change was a spatial and geographical one.”¹ As Said points out, “the *geographical space* of the Orient was penetrated, worked over, taken hold of.”² In *Lord Jim*, Jim’s perception of the “East” undergoes a similar change from “being textual and contemplative” into being “military” and “administrative.” In his early days, “the sea-life of light literature” lived in Jim’s mind, and he often imagined himself “as a hero in a book” who “confronted savages on tropical shores.”³ In Patusan, Jim puts into practice the imaginary heroism that has long dominated his adventurous mind. His victory over Sherif Ali and thereby over Rajah Allang enables Jim to savour the full flavour of a real-world “light literature” adventure. This victory also marks Jim’s transition into the “militant” phase of his pursuit—a pursuit that reshapes the living space of the Patusan dwellers.⁴ In Patusan, Jim says that the Bugis settlers are “like people in a book” (260). Yet this simile used to describe Patusan’s exoticism paradoxically shows that, for the first time, Jim’s “imaginary” heroism actually deals with real people and can in fact alter real life in real places. Most importantly, Jim’s transition into the “militant” phase is a violent process in which Patusan is being drastically remodelled from three political groups into two competing camps: the Bugis community supported by Jim, and the Malays led by Rajah Allang. Even at the most “textual” moment when Jim begins writing “the Fort, Patusan” (340), this occasion of writing is caused by his dealing with Brown’s territorial intrusion, which has produced a further remodelling of Patusan’s politics.

Marlow says elsewhere: “The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.”⁵ As Said suggests, imperialism, as shown by “the conquest of the earth,” “means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others.”⁶ In Patusan, the formation of Jim’s fame, produced by the

¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (1978; New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 210.

² Said, *Orientalism*, 211.

³ Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (1900; London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1946), 6.

⁴ In “Geography and Some Explorers,” Conrad describes European geographical exploration in terms of the development from “fabulous geography” to “militant geography.” See *Last Essays* (1926; London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1955), 1-21.

⁵ Joseph Conrad, “Heart of Darkness,” in *Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories* (1902; London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1923), 50-1.

⁶ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993; London: Vintage, 1994), 5.

establishment of his role as “the virtual ruler,” exemplifies the imperial conquest of territory. In particular, it embodies a process in which Jim transforms his fantasy of the “East” into militant administration of Patusan. The formation of Jim’s “fame,” contrary to Marlow’s presentation, is after all “not a pretty thing.” In order to explore this issue, I will begin my discussion by tackling the inter-communal conspiracy in *Lord Jim*.

(Counter)Performing “Racial Prestige”

Threatened by Rajah Allang’s conspiracy “for his assassination” (290), Jim sets up a counter-conspiracy with the Bugis to raid Sherif Ali, Allang’s close ally, in order to secure his safety. Jim’s unprecedented plot to use “Doramin’s old ordnance” (263) and to exploit the strategic hilltop successfully overcomes Sherif Ali for a total victory. While Dain Waris, Doramin’s son, shows his ability to “fight *like* a white man” (262, emphasis added), Jim demonstrates to all parties—the Malays, the Bugis, and the interior tribes under Sherif Ali’s command—the destructiveness of his inborn capability to fight *as* “a white man.” His military tactics, unavoidably associated with his racial identity, undergo a transformation in local legend.⁷ Marlow comments upon the “supernatural powers” (266) popularly ascribed to Jim: “The popular story has it that Jim with a touch of one finger had thrown down the gate” (270). The common villagers undoubtedly believe in Jim’s “occult” (266) power in leading the raid: “they believed and said (as the most natural thing in the world) that Jim had carried the guns up the hill on his back—two at a time” (266). Marlow describes Jim’s response to this spread of legends:

This would make Jim stamp his foot in vexation and exclaim with an exasperated little laugh, ‘What can you do with such silly beggars? They will sit up half the night talking bally rot, and the greater the lie the more they seem to like it.’...The earnestness of his denials was amusing, and at last I said, ‘My dear fellow, you don’t suppose I believe this.’ He looked at me quite startled. ‘Well, no! I suppose not,’ he said, and burst into a Homeric peal of laughter. (266-7)

Jim’s conquest is to be marked by “the fame of his virtues” (243), but the dissemination of this “fame” depends upon the local community. As a result, it also

⁷ Also see Robert Hampson, “Conrad and the Formation of Legends,” in *Conrad’s Literary Career*, ed. by Keith Carabine, *et al.* (Lublin: Maria Curie-Skłodowska University Press, 1992), 167-8.

involves the mystification of Jim's potency as the "white man."

At the end of Marlow's visit, Jim reveals how he deals with Rajah Allang's people: "I must stick to their belief in me to feel safe..." (334). To sustain "the moral effect of his victory in war" (269), Jim also has to sustain the belief of the Patusan inhabitants: he must continue to perform his symbolic role as the mighty conqueror. Douglas Kerr, discussing the importance of crowd control for the maintenance of colonial authority, argues that it is "a species of fraud that guarantees the authority of colonialism over its Asian populations" in *Lord Jim*.⁸ Kerr argues that, in Patusan, "Jim establishes his authority there through trust and maintains it by performance."⁹ This illuminates how Jim maintains the "moral effect" of his military coup against Sherif Ali. As Jim says, he must "stick to" other people's belief in him in order to "feel safe." At the same time, he is irritated by their belief in his "occult" power. This immediately emphasizes the performative aspect of his authority in Patusan. The fact that colonial authority needs to be maintained by performance brings to mind, as Kerr also notes, George Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" which illustrates "the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East."¹⁰ In Orwell's story, the colonial official, surrounded by local spectators, is forced to shoot a run-away elephant against his will in order to perform his authority as expected by the crowd. Similarly, Jim has to perform his "power" as expected by the Patusan people since, as he points out, he "couldn't fight the whole population" (245). In Rajah Allang's courtyard, Jim's drinking of the coffee exemplifies the paradox of "the white man's dominion in the East": it is a type of domination that is maintained by the "lies," legends, and mystification of white man's potency. Jim drinks the coffee in the Rajah's courtyard as a routine public performance of his assumed invincibility—not because he genuinely possesses some occult power as the Rajah and his people believe. He confesses: "I must stand the risk: I take it once every month, at least. Many people trust me to do that—for them. Afraid of me! That's just it. Most likely he is afraid of me because I am not afraid of his coffee" (251).

Marlow also reminds his audience of the private aspect of Jim's conquest: "Remember this is a love-story I am telling you now" (298); "This, let me remind you again, is a love story" (299). Not only does this "love story" tell of the vigilance of Jewel against the conspiracy to assassinate Jim, it also tells the private story about

⁸ Douglas Kerr, "Crowds, Colonialism, and *Lord Jim*," *The Conradian* 18:2 (1994): 61.

⁹ Kerr, 55.

¹⁰ George Orwell, "Shooting an Elephant" in *Shooting an Elephant* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1950), 1-10.

how Jewel fails to reconcile Jim’s private identity of being “not good enough” (318) with his public role as the invincible “white lord.” After the inquiry, Jim has confessed to Marlow that he is “not good enough” (154). During their private meeting, Marlow, accordingly, discloses to Jewel that it is because Jim is “not good enough” that he is exiled from the “outside” world. Marlow notices Jewel’s puzzlement: “She knew him to be strong, true, wise, brave. He was all that. Certainly. He was more. He was great—invincible—and the world did not want him, it had forgotten him, it would not even know him” (318). According to Jewel, Jim has made the same confession to her about his inadequacy. Yet she simply refuses to believe in Jim’s confession, as she tells Marlow: “You lie” (318). Marlow’s “love story” suggests that it is Jewel’s love that safeguards the secret of Jim’s inadequacy and thus enables Jim to continue to perform his “power.” The vital information of Jim’s confession is kept from the Patusan inhabitants who regard Jim as gifted with invincible, supernatural power. The private circle of Marlow, Jim, and Jewel thus helps to maintain the legend of Jim’s public role.

According to Kerr, “for the always outnumbered figure of colonial authority, especially where there are impediments to written and even spoken discourse, order can best be maintained by a display of difference and superiority, a performance of cultural sovereignty that both mystifies and naturalizes western leadership, to which the eastern crowd then consents, with any luck.”¹¹ This idea of performing authority illuminates the novel’s account of the formation of Jim’s “fame” and his subsequent maintenance of it by displaying his inherited “cultural sovereignty.”¹² As far as Jim’s administration of Patusan is concerned, Kerr’s idea helps us to understand the exercise of Jim’s power, especially *after* his legendary raid against Sherif Ali that establishes his trustworthiness and “racial prestige” (361). But when Jim first arrived at Patusan, he already brought with him a “cultural sovereignty” that is unabashedly *there*. Jim’s “racial prestige” is taken for granted by the Rajah’s people as soon as he arrived at the stockade. Marlow describes his arrival as follows:

They had him, but it was like getting hold of an apparition, a wraith, a portent. What did it mean? What to do with it? Was it too late to conciliate him? Hadn’t he better be killed without more delay? But

¹¹Kerr, 54.

