

# The Logic of Adventure: Marlow's Moral Malady in *Lord Jim*

RAFE MCGREGOR

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What are we to make of Charles Marlow, Joseph Conrad's alter ego, in *Lord Jim*, the modernist novel published at the height of Britannia's rule of the waves? In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow is sensitive to the suffering of the colonised and deeply critical of the colonial project, but his narration of *Lord Jim* betrays casual privilege and enthusiastic complicity in imperial hegemony. I suggest that a more comprehensive understanding of Marlow's attitude to colonialism can be achieved by reading *Heart of Darkness* in relation to its two most faithful adaptations, Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* and James Brabazon's *The Break Line*.

## I

Charles Marlow, an officer in the British Merchant Service, is the narrator of four of Conrad's works: "Youth" (1898), a short story; *Heart of Darkness* (1898), a novella; and the novels *Lord Jim* (1900) and *Chance* (1913).<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking all four are narrated by Conrad as "Youth", *Heart of Darkness*, and *Chance* are embedded in meta-fictions where Marlow tells a tale of the sea to a small circle of intimates that includes the self-effacing author and *Lord Jim* is narrated by the author in the third person. In each case, however, the point of view from which the narrative is presented is almost exclusively Marlow's. There is a neat juxtaposition between *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, with the former involving Marlow following the physical and psychological path pioneered by his senior, Kurtz, and the latter involving Marlow attempting to establish a young protégé, Jim, in order that he can pursue his own physical and psychological path.

In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow is appointed captain of a steamship for a Continental commercial concern operating in the Congo Free State, a colony that was ruled personally by King Leopold II of Belgium (rather than by the Belgian government) from 1885 to 1908 and in which atrocities were the norm rather than the exception. Marlow describes his arrival in-country with multiple images of senseless destruction and wanton cruelty. His first encounter with Africans is a chain gang, followed by a group of forced labourers: 'Black shapes crouched, lay, sat between the trees, leaning against the trunks, clinging to the earth, half coming out, half effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair' (34-35). The situation does not improve when he reaches the company's Central Station and he is almost universally critical of his colleagues, whom he refers to ironically as 'pilgrims' (44), representing themselves as bringing civilisation to Africa while stripping the continent of its natural resources for profit. Marlow's point of view establishes a narrative framework in which colonialism is not only bad for Africans, but bad for Europeans, enabling and encouraging the exercise of arbitrary

authority, the satisfaction of desire without restraint, and insidious moral corruption (McGregor 90). In contemporary terminology, Marlow is a white supremacist, like the vast majority of Britons and Europeans at the time of publication, but he nonetheless recognises the full humanity of the Africans and the immorality of the colonial project that subjects them to suffering in the name of commerce.

In his famous essay on racism in *Heart of Darkness*, Chinua Achebe takes Conrad to task for portraying Africa as 'a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest' (1784). Achebe expands this criticism in response to a student who suggests that Africa in the novella is merely a stage for the mental and moral disintegration of Kurtz: 'Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind?' (1790). Whether or not this criticism is fair of *Heart of Darkness*, it provides an accurate description of Marlow's attitude to Britain's colonies in *Lord Jim*. Marlow meets the eponymous protagonist of the novel while the latter is on trial for abandoning a ship of which he was chief mate. Marlow feels sorry for Jim, whose promising career in the Merchant Service has been ruined by a momentary failure of physical courage, and takes him under his wing. Marlow's assistance involves Jim setting himself up in imitation of Kurtz in Patusan, a fictional country in the South China Sea. Jim arrives in-country as the manager of Stein & Co.'s trading post, but accedes to his lordship by a combination of martial and mental prowess. In contrast to Kurtz, Jim's rule is benevolent, but maritime Southeast Asia is nonetheless portrayed by Marlow as a prop for Jim to regain his self-confidence, exert his agency, and realise his potential. Marlow is, when compared to the narrator of *Heart of Darkness*, more casual and more callous about the lives of the colonised and an enthusiastic participant in the imperial system that facilitates Jim's self-actualisation in virtue of his whiteness.