¹²Various factors contribute to the formation of Europe’s “cultural sovereignty”: for example, technological superiority and the globalization of colonial capitalism. I would also draw attention to a significant factor relevant to *Lord Jim*: the territorial expansion of Euro-imperialism which creates the image of the “invincible” white man.

what would happen then? Wretched old Allang went nearly mad with apprehension and through the difficulty of making up his mind...Now and again 'some fussy ass' deputed from the council-room would come out running to him, and in honeyed tones would administer amazing interrogatories: 'Were the Dutch coming to take the country? Would the white man like to go back down the river? What was the object of coming to such a miserable country? The Rajah wanted to know whether the white man could repair a watch?['] (251-2)

The assumption of Jim's "racial prestige" is closely related to the territorial conquest of Euro-imperialism as exemplified by the Dutch in the region.¹³ Jim is mistaken for a Dutch "spy" or a colonial official. The paradox of Jim's "racial prestige" is that while he draws on the political reality created by Euro-colonial conquest in the region, he is practically an exile from this reality and, therefore, his "racial prestige" is largely an unwarranted one. Conversely, it could be argued that Jim does not have to possess actual "cultural sovereignty" in order to perform it. Rather, Jim's performance shows that he successfully enacts the racial stereotype of the potent "white man" in foreign territories, by drawing on the "cultural sovereignty" endorsed by this reality, even while personally disconnected from the reality of colonial power in the region. There is, however, a price to be paid for the gap between Jim's performance and the reality of political power: the "solitude of his achievement" is so great that his "isolation seem[s] only the effect of his power" (272).

The term "performance" is clearly metaphoric in describing Jim's maintenance of his power. It differs from the general use of the term in anthropology and ethnography, where "performance" refers to oral, theatrical, ritual, or artistic presentation of a dramatic creation specific to a culture.¹⁴ Nevertheless, according to Victor Turner, distinction can usefully be made between *types* of social performance and *genres* of cultural performance.¹⁵ Performance, as he defines it, means "the

¹³I use "Euro-" to refer to any imperial power of Western Europe. In particular, as far as *Lord Jim* is concerned, this prefix denotes those European nations that had taken part in influencing or controlling the Malay Archipelago and the adjacent regions. They include the Dutch, the Spanish, the Portuguese, and the British. I deliberately obscure the diversity of these imperial powers, since the performance of Jim and Brown's "racial prestige" depends upon the homogenization of Europeans. For the Patusan inhabitants, they are all regarded as "white men."

¹⁴For example, see *Performance, Culture, and Identity*, ed. by Elizabeth C. Fine and Jean Haskell Speer (Westport: Praeger, 1992). For a linguistic-anthropological study of performance, see Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

¹⁵Victor Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986), 81.

presentation of the self in everyday life.”¹⁶ As far as social performance is concerned, Turner argues that “the basic stuff of social life is performance”: “Self is presented through the performance of roles, through performance that breaks roles....”¹⁷ Turner’s attention to the social aspect of performance presents “performance” as how a person creates identity through various “personae” enacted in daily life in different social encounters. In *Lord Jim*, however, what complicates the social performance is the fact that there is an inequality of power between the “performer” and the “audience.”¹⁸ In the case of Jim, who maintains his authority through performance, this inequality designates him as “the ruler” and the Patusan inhabitants as “the ruled.”

In this context of social performance and the unequal power-relation associated with it, Jim’s performance can be illuminated by a classic model—that of the Machiavellian prince. I am not suggesting, of course, that Jim is a “prince”; nor do I read “Lord Jim” as a genuine “Lord.”¹⁹ But I would like to draw an analogy between the Machiavellian prince and Lord Jim. For the ruled, these two figures both embody a person of noble, higher calibre. Machiavelli writes:

since men almost always tread the paths made by others and proceed in their affairs by imitation, although they are not completely able to stay on the path of others nor attain the skill of those they imitate, a prudent man should always enter those paths taken by great men and imitate those who have been most excellent, so that if one’s own skill does not match theirs, at least it will have the smell of it....²⁰

Having failed to enact heroism on the *Patna*, Jim militantly acquires his sovereignty

¹⁶Turner, 77.

¹⁷Turner, 81.

¹⁸The use of “persona,” “performer,” and “audience” here is again metaphoric rather than in the strict theatrical sense.

¹⁹Christopher GoGwilt, drawing attention to the mistranslation of “Tuan” as “Lord,” argues: “the proper ‘Malay’ meaning for ‘Tuan’ can never be placed, but provides the absent center for understanding the meaning of that metaphorical title ‘Lord.’” See *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 91.

²⁰Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, first published in 1532, trans. by Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 20. There is a passing reference to Machiavellism in *The Rescue* by Mrs. Travers. Lingard says to her about her husband: “Fear in those you care for is hard to bear for any man.” She replies: “What Machiavellism!” See *The Rescue* (1920; London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1949), 160. For Machiavelli, a prince’s careful balance between “cruelty” and “mercy” is essential to the maintenance of his power: “A prince must nevertheless make himself feared in such a manner that he will avoid hatred, even if he does not acquire love.” See Machiavelli, 56.

in Patusan and places himself, by performance, “in the ranks” of the ideal Euro-heroes. The trust between Jim and his “own people” represents “the testimony to that faithfulness which ma[kes] him in his own eyes the equal of the impeccable men who never fall out of the ranks” (393). However, in spite of his “accomplishment,” Jim has only “the smell” of those “impeccable men”—after all, he readily admits that he is “not good enough.” Nevertheless, performing the semblance of an ideal Euro-hero is enough to maintain his power. As Machiavelli argues, “a prince should strive in all of his deeds to give the *impression* of a great man of superior intelligence.”²¹ The fact that Jim enacts the “impression” of himself as “a great man” can be summed up in Machiavelli’s words: “[e]veryone sees what you seem to be, few touch upon what you are.”²² Dressed in white, Jim makes his “racial prestige” easily recognizable to the Patusan people and thereby lets others see what he “seems to be”: a powerful “white lord.” In the colonial context of Patusan where the power-relation between the “performer” and the “audience” is racially unequal, Jim’s performance is especially effective. Not only does he appear to be morally superior to the native rulers, he is also racially superior. “In the midst of these dark-faced men,” as Marlow observes in Rajah Allang’s courtyard, Jim appears “like a creature not only of another kind but of another essence” (229).

However, “the white man’s dominion in the East” through performance is not always consented to unconditionally. The Kassim-Brown conspiracy shows that “cultural sovereignty” can be easily used to turn the tables by those who only seem to comply to the performance of authority. As desperadoes escaping from the Spanish patrol, Brown and his men arrive at Patusan to obtain provisions for their flight. Like Jim, Brown is a “white man” and, therefore, is accorded a certain power: “Brown calculated upon the terrifying surprise of his appearance” (358). The villagers mistake his nondescript deserters and their schooner for a significant military force: “Wild and exaggerated rumours were flying: there was a large ship at the mouth of the river with big guns and many more men—some white, others with black skins and of blood-thirsty appearance. They were coming with many more boats to exterminate every living thing. A sense of near, incomprehensible danger affected the common people” (363). Since Kassim needs an alliance with Brown in order to defeat Doramin’s party, he pretends to conciliate Brown:

It had occurred to him that these whites, together with the Rajah’s followers, could attack and defeat the Bugis before Jim’s return. Then,

²¹Machiavelli, 74. Emphasis added.

²²Machiavelli, 60.

he reasoned, general defection of the townsfolk was sure to follow, and the reign of the white man who protected poor people would be over. Afterwards the new allies could be dealt with. They would have no friends. The fellow was perfectly able to perceive the difference of character, and had seen enough of white men to know that these newcomers were outcasts, men without country. (366)

It is ironic that although Kassim recognizes that Brown’s band consists of “outcasts,” he submits to Brown for an expedient alliance. This alliance, in turn, means that Brown is able to continue performing his mistaken stature. Brown reflects:

In the course of his negotiations with Kassim he became aware that he was supposed to have a big ship with plenty of men outside. Kassim begged him earnestly to have this big ship with his many guns and men brought up the river without delay for the Rajah’s service. Brown professed himself willing, and on this basis the negotiation was carried on with mutual distrust...Brown, while bargaining, had a sort of grim enjoyment in thinking of his wretched schooner, with nothing but a heap of dirt in her hold, that stood for an armed ship, and a Chinaman and a lame ex-beachcomber of Levuka on board, who represented all his many men. (367)

Brown’s group is outnumbered by “two hundred to one” (371), but he creates a false impression of his power by shooting a man in the Rajah’s stockade. As he rightly expects, this performance strikes “the fear of sudden death” (371) into the Rajah’s people: Brown thus “play[s] havoc with that jungle town” (370). Later Brown is informed by Cornelius about Dain Waris’s river guards. As a result of having this information, Brown is able to attack the Bugis river camp. Thanks to Brown’s betrayal of Jim and killing of Dain Waris, there is indeed a “general defection of the townsfolk” in the Bugis quarters as Kassim expects. Kassim’s “diplomacy” (369), destroying Jim’s fame and eventually leading to his death, also succeeds in baffling Doramin and the Bugis settlers.

Brown’s party, “a wan, sallow-faced band of utter outcasts, enraged with hunger and hunted by fear” (357), consists of various outlaws: “two runaway blue-jackets, a lanky deserter from a Yankee man-of-war, a couple of simple, blond Scandinavians, a mulatto of sorts, one bland Chinaman who cooked—and the rest of the nondescript

spawn of the South Seas” (356). Fleeing from Spanish captivity, Brown aims for Madagascar to sell the stolen schooner. He leads his gang to Patusan since it is “an absolute necessity, a question of life and death” (357). However, “confidential talk” (365) with Cornelius makes Brown aware of the “immense possibilities” (365). Further councils with Kassim, moreover, enable Brown to ensure that his performance will remain effective. While Brown originally came to Patusan to “steal food” (366), his “treacherous alliances” (370) with Kassim and Cornelius make him “think of stealing the whole country” (366). Brown’s performance is initially prompted by the local defence, organized by Dain Waris and Jewel, that traps him on the knoll near the stockade. Later on, their performance is so successful that, even after their raid on Dain Waris’s camp, their retreat engenders further fears: “The robbers were coming back, bringing many others with them, in a great ship, and there would be no refuge in the land for any one. A sense of utter insecurity as during an earthquake pervaded the minds of men, who whispered their suspicions, looking at each other as if in the presence of some awful portent” (410).

Brown’s performance results in the disintegration of the Bugis community. But this result is also the fruit of Kassim’s “tortuous policy” (372) to “double-deal” with Brown and the Bugis. Kassim manipulates Brown and fashions him into an instrument in order to thwart Doramin. Although Kassim misjudges Brown’s power, he yields to Brown only in order to undo him later. He keeps Brown in the dark about Dain Waris’s river camp, while misinforming Dain Waris about Brown’s force: “He minimised its strength and exhorted him to oppose its passage” (372). Cornelius, Kassim’s translator and co-conspirator, aggravates the situation by telling Brown about the river guards. Driven by his personal animosity towards Jim, Cornelius secretly leads Brown to a river passage that enables Brown to attack the river camp. Thus, Cornelius succeeds in revenging himself on Jim “unfailing” (361) power and avenges the shame caused by Jim’s replacement of him as Stein’s agent. The retreat of Brown and the successive deaths of Dain Waris and Jim all help Kassim to restore the Malay inhabitants to Rajah Allang’s control. Brown performs the role of power mistakenly assigned to him in order to find a way out of the siege, while Kassim manipulates Brown’s performance to break the dominance of the Bugis party. In this complicated conspiracy, Brown performs his “racial prestige”—a degraded one compared to Jim’s, but equally effective—whereas Kassim performs docility, a counter-performance, in order to achieve his larger goal.

In addition to the performance/counter-performance interaction between Kassim and Brown, there is a similar engagement between Jim and Brown. It is significant

that Jim’s negotiation with Brown, unlike Kassim’s private meeting with him, is made into a public spectacle before the inhabitants of Patusan. Dressed in the typical European outfit of the tropics, “in a helmet, all white” (379), Jim meets Brown under the gaze of the Patusan spectators to perform his authority. Brown observes: “The group of vivid colours and dark faces with the white figure in the midst were observing the knoll...The coloured group closed round the white man, and fell back twice before he got clear of them, walking slowly alone” (379). The excitement of the Patusan crowd is understandable, since Jim, their “white lord,” has finally returned from his trip to defend them, his “own people” (361), against the white intruder. It is essential for them to have a public figure like Jim whose “racial prestige” turns him into “the visible, tangible incarnation of unflinching truth and of unflinching victory” (361). Without the support of Jim’s legendary power, Dain Waris finds his people “too much for him” (361) for an attack against Brown’s band: “He had not Jim’s racial prestige and the reputation of invincible, supernatural power...he was still one of *them*, while Jim was one of *us*” (361). Jim’s public meeting with Brown, therefore, is but a routine performance designed to demonstrate his sovereignty in Patusan. It also represents another performance of his “occult” power demanded by the Patusan dwellers in order for them to “feel safe.” Brown also needs the meeting as a precious occasion to perform his newly-formed “reputation” as the leader of a band of ruthless, “devil-like” white men. In front of the Patusan audience, he meets Jim to show that he is able to deal with Tuan Jim “as equals” (381). Their privileged speech—they converse in English, a language alien to the local audience—further secures their performance of a common “racial prestige.”²³ Observed by “many invisible eyes” (387), what Jim and Brown actually say is very different from the expectation of their local audience. Jim appears to be asserting his “noble” status against Brown; in reality, Brown knows that Tuan Jim, like him, is but a sham. Their meeting is a public show designed to disguise their shared identity as outcasts: “And there ran through the rough talk a vein of subtle reference to their common blood, an assumption of common experience; a sickening suggestion of common guilt, of secret knowledge that was like a bond of their minds and of their hearts”

²³Brown takes advantage of using English as his privileged speech. During a conspiratorial meeting, Kassim asks him to send an “order” (368) to bring in the ship. Brown performs the task by writing the order in English, a language inaccessible to both Kassim and the “trustworthy messenger” (368) who carries it. Brown writes: “We are getting on. Big job. Detain the man” (368). Like Brown, Jim makes use of the privilege in writing in English. After he has decided to let Brown retreat, Jim sends him a note in English, carried by Cornelius, to warn him not to betray the deal. Cornelius, unlike Kassim’s messenger, benefits from the Jim/Brown performance. As the third important figure in Patusan that can speak English, Cornelius is thus able to visit Brown to inform him about Dain Waris’s river guard.

(387).

The performance/counter-performance by Jim and Brown also has a territorial significance. Brown's unexpected arrival at Patusan provides Jim with a convenient pretext to relocate his sovereignty and to move into the Rajah's quarters. On the morning of the council called to discuss Jim's deal with Brown, Rajah Allang, fearing the imminent destruction of his country by Brown's "troops," has fled with "most of his women" (395) to a jungle village. Accordingly, there is a temporary political vacuum in the Malayan quarter. On the pretext of defending Patusan, the deal with Brown enables Jim to take advantage of the situation to expand his power across Patusan—and to occupy the hitherto unconquered territory of Rajah Allang. Jim informs Kassim after the council: "he proposed to occupy the stockade on that night with his own men" (395). On the eve of Brown's retreat, Jim's men "marc[h] in" (395), and the unification of his sovereignty in Patusan is thus spatially accomplished.

Similarly, Brown's performance of power and Kassim's counter-performance of docility are both spatially significant. In his conspiracy with Cornelius, Kassim is the only inhabitant in Patusan except Jim who is able to negotiate with Brown in person. Plotting against the Bugis party, Kassim manipulates Brown in order to enhance the territorial interests of the Malay party. Kassim's "diplomacy" enables him to cross the politically alien territories of the Bugis quarter and Brown's camp to forge "treacherous alliances" with both parties in order to restore the Rajah's sovereignty. Jim's legendary attack upon Sherif Ali marked a decisive moment in Patusan's home politics; Brown's treacherous attack upon the Bugis river camp, as a result of Kassim's plot, represents another turning-point in Patusan history. However, in this case, the attack represents the fighting-back of the Malayan force to regain their original territorial control.