The Marlow of *Lord Jim* is, furthermore, confident that his complicity in the colonial project has not tainted him morally, stating of his homecomings: "'Say what you like, to get its joy, to breathe its peace, to face its truth, one must return with a clear conscience'" (170). The Marlow of *Heart of Darkness* is much less assured of his moral cleanliness and provides a justification of both his participation in the colonial project and his employment in the Congo Free State. The lengthy passage begins with:

"Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there." (21-22)

Marlow then describes his fascination with the biggest white space (Africa) and, within that space, the biggest river (Congo River):

"But there was on it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land. And as I looked at the map of it in a shop-window it fascinated me as a snake would a bird – a silly little bird." (22)

Marlow's justification opens Conrad up to Achebe's accusation of racism by representing Africa as a 'a white patch for a [white] boy to dream over' (Conrad 22), but is nonetheless

indicative of Marlow's need to explain his participation in the colonial project. This explanation is absent in *Lord Jim*, where Marlow is content to send Jim to one of these white spaces despite being aware of the harm he may cause.

Both of the adaptations of *Heart of Darkness* with which I am concerned include similar first-person justifications by the protagonists for their participation in the respective enterprises (an assassination in both cases). In *Apocalypse Now* (1979), Benjamin L. Willard (played by Martin Sheen) is a captain in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division serving in the Second Indochina War and assigned to Special Operations. Willard is ordered to kill Walter E. Kurtz (played by Marlon Brando), a colonel in the 5<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group who has set himself up as the absolute ruler of a Highlander tribe in Cambodia and severed contact with the United States Army.<sup>2</sup> Like Marlow, Willard must reach Kurtz by boat, travelling up the fictional Nùng River. There are three versions of *Apocalypse Now* currently available: the original, one hundred and fifty-three minutes long and released in 1979; *Apocalypse Now Redux*, an extended version of two hundred and two minutes released in 2001; and *Apocalypse Now: Final Cut*, which is one hundred and eighty-three minutes long and was released in 2019. I shall take the *Final Cut* as the definitive version and should be taken as referring to the *Final Cut* unless explicitly referring to one of the other two versions. All three versions are narrated by Willard in a voiceover and begin with him in a hotel room in Saigon, awaiting orders from Special Operations headquarters. As two soldiers walk up the stairs to his room, Willard justifies his work for Special Operations: 'Everyone gets everything he wants. I wanted a mission and for my sins they gave me one. Brought it up to me like room service. It was a real choice mission and when it was over I'd never want another' (*Final Cut* 07:38-08:04). War is a carnival for Willard, a time of totality in which social norms and values are suspended and subordinated to a new order of absolute freedom, an order in which *everyone gets everything he wants* (Bakhtin 7). As in war, the beginning and end of carnival are publicly announced and while 'the usual world order is suspended, the new utopian order which has come to replace it is sovereign and embraces all' (Bakhtin 259). The description of this new order as *utopian* seems problematic in wartime and I shall return to this apparent paradox in the final part of this essay.

*The Break Line* (2018) is authored by James Brabazon, a British war correspondent and documentary filmmaker. The novel is a work of genre fiction, a contemporary thriller that adapts *Apocalypse Now* while returning the setting to West Africa, specifically the Republic of Sierra Leone.<sup>3</sup> Maxwell McLean is a major in The Unknown (UKN), a fictional British Special Operations unit that fulfils a role in between United Kingdom Special Forces (UKSF) and the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6). *The Break Line* begins with a prologue in which McLean is recruited to UKN in 1994 and is followed by three chapters describing the culmination of a mission to Venezuela in 2017. The central plot begins in the fourth chapter, where McLean is ordered to kill an unidentified white man who is believed to be either former or current Russian Federation Special Forces, has raised a rebel army, launched successful raids in both Sierra Leone and Guinea, and poses a threat to the stability of the region. The target, whom McLean refers to as "Mr Kurtz" (44), is based in a military camp near the fictional outpost of Karabunda, in Sierra Leone's Northern Province. Immediately after the interview, McLean addresses the reader directly, offering a brief, but nonetheless compelling justification of his mission: 'I sat up front in silence, running over the known-knowns of the job so far – which boiled down to this: I'd get one shot, at one man, to stop a war' (50).