In the context of Patusan's inter-communal warfare and inter-racial encounters, the performance of "racial prestige" by white Europeans requires the spatial experience of dislocation. Patusan's geographic isolation enables Jim and Brown to enact their racial stereotype as the superior, potent "white man." For the Patusan inhabitants, the "outside" world is dominated by Euro-imperial powers which colonially control the region. These European forces such as the Dutch and the English are liable to be homogenized and compressed into a single representative figure. Accordingly, Jim and Brown, by virtue of being "white," are believed to have the same military might as the colonial power from the world "out there" (383). In fact, as we have seen, Brown's men consist of a mixture of outlaws—none of them is socially prestigious at "home." Yet, the spatial dislocation of Brown and his men

provides them with an opportunity to “stick to” the Patusan people’s belief in their racial superiority. Jim tries to escape from the communities of Europeans in the “East” because he has been dishonoured by the *Patna* incident. In Patusan, he redeems his lost honour by enacting his “racial prestige.” Nevertheless, however mighty and occult “Tuan Jim” is, he can maintain his prestige only in Patusan. As Marlow comments, “Jim the leader was a captive in every sense” (262): “all his conquests, the trust, the fame, the friendships, the love—all these things that made him master had made him a captive, too” (247). Jim’s imprisonment “within the very freedom of his power” (283) also illuminates Brown’s performance of his mistaken identity—an identity whose efficacy remains confined to Patusan. The dislocation of Jim and Brown empowers and, ironically, enfeebles them. They are “masters,” but they are also captives of their dislocation. Jim thus says that he “can’t conceive being able to live anywhere else” (305). For the Patusan people, Jim “shall always remain for them an insoluble mystery” (306). It is, paradoxically, for this reason that Jim says: “let me always remain here” (306).

The significance of spatial dislocation for identity-performance can be read in the light of Marlow’s reflections on returning home and his comment upon “the spirit of the land” (223):

I think it is the lonely, without a fireside or an affection they may call their own, those who return not to a dwelling but to the land itself, to meet its disembodied, eternal, and unchangeable spirit—it is those who understand best its severity, its saving power, the grace of its secular right to our fidelity, to our obedience. Yes! few of us understand, but we all feel it though, and I say *all* without exception, because those who do not feel do not count. (222)

Moreover, “[t]he spirit of the land, as becomes the ruler of great enterprises, is careless of innumerable lives. Woe to the stragglers! We exist only in so far as we hang together” (223). For Marlow, although Jim will never “go home” (222) to pay tribute to “the spirit of the land,” it is Jim’s abiding fidelity to this spirit that enables Marlow earnestly to regard him as “one of us” (43). Jim poignantly says to Marlow: “I shall be faithful” (334). For Marlow, Jim is “a straggler yearning inconsolably for his humble place in the ranks” (224-5). Jim’s faithfulness to “the spirit of the land” compels him “with an intensity that ma[kes] him touching” (223). His yearning to “keep in touch” (334) with those at “home” makes him in Marlow’s sympathetic eyes

unmistakably “one of us.”

However, Marlow’s idea of “the spirit of the land” that makes Jim “one of us” is problematic. Marlow believes that man is “rooted to the land from which he draws his faith together with his life” (222); Jim, however, draws his faith from the land from which he has been uprooted. The “land” where the commanding spirit originates is the homeland of the British Empire. This idea implies a spatial hierarchy in which the homeland is set over Patusan. Jim, after all, ultimately pays homage to the former. Yet, it is only through spatial dislocation from the homeland that Jim can enact the commanding “spirit of the land” in Patusan. Jim’s words can represent “unfailing truth” and “unfailing victory” (361) in Patusan only because he has been removed from “home.” Thus Jim remains a “straggler” in relation to his peers at “home”; yet, in Patusan, “Tuan Jim” is the “heir” to the invincible tradition of his “home” spirit. Jim’s “work” in Patusan needs to be evaluated according to “the spirit of the land” while, paradoxically, he also needs to be dislocated from his homeland in order to carry out this “work.” The territorial conquests of Euro-imperialism give the Patusan people the idea of invincible white Europeans. Jim’s dislocation helps him to enact this “impression” as if his power is “eternal” and “unchangeable” (222). At the same time, the condition of Jim’s success in Patusan is that his performance of sovereignty cannot be re-enacted “back home.”

Ross C. Murfin succinctly points out the fundamental crux in *Lord Jim*: “Jim’s quest for a noble identity is...a form of running from an allegedly ignoble one.”²⁴ I would like to borrow from Murfin this formula of “quest for/running from” to describe Jim’s relationship with “the spirit of the land”: Jim’s performance demands that he situate himself in the paradoxical simultaneity of quest and escape. He enacts “the spirit of the land” but, at the same time, this enactment requires him to turn away from the homeland as its precondition. Suggesting a similar paradox, Jeremy Hawthorn illustrates Jim’s predicament through the polarities of “facts” and “ideas.”²⁵ As Hawthorn argues, for Marlow and Jim, “[t]he Sea’ is a topic bound up very intimately with British imperialism”:

it secured Britain’s borders and was a hard fact for rivals to face, but it was also the glamorous escape from the everyday realities from which wealth could be gained, and thus could become the dream of boys

²⁴Ross C. Murfin, *Lord Jim: After the Truth* (New York: Twayne Publishers: 1992), 82.

²⁵Jeremy Hawthorn, *Joseph Conrad: Language and Fictional Self-Consciousness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 37-45.

throughout the land. Because it was such an important fact it was transformed into a dominating idea.²⁶

Lord Jim, as Hawthorn argues, “uncovers the extent to which imperialism relied upon enough ideas to subdue ‘natives’ and nature, while maintaining a tight hold on these ideas through a “faith’ that locked out awkward questions.”²⁷ In Patusan, both Jim’s performance of his “racial prestige” and his enactment of the “spirit of the land” exploit the “hard fact” of Euro-imperial dominance in the adjacent region. British influence, in fact, embodies only part of the imperial conquest, and the British are far less prominent than the Dutch whose authority in Batavia remains politically in force over Patusan.²⁸ For the Patusan inhabitants, however, the “hard fact” of Euro-imperial conquest becomes an “idea” of Euro-supremacy that effectively homogenizes Euro-imperial powers.²⁹ Jim knows that the Patusan people only care about what he appears to be, not what he really is. The formation of Jim’s “fame” in Patusan demands the belief of the Patusan people in this “idea” which, as Jim’s identity-performance shows, can be a fiction. But as long as Jim stays in Patusan, he is able to maintain his mythic status as the “white lord.” Only thus can he evade “awkward questions” about his inadequacy as a “straggler.”

Jim’s enactment of the mistaken “idea” of his Euro-supremacy can also be read in relation to what Homi Bhabha calls the “mimic man.” According to Bhabha, colonial mimicry is “the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.*”³⁰ The colonial authority creates the “mimic man,” the “recognizable Other,” in order to reinforce colonial control over indigenous population. As Bhabha notes, the best example is the creation of a class of English-educated Indians to act as the intermediary for British colonial rule.³¹ In *Lord Jim*, ironically, it is, in a sense, Jim himself who becomes a “mimic man” as he is trapped in the exercise and maintenance of his power.³² Jim’s performance of his

²⁶Hawthorn, 44.

²⁷Hawthorn, 45.

²⁸For example, it is from the Dutch government that Stein obtains “a special authorisation” (362) to export gunpowder to Patusan. Rajah Allang mistakes Jim’s first arrival as the imminent invasion of the Dutch troops.

²⁹GoGwilt has shown that Marlow’s “Western eyes” similarly overlook the diversity of European nations in presenting an idea of empire that is “Western.” See GoGwilt, 88-105.

³⁰Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge: 1994), 86.

³¹Bhabha, 86.

³²In this reading of “mimic man,” I am not considering the possibility that to be a “mimic man” might be the strategy of resistance adopted by the “natives.” See Bhabha, 88-9. I wish to consider instead the situation—as shown by Jim’s case—in which a European needs to make himself

“racial prestige” produces him as a “recognizable Other” for the Patusan people: he must manifest his identity as a “white man” in order to perform his power. Thus, for his colonial “subjects,” Jim becomes an object of their surveillance. Jim is also “almost the same, but not quite” as other Euro-colonialists. For Jim, to enact this “idea” of his racial superiority entails “sticking to” the belief of the Patusan inhabitants—that is, he is required to mimic the semblance of a Euro-hero. Jim’s racial identity is thus knowable to the Patusan people: he is their “white lord” capable of materializing “unfailing” truth and power. Yet this performance ironically highlights the dislocation of Jim’s identity. To mimic his peers at “home” is also a way of acknowledging his dislocation from them, the fact that he is *not* “in the ranks.”³³

The paradox of Jim’s identity-performance—he has to affiliate himself with but also alienate himself from his peers at “home”—casts doubt upon Michael Valdez Moses’s attempt to situate Jim’s “accomplishment” in the context of “modernizing” Patusan into an “independent,” “multiethnic,” and “nonracial” nation.³⁴ Moses contends:

If we take seriously Jim’s opinion of himself—that he has permanently left the world of Western Europe behind; that he has become a member and leader of the native community rather than an agent of outside political powers; that he wishes to improve the social and material conditions of *his* people without regard to the political, cultural, and commercial interests of his British and European detractors; that he desires to preserve the freedom and autonomy of Patusan—then it becomes possible to view Jim’s story as emblematic of the tragic course followed by the Europeanized elites of many newly independent postcolonial nations, political figures caught between the desire to modernize their countries and the equally strong wish to preserve the traditional basis of their indigenous cultures.³⁵

Contrary to Moses’s argument, Jim never “permanently” abandons “the world of

“recognizable” to the “natives” in order to perform his colonial power.

³³This is analogous to Bhabha’s “mimic man.” As Bhabha suggests, in the case of Anglicizing British subalterns for colonial control, “to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English.” See Bhabha, 87.

³⁴Michael Valdez Moses, *The Novel and the Globalization of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 67-104.

³⁵Moses, 72.

Western Europe.” The fact that Jim seems to be “one with them” (381)—the Patusan people—actually represents a double-dealing. Jim’s spatial dislocation enables him to live up to the codes of “one of us”—duty, honour, and trustworthiness. But, as Andrzej Gasiorek notes, Jim thus always shows a “metropolitan imperative”: a “desire to justify himself to an imaginary European audience,” and to seek “recognition from elsewhere” rather than from the Patusan people.³⁶ Moreover, Jim acts as the agent of Stein’s company with which he maintains “intimate relations by letters” (362) throughout his stay.³⁷ The establishment of Jim’s political sovereignty in Patusan effectively secures Stein’s commercial interests against Rajah Allang’s attempted monopoly. As the manager of the “Stein & Co.’s trading post” (220), Jim has not only the material provisions of the company, but also the military support of the privileged store of gunpowder specially approved by the Dutch government.

Moreover, Jim is “going to try ever so many experiments” (322) in Patusan—including a “coffee-plantation” (322). Jim’s political and economic “experiments” firmly associate his “work” with that of Euro-imperialism, and this is a far cry from seeking “freedom” and “autonomy” for Patusan—what Moses sees as the “postcolonial concerns” of the novel.³⁸ Politically, Jim’s role as the “*virtual* ruler of the land” (273, emphasis added) is more like that of a Resident in the Residential system, developed by his contemporary colonialists in British Malaya, that reinforced British control through indigenous rulers.³⁹ In 1874, the Pangkor Engagement with Perak enabled Governor Andrew Clarke to assign to the Sultan a British officer as the Resident whom must be “asked and acted upon on all questions other than those touching Malay Religion and Custom.”⁴⁰ As John G. Butcher notes, “[i]t soon became clear however that British ‘advice’ did in fact mean British control.”⁴¹ Hugh

³⁶ Andrzej Gasiorek, “‘To Season with a Pinch of Romance’: Ethics and Politics in *Lord Jim*,” *The Conradian* 22 (1997): 106-7.

³⁷ Stein, in turn, remains in close contact with “entomologists in Europe” (207). Therefore, the channel of an indirect contact with Europe is open to Jim.

³⁸ As Gasiorek shows, the ambivalence of Jim’s “civilizing mission” marks the historical context of “imperial trusteeship” whose ethics are never immune from the imperial sentiment of the time. See Gasiorek, 102-7.

³⁹ For a historical survey of the Residential system, see J. M. Gullick, *Rulers and Residents: Influence and Power in the Malay States, 1870-1920* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992). For a contemporary account of the system from a British colonialist, see Frank Swettenham, *British Malaya: An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence in Malaya*, rev. ed. (1906; London: George Allen and Unwin, 1948). The account of Swettenham, the Resident of Perak from 1889 to 1895, who unabashedly believed that Englishmen “are born administrators” (xv), should be read with caution. Jim’s success as “the virtual ruler” also echoes—as many critics have noted—the career of James Brooke, the “White Rajah” of Sarawak.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Gullick, 14. Rajah Abdullah as the Sultan was chosen by Clarke.

⁴¹ John G. Butcher, *The British in Malaya, 1880-1941: The Social History of a European Community in*

Low, the Resident of Perak from 1877 to 1889, was informed by Governor William Robinson that “the fiction (if such you prefer to call it) that the Residents are merely advisers must be kept up.”⁴² In *Lord Jim*, it is therefore significant that Jim, the “white lord,” never displaces the chief of the Bugis. The Residential system introduced an alien political power—the British—into an indigenous political structure in order to reinforce British colonial control. Similarly, in Doramin’s court, Jim resembles a Resident whose advisory role often results in his direct intervention in local politics. In the council to discuss Brown’s intrusion, for example, it is Jim’s “words,” backed up by Doramin’s symbolic authority, that decide the course of action for the whole community. For efficient but non-confrontational rule, the “white lord” tactfully draws political endorsement from the native chief as part of the process of “indirect” rule.

Economically, Jim’s role as the “virtual” ruler who destroys the monopoly of Rajah Allang is also akin to the Residential system. British colonial government sought, for example, to intervene in the local feuds between the Malay and the Chinese communities relating to the tin business in Perak. It was this effort to secure the tin concessions for British merchants that prompted the introduction of the Residential system in the Pangkor Engagement with Perak.⁴³ As the manager of “Stein & Co.’s trading post,” Jim affiliates himself with the Bugis party against the economic dominion of Rajah Allang. Like the British intervention in the local politics of Perak, Jim’s intervention in the rivalry between the Bugis and the Malay is economically significant. After the battle against Sherif Ali, Jim’s economic conquest of Patusan ensues from his political victory. During his visit, Marlow informs Jim about Stein’s order to grant him the house and the right to transact the company’s goods. Consequently, Jim refuses to leave Patusan. He tells Marlow: “Good God! I! want to leave! Especially now after what you told me of Mr. Stein’s...” (247). Jim’s plans for the “coffee-plantation” also have a precedent in the Residential system. Low, the Resident of Perak, also introduced Government plantations for the cultivation of Arabian coffee.⁴⁴

Moses also misreads the racial politics involved in Jim’s relationship with Jewel. He argues that “Jim’s public acknowledgment of Jewel, a ‘half-caste’ Malay woman, as his legitimate spouse constitutes a major breach of the nineteenth-century British

Colonial South-East Asia (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979), 7.

⁴²William Robinson to Hugh Low, 9 June 1878. Quoted in Gullick, 32.

⁴³I rely upon Butcher’s information in this matter. See Butcher, 6.

⁴⁴Swettenham, 262.

imperial ethos.”⁴⁵ Contrary to Moses’s argument, Jim’s relationship with Jewel puts him firmly “in the ranks” alongside his contemporary colonialists in British Malaya. According to Butcher, the hardship of the colonial life—the low salary, the scanty population of European women, and the high expense of marrying them—made it a common practice for male British colonial servants to look for concubinage and prostitution with Asian or Eurasian women.⁴⁶ The social demand for expensive, high-quality marriages with European women was incompatible with the low salaries of most civil servants so that “before World War I some men were marrying Eurasian or Asian women knowing that they might never be able to afford a European wife.”⁴⁷ In this social climate, therefore, the practice of marrying Asian or Eurasian women in colonies actually reinforced the “imperial ethos” since it implicitly situated these women as socially and racially inferior to European females. Relatively young, not yet well-established in any job, and socially exiled from “home,” Jim could not “afford” a European wife. His relationship with Jewel, on the other hand, fits into the pattern of sexual colonization of Asian or Eurasian women by British colonists in Malaya.

“An Inexplicable and Incomprehensible Conspiracy”

Padmini Mongia argues that it is vital to grasp “the material conditions created by imperialism that determine the contours of Jim’s life,” since “dreams such as Jim’s can only be fulfilled in a given material setting.”⁴⁸ Mongia directs attention to the context of imperialism that contributes to Jim’s “success” in Patusan—a “global, imperialist sense of male possibility.”⁴⁹ I have discussed the significance of this context in relation to the identity-performance of Jim and Brown. I would like to draw attention to another significant context for Jim’s conquest: the economic context of colonial capitalism. As Syed Hussein Alatas states, colonial capitalism means the “predominant control of and access to capital by an alien economic power.”⁵⁰ In this sense, Stein’s company as run by Jim can be regarded as a latent, miniature version of colonial capitalism. As I have pointed out, Jim is not unique

⁴⁵Moses, 81.

⁴⁶See Butcher, 84-7, and 201-22.

⁴⁷See Butcher, 86.

⁴⁸Padmini Mongia, “Narrative Strategy and Imperialism in Conrad’s *Lord Jim*,” *Studies in the Novel* 24:2 (1992): 173-86.

⁴⁹Mongia, 181.