## II

*Apocalypse Now* starts with the image of a wall of palm trees. A helicopter flies past, followed by the sound of the first chords of The Doors' "The End" (1967). Instead of opening credits, Coppola employs a montage of images that fade in and out, alternating between two flashforwards (to an air assault on a Vietnamese village and a religious statue in Kurtz's compound) and a closeup of Willard's face as he lies in bed smoking a cigarette (Ebert 29). Just over three and a half minutes later, the camera tracks across Willard's personal effects, the sound of the helicopters segues into the sound of a ceiling fan, and Willard opens his eyes to stare at it. Margot Norris provides a pithy description of Coppola as beginning 'the film in the interior of Willard's spiritual and psychological heart of darkness expressed in visual images and techniques' (735). The voiceover begins when Willard looks out of his hotel window and the scene continues for just over three minutes, during which Willard, drunk and distraught, smashes a mirror, pours the remains of a bottle of cognac down his throat, and sobs inconsolably. When the two soldiers from Special Operations arrive in the next scene, they find him hungover – naked, bloody, and confused – and have to drag him into a cold shower to wake him up. In short, Willard as he first appears onscreen is a psychological wreck, barely fit for peacetime let alone Special Operations duties in wartime.

Willard arrives at Special Operations headquarters, where he is first interviewed and then ordered (in terms that are vague enough for his superiors to be able to deny subsequent responsibility) to kill Kurtz. Willard is clean-shaven, smartly turned-out, and attendant to military etiquette, but taciturn to the point of timidity and one once again wonders why he has been selected for such an important mission. In the following scenes, he takes passage on a United States Navy river patrol boat, witnesses an airborne raid on a village, watches a Playboy centrefold show turn into a riot, and spends most of his journey reading dossiers on Kurtz. Willard as depicted in the first half of the film is a passenger, an observer, a researcher. The only evidence of any agency on his part is when he uses force to coerce a quartermaster into providing the boat crew with fuel, but his superior rank and the legitimacy of the request quickly win the day, requiring little exertion. When Chief George Phillips (played by Albert Hall), commander of the patrol boat, orders the crew to prepare for the routine stop of a Vietnamese sampan, Willard (who outranks him) tells him that his mission takes priority. Phillips replies, 'Until we reach your destination, Captain, you just on for the ride' (*Final Cut* 84:19-21). Phillips stops the sampan and one of his crew – all of whom are very nervous – checks the papers of the occupants, which are in order. For reasons that remain opaque, Phillips instructs the sailor to search the sampan and when a Vietnamese woman rushes towards him to save her puppy, the other two sailors panic and rake all of the Vietnamese with automatic fire, killing everyone except the woman, who is badly wounded. Phillips tells the sailors to bring her aboard so that they can take her to a hospital. Willard, who has been calmly putting on his boots while all this has been happening, walks up to Phillips and asks him what he is doing. Phillips responds, but Willard kills the woman with a single shot from his pistol and says: 'I told you not to stop – now let's go' (*Final Cut*: 88:14-16).