⁵⁰Syed Hussein Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 2.

among his contemporary colonialists in engaging himself in the plantation project. Although Jim's job as Stein's agent remains a private undertaking, its success in Patusan depends ultimately upon the globalization of Euro-colonial capitalism, backed up by territorial conquest, that creates a favourable political condition for companies such as Stein's to flourish. Marx and Engels noted in 1848: "The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonization of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known...the need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe."⁵¹ Marlow and Jim, both seamen, are part of this picture of the globalization of colonial commerce, since it is precisely this globalization of colonial commerce that makes it possible for them to pursue their careers in the "East."

Alatas has shown that colonial capitalism contributes to the myth of "the lazy native."⁵² According to Alatas, "the image of the indolent native was the product of colonial domination generally in the 19th century when the domination of the colonies reached a high peak and when colonial capitalist exploitation required extensive control of the area."⁵³ As Alatas notes, in South-East Asia, plantation labour was indispensable to the colonial exploitation of opium, rubber, and tin. Ignoring the indigenous economic system, colonial capitalism associated industriousness with plantation labour in order to justify its use. Consequently, plantation labour was given "an aura of respectability," while other forms of production, not sanctioned by colonial capitalism, were disparaged. Malayan workers, who maintained their traditional economic activities (such as fishing) and disliked plantation work, came to be regarded as "indolent."⁵⁴

I would like to end my paper by placing Marlow's observation of Patusan in this context of "the lazy native." I am not suggesting that Marlow and Jim work for a colonial government or that they seek to exploit Patusan systematically through plantation labour. Rather, I wish to highlight the fact that, although there is no formal plantation labour in Patusan, Marlow's observation of the local people presents immobility as the recurrent image. He thus perpetuates the myth of "the lazy native"

⁵¹Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, first published in 1848, ed. by David McLellan(1992; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3-4, and 6. The Oxford edition uses Samuel Moor's 1888 English translation.

⁵²See Alatas, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*. Like Alatas, I use "myth" in the sense of a false idea or a misrepresentation of facts.

⁵³Alatas, 70.

⁵⁴Alatas, 95-6. As Swettenham writes, the "leading characteristic of the Malay of every class is a disinclination to work." See Swettenham, 136.

by intimating the indolence of Patusan:

It remains in the memory motionless, unfaded, with its life arrested, in an unchanging light...I had turned away from the picture and was going back to the world where events move, men change, light flickers, life flows in a clear stream, no matter whether over mud or over stones...But as to what I was leaving behind, I cannot imagine any alteration. (330)

In sharp contrast to the inert Patusan, the world Marlow returns to is active and “inspiring” (332):

I breathed deeply, I revelled in the vastness of the opened horizon, in the different atmosphere that seemed to vibrate with a toil of life, with the energy of an impeccable world. This sky and this sea were open to me...there was a sign, a call in them—something to which I responded with every fibre of my being. (331)

For Marlow, the global domination of Euro-imperialism transforms “this sky and this sea” into the arena where each “one of us” is able to pursue immense “opportunities.” In contrast, Marlow has not found any appealing “toil of life” in Patusan, as he observes: “A brooding gloom lay over this vast and monotonous landscape; the light fell on it as if into an abyss. The land devoured the sunshine; only far off, along the coast, the empty ocean, smooth and polished within the faint breeze, seemed to rise up to the sky in a wall of steel” (264-5). Under the gloomy stagnant sky, the “old trees” and “old mankind” lie “neglected and isolated” (226). Strolling around Jim’s house, Marlow finds the occasion “a moment of immobility that accentuate[s] the utter isolation of this lost corner of the earth” (246). The landscape of the village suggests “a spectral herd of shapeless creatures pressing forward to drink in a spectral and lifeless stream” (246).

This impression of an inert Patusan is produced by what Anne McClintock calls the trope of “anachronistic space.” As McClintock points out, “the colonial journey into the virgin interior reveals a contradiction, for the journey is figured as proceeding forward in geographical space but backward in historical time.” Colonized people are thus displaced in the “anachronistic space” as if they “exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic

humans.”⁵⁵ In Patusan, Marlow finds that Jim “dominat[es] the forest, the secular gloom, the old mankind” (265). For Marlow, the Patusan people, “old mankind,” are entrapped in an “anachronistic space.” This temporal stasis, in turn, produces a sense of the indolence of the local people. For Marlow, the people of Patusan are atavistically “old,” and the space they inhabit thereby appears “lifeless.” Speaking of Jim’s plantation project, Marlow comments: “I had admired his energy, his enterprise, and his shrewdness” (322). Very different from “the old mankind” around him, Jim proposes to expand the commercial activity of his company. Marlow believes that this commercial pursuit will turn the static Patusan into an arena of commercial opportunity. Yet Jim’s effort also has spatial ramifications that affect Patusan’s landscape. Marlow observes “a stretch of a newly cleared ground” (321) near Jim’s house: “the few big trees had been felled, the undergrowth had been cut down and the grass fired” (322). If Jim had been able to continue his “experiments,” Patusan would perhaps have undergone further deforestation on a wider scale than in this small plantation. Jim dies without seeing the fruit of his project; nevertheless, Marlow’s observation highlights the fact that Jim works industriously to widen the commercial horizon of Patusan—a trait that seems racially denied to the Patusan people.

The myth of Patusan’s indolence is tellingly suggested near the end of *Lord Jim* when the omniscient narrator describes the vibrant metropolitan life contemplated by the privileged man:

The slopes of the roofs glistened, the dark broken ridges succeeded each other without end like sombre, uncrested waves, and from the depths of the town under his feet ascended a confused and unceasing mutter. The spires of churches, numerous, scattered haphazard, uprose like beacons on a maze of shoals without a channel....(337)

The privileged man is a veteran of colonial conquest who has accomplished “the hot quest of the Ever-undiscovered Country” (338). He receives Marlow’s letter at “home,” in a financial capital enriched with the vitality of modern commercial life. The “confused and unceasing mutter” of the city life, as “Karain: A Memory” shows, suggests the flourishing commercial activities in London, the “home” of the British Empire. In “Karain,” the active life of London—albeit rather Dickensian—suggests

⁵⁵ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), 30.

the political and commercial strength of the nation:

the broken confusion of roofs, the chimney-stacks, the gold letters sprawling over the fronts of houses, the sombre polish of windows, stood resigned and sullen under the falling gloom. The whole length of the street, deep as a well and narrow like a corridor, was full of a sombre and ceaseless stir. Our ears were filled by a headlong shuffle and beat of rapid footsteps and an underlying rumour—a rumour vast, fait, pulsating, as of panting breaths, of beating hearts, of gasping voices.⁵⁶

The “confused and unceasing mutter” heard by the privileged man repeats this “underlying rumour” in “Karain”: both emphasize the power of a vibrant, dynamic metropolis over the distant, Malay world. Moreover, the immense metropolitan landscape asserts the primariness of the imperial capital—its political and economic vigour overpowers “native” peoples in colonies. The territorial expansion of the empire leads to the globalization of colonial capitalism. This spatial expansion of commerce, in turn, reinforces the control of the imperial capital over the subordinated colonies.

I would like to read Marlow’s two “escapes” from Jewel in this context. First, during his visit to Patusan, Marlow refrains from explaining Jim’s past to Jewel—Marlow “slip[s] away” (319) from Jewel. However, as Marlow says, his silent retreat gives Jewel “the hint of some mysterious collusion, of an inexplicable and incomprehensible conspiracy to keep her for ever in the dark” (321). Significantly, this observation foreshadows Marlow’s actual conspiracy of silence with the privileged man “more than two years later” (337): Marlow sends “the last word” (337) to the privileged man to share with him the truth of Jim’s case “like a secret” (337). This conspiracy of silence silently inscribes within itself Jewel’s presumed inability to “understand” (316). For Marlow, Jewel has “seen nothing,” “known nothing,” and has “no conception of anything” (307). He feels obliged to preserve Jewel’s “ignorance” (309) from the “full utterance” (225) of the “real, real truth” (305) of Jim: “[t]he heaven and the earth must not be shaken...at least, not by *us* who know so many truths about either” (225, emphasis added). Marlow’s conspiracy of silence with the privileged man also affirms his affiliation with “the ranks.” Above all, this conspiracy emphatically enacts the spatial primariness of the metropolitan “home” where the privileged man receives Marlow’s letter. In the face of the

⁵⁶Joseph Conrad, *Tales of Unrest* (1898; London: J. M. Dents and Sons, 1947), 54.

“ignorant” Jewel, Marlow reflects upon the “world” he and Jim come from: “I belonged to this Unknown that might claim Jim for its own at any moment. I was, as it were, in the secret of its nature and of its intentions;—the confidant of a threatening mystery;—armed with its power perhaps!” (308). For Marlow, Jewel’s inability to “understand” suggests also the inability of the Patusan people to comprehend a world that is “too big” (317) for them. In this light, Jewel’s physiological “immobility,” like the inertness of Patusan, represents an inadequacy to grasp the greatness of the “outside,” metropolitan life from which Jim pleads for recognition.