Willard's action, his first exercise of agency in the film, occurs at the precise halfway point. John Yorke (58-59 & 135-140) identifies the halfway point in the template used by big budget Hollywood productions as crucial to both the overarching plot and the development of the character of the protagonist. With respect to the former, the sequence

in the middle of the film signals the point of no return from which the conclusion of the narrative (in this case, Kurtz's murder) is inevitable. With respect to the latter, the turning point is where the story changes from being driven by what the protagonist wants to what the protagonist needs. What Willard wants is a mission to give his life meaning, but what he needs is to exercise his agency and create the meaning in and of his life for himself. Willard's character flaw is that he is not a fully-autonomous agent but an automaton of the agency of others, whose orders he follows and whose meanings he appropriates. Further evidence for the significance of Willard's agency to the narrative can be found by comparing the midpoint of the *Final Cut* with the midpoints of the original release and *Redux*. In both cases, the sequence involves Willard narrating rather than acting, reading Kurtz's letter to his son in the former (*Apocalypse Now* 69:33-71:07) and empathising with Kurtz in the latter (*Redux* 94:00-33). The focus in the previous versions is thus on Willard in relation to Kurtz as opposed to Willard himself. In order to achieve autonomy, Willard will have to create meaning by freely exerting his agency – and this is precisely what he does at the conclusion of the film.<sup>4</sup> Willard in the final ten minutes of the film is barely recognisable from the character introduced in the first ten minutes: having weighed up whether or not to follow his orders, he decides to kill Kurtz; infiltrates his quarters; hacks him to death with a machete; confronts the entire Highlander tribe; and sets off downriver with the only surviving sailor. *The Final Cut* structures the narrative around the development of Willard's autonomy from beginning to middle to end, from an agent without a mission to an agent on someone else's mission to taking ownership of the mission and completing it on his own terms.

### III

Like Coppola, Brabazon is concerned with the exercise of his protagonist's agency and McLean makes explicit reference to agency in his narration. In the following passage, McLean describes the experience of regaining consciousness:

Nothing.  
 Pure, absolute void.  
 No shadow.  
 No echo.  
 An eternity of emptiness in endless grey.  
 It's not that I can't remember. I haven't *forgotten*. I was neither unconscious nor dead.  
 I just simply *wasn't*: being without agency.  
 Perhaps that's how we live in the womb until we are ripped into the world, awoken by human voices, drowning in the oxygen of existence. (292)

McLean has been drugged by his father and Brabazon delivers a dramatic two-stage anagnorisis in which McLean discovers first that the target of his mission is his father, whom he thought dead, and second, that the rebel army protects a Russian Federation laboratory in which his father has created a 'shapestrong' (285), an evolutionary throwback manufactured by the combination of exposure to filoviruses and chemical stimulation of the immune system. Unlike Willard, McLean neither waives his agency nor experiences any significant psychological conflict in the performance of his missions. Both men are soldiers who follow orders, but where Willard is an automaton, an instrument of the agency of his military superiors, McLean does so self-consciously, adhering to a code of conduct that he has devised himself, that he has freely chosen to follow, and that he

reaffirms in the exercise of his agency on each mission. Here, he explains his code of conduct to Major General King, the Director Special Forces (UKSF):

“Kristóf,” I said cautiously, “I’ve killed a of people. For you, for Commander Knight, for my men. For my country.” Suddenly I could hear the trace of my Irish accent, hard like so many stones clattering between us. “*This country.*” I looked at the bookshelf, his mother, the ribbon, and shrugged with my hands open. “But I’ve never killed for me. I’ve killed because I’ve been told to. Sure, sometimes I’ve wanted to kill. But I never did. I never killed for me.” (32)

McLean is completely self-aware, conscious of the moral and psychological cost of both his chosen profession and his personal code of conduct within that profession:

Killing people in cold blood without question because I was ordered to might have made me a “legally sane psychopath”; killing people when I thought I knew they were innocent made me, at best, a sociopath – a sociopath who followed orders. History hadn’t judged that sort too well.<sup>5</sup> (54-55)

McLean is clear that he can accept being a psychopath but not a sociopath and this self-knowledge appears to inoculate him from the anguish, despair, and demoralisation that torment Willard in the opening scene of *Apocalypse Now*. McLean’s reaffirmation of his commitment to UKN by means of the exercise of his agency involves a series of conscious choices and the fact that these are freely made is revealed in the final chapter, where he confronts his superiors in order to expose a traitor. McLean is prepared, if necessary, to kill whichever one of General King, Commander Knight, and David Mason (a director general in MI6) has betrayed him. He is not an automaton of the agency of others because he neither follow his orders blindly, nor follows orders for the sake of following orders, nor follows orders for the purpose of finding meaning. McLean creates his own meaning through his missions, taking self-reflexive ownership of their aims and objectives while exercising his agency in full.

Conrad’s concern with Marlow’s agency is most obvious in the short story “Youth”, in which Marlow tells the tale of his first voyage to the ‘Eastern seas’ (115).<sup>6</sup> His ship, the *Judea*, is commissioned to transport coal from Tyne to Bangkok, but the voyage is beset by a series of problems from the very beginning. Shortly after entering the Atlantic, her beams begin opening and the crew are required to operate the pumps continuously in order to prevent her from sinking. Marlow comments:

“And there was somewhere in me the thought: By Jove! this is the deuce of an adventure – something you read about; and it is my first voyage as second mate – and I am only twenty – and here I am lasting it out as well as any of these men, and keeping my chaps up to the mark. I was pleased. I would not have given up the experience for worlds.” (123)

The young Marlow is entirely selfish, taking pleasure in meeting the challenge thrown at him without consideration for the pain of others or the potential for loss of life. He regards the dangerous circumstances and his relationship with the crew as an opportunity to test his strength of character, to create his own agency, and to realise his potential as a fully-autonomous agent. The *Judea* reaches sanctuary in Falmouth and after some delay sets off for Bangkok again. Several weeks after entering the Indian Ocean, Marlow discovers that the cargo of coals has caught alight. The *Judea* is assisted by a steamer, the *Sommerville*, which tows her, but the blaze breaks out in earnest, forcing the crew to abandon ship. The captain declines an offer of rescue from the *Sommerville* in order to

salvage as much from the *Judea* as possible and the property is transferred to three boats, with Marlow given command of the smallest. When the *Judea* sinks, the three boats are well over one hundred miles from the nearest land, the Indonesian island of Java, but Marlow is delighted by the captain's decision to risk the lives of his crew unnecessarily because it means he will arrive in the East as the commander of his own vessel, a 'cockleshell' (145).

Marlow is in fact so desperate to exercise his agency that he seeks a way to quit the other boats, notwithstanding the risks involved and his responsibility for the lives of his crew of two:

"And do you know what I thought? I thought I would part company as soon as I could. I wanted to have my first command all to myself. I wasn't going to sail in squadron if there were a chance for independent cruising. I would make land by myself. I would beat the other boats." (144)

Like McLean, Marlow is not above disobeying orders. Ignoring the captain's instruction to stay together, he sails far ahead of the other two and is pleased when he is cut off from them by a rainsquall. Marlow literally revels in the consequent unrestrained exercise of agency and the exultation which that exercise brings:

"I remember the drawn faces, the dejected figures of my two men, and I remember my youth and the feeling that will never come back any more – the feeling that I could last for ever, outlast the sea, the earth, and all men; the deceitful feeling that lures us on to joys, to perils, to love, to vain effort – to death; the triumphant conviction of strength, the heat of life in the handful of dust, the glow in the heart that with every year grows dim, grows cold, grows small, and expires – and expires, too soon, too soon – before life itself." (146)

All three boats reach the safety of a small port and Marlow's agency is ultimately not exercised at the expense of his crew though he has of course employed their lives as a means to the end of the exercise of his agency. Narrating the story to his friends two decades later, Marlow is self-reflective but unapologetic, attributing his self-centred actions solely to his age, to 'silly, charming, beautiful youth' (144), and entreating his audience to accept this justification by asking them 'wasn't that the best time, that time when we were young at sea' (151). The significance of the exercise of agency in *Apocalypse Now*, *The Break Line*, and "Youth" suggests that Marlow's complicity in imperial hegemony in *Lord Jim* may be explained by his construction of colonialism as a means to the end of Jim creating (or perhaps recreating) his own agency and realising his potential as a fully-autonomous agent. Indeed, Achebe's criticism expressed in terms of agency provides a compelling explanation for Marlow's indifference to the fate of the colonised in *Lord Jim*. What it does not explain, however, is the apparent change in Marlow from his narration of *Heart of Darkness* to his narration of *Lord Jim*.