Marlow’s second “escape” (321) from Jewel in Stein’s house further exemplifies his need to deny her the knowledge of the imperial, metropolitan world which endorses the “racial prestige” of Jim. Again, Marlow is “glad to escape” (349) from Jewel’s demand for “an explanation” (307), and abandons the effort to make her “understand” and “forgive” (347) Jim. It is significant that in relation to this “escape,” Marlow’s description of his last view of Jewel is disrupted by his observation of Stein’s garden. After Jewel—escorted by Stein—has disappeared “beyond that spinney” (351) of the garden, Marlow reflects:

For my part, I was fascinated by the exquisite grace and beauty of that fluted grove, crowned with pointed leaves and feathery heads, the lightness, the vigour, the charm as distinct as a voice of that unperplexed luxuriating life. I remember staying to look at it for a long time, as one would linger within reach of a consoling whisper. The sky was pearly grey. It was one of those overcast days so rare in the tropics, in which memories crowd upon me, memories of other shores, of other faces.
(351)

In Stein’s garden, the swaying “casuarina-trees” remind Marlow “of the souging of fir-trees at home” (349). Although set against a tropical background, Stein’s garden is not an “anachronistic space.” Stein has carefully collected “every plant and tree of tropical lowlands” (349), and his “famous gardens” (349) represent an imperialized space of knowledge. The static display of plants, curiously, appears vibrant to Marlow. It suggests a “luxuriating life” endowed with a pleasant “vigour” similar to that shown by the metropolitan landscape contemplated by the privileged man. Thus, Marlow’s last view of Jewel doubly accentuates her presumed “inadequacy.” First, her presumed limitation (her inability to comprehend the “real truth”) is displaced by the spatial inadequacy of the colonial space outside Stein’s garden. In contrast,

Stein's "paternal" (352) sheltering of Jewel embodies his ability to apprehend both the knowledge of botany and the "real truth" about Jim. For Marlow, Jewel's demureness by "the side of the tall man" (351) suggests the subjugation of her "ignorance" by Stein's knowledge. Secondly, Stein's naturalist knowledge represents the efficacy of an imperial knowledge to control other peoples' living space in the colonies. The knowledge/ignorance polarity represented by the coupling of Stein and Jewel metaphorizes through Jewel's ignorance the inadequacy of the colonial space where she lives. Jewel is known only to us through this name given by Jim. Similarly, the tropical plants in Stein's garden have also been given scientific names by European naturalists. In Patusan forest, these plants are part of an inert, static landscape. However, once relocated and displayed in a naturalist's garden, they serve to remind Marlow of the soothing "vigour" of the imperial "home."

Marlow's effort to maintain Jewel's "ignorance" also underlines the imperative he shares with Jim to look up to the urban audience at "home." Benita Parry notes: "what Jim *is*...is not the same as how he is seen, and it is how he is seen that is of significance."⁵⁷ As I have shown, how Jim is seen by the Patusan people is vital for his performance as the "white lord." But Jim is also poignantly preoccupied with how he may be evaluated by the metropolitan audience at "home." At their final parting, Jim pleads Marlow to "[t]ell them"(335). Jim's unfinished letter, headed "The Fort, Patusan" (340), embodies his unceasing longing to win recognition from "somebody" (409) in "the ranks." In Marlow's words, Jim feels driven "to frame a message to the impeccable world" (339). This metropolitan imperative is underscored by Marlow's sending of "the last word of the story" (337) to the privileged man. Like Jim, Marlow is concerned with how Jim is to be judged at the metropolitan "home." Marlow's "last words" (225) affirm Jim's fame: "I affirm he had achieved greatness" (225). Yet this affirmation has still to be reviewed by Marlow's metropolitan audience as represented by the privileged man. For Marlow, what matters is not Jim's conquest of Patusan, since this "achievement," like the territorial expansion of Euro-imperialism, is taken for granted. What matters is how Jim's identity as "one of us" is to be evaluated by his metropolitan peers. Marlow's letter to the privileged man embodies Marlow's own effort "to frame a message to the impeccable world."

Without Jim's conquest of Patusan, Marlow would not have been able to foreground the primariness of the world where Jim "is not good enough" (318) to live.

⁵⁷Benita Parry, *Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 77-8.

Marlow demonstrates his authority in telling the story of Jim not simply because of his firsthand knowledge; but also because, by “speak[ing] for [his] brother” (316), Marlow reinforces his own place within “the ranks.” Hence, with the privileged man, Marlow is entitled to withdraw “the last word of the story.” At the end of their last meeting, Jim poignantly tells Marlow that he seeks to “keep in touch” (334) with those he will never see, especially with Marlow. Marlow reflects: “I felt a gratitude, an affection, for that straggler whose eyes had singled me out, keeping my place in the ranks of an insignificant multitude” (334). Marlow is unequivocal in affirming *his own* status as “one of us.” He knows that he belongs to the ranks of those “impeccable men” to whom Jim strenuously seeks to appeal. Like Jim’s performance, Marlow’s telling of Jim’s story, “many times, in distant parts of the world” (33), marks his own unabashed performance as “one of us.”⁵⁸ Marlow says of himself: “I—who have the right to think myself good enough...” (325). By exposing Jim’s “weakness” (43) and his “crime” (157) in making “a breach of faith with the community” (157), Marlow, ironically, fulfils Jim’s plead to “[t]ell them.”

The panoptic privileged man, “solitary above the billowy roofs of the town, like a lighthouse-keeper above the sea” (351), also suggests “the sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct” (50). The privileged man has accomplished what each “one of us” seeks to achieve: “No more horizons as boundless as hope...in the hot quest of the Ever-undiscovered Country...” (338).⁵⁹ The privileged man tells Marlow: “we must fight in the ranks or our lives don’t count” (339). Marlow writes to him:

You said...that ‘giving your life up to them’ (*them* meaning all of mankind with skins brown, yellow, or black in colour) ‘was like selling your soul to a brute.’ You contended that ‘that kind of thing’ was only endurable and enduring when based on a firm conviction in the truth of ideas racially our

⁵⁸Kerr ends his essay open-endedly with a question in this respect: “It remains a question whether *Lord Jim* itself...is part of the performance as well as a criticism of it.” See Kerr, 62. I seek to foreground performance as social practice in the context of inter-racial conspiracy. My approach differs from Kerr’s which tackles performance through Le Bon’s theory of crowd control and hypnotism.

⁵⁹Since John Feaster’s speculative note on the privileged man, there has been much critical attention to his identity. Situating *Lord Jim* in relation to Conrad’s contemporary Malay novels, Feaster identifies the privileged man with Tom Lingard. See “The ‘Privileged Man’ in *Lord Jim*: A Speculative Note,” *Conradiana* 10 (1978): 81-4. Linda M. Shires, focusing on the dialogical relationship between the privileged man and Stein, argues that the privileged man can be understood as the implied reader of the novel. See “The ‘Privileged’ Reader and Narrative Methodology in *Lord Jim*,” *Conradiana* 17:1 (1985): 19-30. More recently, Daniel Born argues that the privileged man suggests Kipling’s racism. See “Echoes of Kipling in Marlow’s ‘Privileged Man’?,” *Conradiana* 24:2 (1992): 100-15.

own, in whose name are established the order, the morality of an ethical progress. (339)

Marlow’s reservation, his “doubt” (50) about a “sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct,” is pertinent to his “sympathies” (78) for Jim. He says about Jim’s case: “the question is whether at the last he had not confessed to a faith mightier than the laws of order and progress” (339). Marlow sends the privileged man “the last word of the story” in order to show that Jim’s life should “count” although he does not—and cannot—“fight in the ranks.” Marlow thus silently upholds the privileged man’s conviction while seeking to redefine such conviction.⁶⁰ Earlier in his narration, Marlow abided by the rule of the privileged man in considering Jim as “a straggler yearning inconsolably for his humble place in the ranks” (224-5). It is also Marlow who introduced to his audience the belief that “[w]e exist only in so far as we hang together” (223). Without uprooting this conviction, Marlow seeks to extend its validity to appreciate Jim’s single-handed dealing with “them”—the Patusan people. For Marlow, Jim is qualified to be “in the ranks” since Jim “[feels] confusedly but powerfully” (222) the commanding “spirit of the land.” Marlow negotiates his “doubt” with the idea of “a faith mightier than the laws of order and progress”; nevertheless, his “doubt” does not contribute to a total uprooting of his conviction.⁶¹ In particular, Marlow’s negotiation emphatically reinforces the spatial sovereignty of the imperial/metropolitan “spirit” over Patusan, and marginalizes Patusan as the background of Jim’s conquest. Without the subjugated spatiality of Patusan as the arena for Euro-imperialism, Marlow would be unable to foreground Jim as “one of us” to the privileged man.

For Marlow, Jim’s intuitional affiliation with “the ranks” makes his “achievement” something that can be acknowledged by those who “fight in the ranks.” Marlow’s negotiation with the privileged man thus marks his effort to reconfigure the privileged man’s ethical belief in order to accommodate the expanding boundary of imperial conquest epitomized by Jim’s “achievement” in Patusan. As

⁶⁰ Andrew Michael Roberts rightly argues that Marlow is engaging himself in “both evaluating Jim and evaluating the ‘sovereign power’ itself.” See “Conrad, Theory and Value,” *The Conradian* 22 (1997): 178-202.

⁶¹ I don’t think that Marlow finds, “two years” (337) after the event, any “paradox” relating to what Gasiorek calls “a ruled-governed code” and “an agent-based ethic.” See Gasiorek, 75-112. I believe that the conspiracy between Marlow and the privileged man aims to accommodate any variable between the two codes in order to eliminate “paradox.” Neither do I find Marlow’s impulse “contradictory.” See Gail Fincham, “The Dialogism of *Lord Jim*,” *The Conradian* 22 (1997): 58-74. I believe that Marlow’s negotiation marks a consistent effort to eradicate contradiction in his belief in the “standard of conduct”—although it has to be re-fixed.

the spatial boundary of an empire extends through territorial conquest and expansion, Marlow shows the concomitant need to extend the “ideological boundary”⁶² so that the metropolitan audience can administer the territorial expansion at the colonial periphery. Marlow’s negotiation with the privileged man thus attempts to contain new forms of conquest according to a *re-fixed* “standard of conduct.”⁶³

Patusan conveniently provides Jim with “the fabulous value of the bargain” (248)—rehabilitation through political and territorial conquest. In addition, Patusan also provides Marlow and the privileged man with an opportunity to reconfigure their metropolitan vision. *Lord Jim* shows how this urge re-draws the colonizers’ “ideological boundaries” in order to keep up with the rapid spatial reconfiguration of *other* peoples’ geographical boundaries by the colonizers. What Jewel experiences as “an inexplicable and incomprehensible conspiracy” thus actually anticipates the ideological reconfiguration engaged in by Marlow and the privileged man in their conspiracy of silence. Jewel and Tamb’ Itam, like the rest of the Patusan people, are denied the “real truth” of Jim. They are also denied the truth of the conspiracy of Marlow and the privileged man. Marlow’s “escapes” from Jewel, like his “escape” from Patusan, evoke the spatial secondariness of Patusan. It is to “*them*” (339)—the Patusan people—that Marlow’s withdrawal appears “inexplicable and incomprehensible.” For Marlow, Patusan and its dwellers are no more than the playground for Jim’s Euro-heroism, an arena where Jim can attempt to demonstrate his abiding solidarity with “the ranks.” Although Tamb’ Itam regards Jim’s death as “the failure of a potent charm” (351), the fiction of Jim’s “supernatural” (266) power has been maintained in Patusan. Even after his failure and death, the memory of Jim is inseparable from his occult “charm.” Marlow never intends to break this “charm” for the Patusan people. Rather, he disseminates the myth of Jim’s “greatness” to the metropolitan audience. This dissemination, in turn, provides Marlow with an occasion to consolidate his own metropolitan filiation. Patusan remains a “name” (226) as it appears on a seventeenth-century map: a name innocent of the crude reality of spatial conquest, but a name necessary to affirm the “greatness” of Jim’s myth and, by implication, the myth of the “greatness” of each “one of us.”

⁶²I borrow this term from the title of Parry’s book.

⁶³Boo Eung Koh situates *Lord Jim* in the context of “new imperialism.” See “Contradictions in Colonial History in *Lord Jim*,” *Conradiana* 28:3 (1996): 163-81. Although Koh notes the spatial significance of Euro-imperialism’s territorial expansion, Koh does not perceive the corollary urge to expand the “ideological boundary” to accommodate this spatial expansion.

Bibliography

CONRAD'S WORKS

The Collected Edition. London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1946-1955.

Tales of Unrest. 1898.

Lord Jim. 1900

Youth: A Narrative and Two Other Stories. 1902.

The Rescue. 1921.

Last Essays. 1926.

SECONDARY SOURCES

Alatas, Syed Hussein. *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism*. London: Frank Cass, 1977.

Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994.

Born, Daniel. "Echoes of Kipling in Marlow's 'Privileged Man'?" *Conradiana* 24.2 (1992): 100-115.

Butcher, John G. *The British in Malaya, 1880-1941: The Social History of a European Community in Colonial South-East Asia*. Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Dirlik, Arif. *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*. Boulder: Westview, 1997.

Feaster, John. "The 'Privileged Man' in *Lord Jim*: A Speculative Note." *Conradiana* 10 (1978): 81-84.

Fincham, Gail. "The Dialogism of *Lord Jim*." *Conradian* 22.1/2 (1997): 58-74.

Fine, Elizabeth C., and Jean Haskell Speer, eds. *Performance, Culture, and Identity*. Westport: Praeger, 1992.

Gasiorek, Andrzej. "'To Season with a Pinch of Romance': Ethics and Politics in *Lord Jim*." *The Conradian* 22:1-2 (1997): 75-112.

GoGwilt, Christopher. *The Invention of the West: Joseph Conrad and the Double-Mapping of Europe and Empire*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Gullick, J. M. *Rulers and Residents: Influence and Power in the Malay States, 1870-1920*. Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1992.

- Hawthorn, Jeremy. *Joseph Conrad: Language and Fictional Self-Consciousness*. Nebraska: The University of Nebraska Press, 1979.
- Hampson, Robert. "Conrad and the Formation of Legends." *Conrad's Literary Career*. Eds. by Keith Carabine, et al. Lublin: Maria Curie-Sklodowska University Press, 1992. 167-85.
- Kerr, Douglas. "Crowds, Colonialism, and *Lord Jim*." *The Conradian* 18.2 (1994): 49-64.
- Koh, Boo Eung. "Contradictions in Colonial History in *Lord Jim*." *Conradiana* 28.3 (1996): 163-81.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince*. Trans. by Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Mongia, Padmini. "Narrative Strategy and Imperialism in Conrad's *Lord Jim*." *Studies in the Novel* 24.2 (1992): 173-86.
- Moses, Michael Valdez. *The Novel and the Globalization of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Murfin, Ross C. *Lord Jim: After the Truth*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992.
- Orwell, George. "Shooting an Elephant." *Shooting an Elephant*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1950. 1-10.
- Parry, Benita. *Conrad and Imperialism: Ideological Boundaries and Visionary Frontiers*. London: Macmillan, 1983.
- Roberts, Andrew Michael. "Conrad, Theory, and Value." *The Conradian* 22.1/2 (1997): 178-202.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, (1978) 1979.
- Said, Edward W. *Cultural and Imperialism*. London: Vintage, (1993) 1994.
- Shires, Linda M. "The 'Privileged' Reader and Narrative Methodology in *Lord Jim*." *Conradiana* 17.1 (1985): 19-30.
- Swettenham, Frank. *British Malaya: An Account of the Origin and Progress of British Influence in Malaya*. Rev. ed. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1948.
- Turner, Victor. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: PAJ Publications, 1986.

逢甲人文社會學報第 1 期
第 173-204 頁 2000 年 11 月
逢甲大學人文社會學院

「物超所值的協議」： 《吉姆爺》裏的陰謀與「表演」

鄧鴻樹*

摘 要

本文將討論康拉德小說《吉姆爺》中的陰謀與「表演」。吉姆流亡至巴帝山(Patusan)—這「物超所值的協議」—並經一連串政治、土地的征服，東山再起。其中最主要的策略，就是吉姆藉「表演」與陰謀成功地塑造「白人乃萬夫莫敵」之刻板印象。本文更進一步指出，馬羅的敘事也是一種「表演」，亦暗藏陰謀。

第一節將探討吉姆、布朗、與馬來族群間的陰謀互動。當白人「表演」刻板的「英雄」角色之際，馬來人並非都是沉默的受害者：他們有時也「反表演」，假裝溫馴，圖謀白人的潰敗。第二節將討論馬羅與家鄉朋友之間的陰謀。藉書信和口述，馬羅輾轉向家鄉朋友道出吉姆一事的真相：馬羅修正對吉姆的看法，認同其海外的征戰，隱約鞏固吉姆「英雄」的角色。

關鍵詞：康拉德、陰謀、表演

* 逢甲大學外語文教學組專任助理教授