#### IV

The most convincing explanation of Marlow's moral malady is concealed in two other texts, in the first minute and a half of Willard's voiceover in *Apocalypse Now* and in the last seven lines of *The Break Line*. The voiceover, during which Willard sets fire to a photograph of his wife with the end of his cigarette, is as follows:

Saigon. Shit. I'm still only in Saigon. Every time, I think I'm gonna wake up back in the jungle. When I was home after my first tour it was worse. I'd wake up and there'd

be nothing. I hardly said a word to my wife until I said yes to a divorce. When I was here I wanted to be there, when I was there all I could think of was getting back into the jungle. I'm here a week now...waiting for a mission, getting softer. Every minute I stay in this room I get weaker, and every minute Charlie squats in the bush he gets stronger. (04:19-05:48)

The key to understanding the characters of Willard, McLean, and Marlow lies in the sentence *when I was here I wanted to be there, when I was there all I could think of was getting back into the jungle*. In other words, when Willard is on a mission, he longs for home, but when he's at home, he longs for a mission – in consequence of which neither satisfy him. Within the context of the narration, cinematography, and acting in the opening scene of *Apocalypse Now*, this confession is an admission by Willard of his addiction to Special Operations work. The latest *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-5) published by the American Psychiatric Association does not use 'addiction' as a clinical term, but employs 'substance use disorder' instead (485). The manual recognises the existence of 'behavioral addictions', but does not include them due to the insufficiency of scientific evidence at the time of publication (481). The category 'Other (or Unknown) Substance Use Disorder' lists eleven diagnostic criteria (577-578), at least eight of which are applicable to Willard if one replaces 'substance' with 'behaviour': persistent desire to cut down the behaviour; significant amount of time spent on either the behaviour or recovery; strong desire for the behaviour; consequent failure to fulfil obligations at home; continued behaviour in spite of persistent interpersonal problems; consequent abandoning of important social or recreational activities; continued behaviour in spite of persistent psychological problems; and withdrawal. Willard does not just want a mission, he is addicted to his missions. He is in Vietnam, in the Army, and in Special Operations because, in the carnival of war, *everyone gets everything he wants* – and he knows he will get a mission. This is the sense in which, for all the psychological distress it produces, war is Willard's utopia, providing his empty existence with the purpose it lacks in peacetime.

In the previous part of this essay, I mentioned Brabazon's dramatic use of anagnorisis in the revelation of first the identity of McLean's enemy and then the true stakes of the mission. *The Break Line* concludes with an even more dramatic self-reflexive revelation by McLean. In the sentence immediately preceding the passage I quoted, where he is considering the moral cost of his code of conduct in terms of the distinction between a psychopath and sociopath, McLean states 'I knew, too, that was the beginning of the end' (54), by which he announces his intention to resign from UKN once his mission to Sierra Leone is completed. This confidence is followed by the revelation that his target is his father, his autonomous choice to destroy his father's work, and his witnessing of his father's violent death. The combination of McLean's reservations with the events that occur during the mission leave one in no doubt that McLean will leave UKSF as soon as he has exposed the traitor. In the final lines of the novel, however, Brabazon combines anagnorisis with peripeteia, a twist in the tail of the tale as McLean suffers a moral reversal of fortune while quarantining himself:

I pulled hard at the oars and set my course for the wilderness of the lake islands. My little boat beat against the current. Forty days, my father had said – after which I would get back to doing what I did best.

Killing was my life.

Anything that happened before or after was just waiting. (374)

This is also an admission of addiction, to killing, and a decision to stop being concerned about the moral cost of giving in to that addiction. Willard is tormented because he knows the behaviour to which he is addicted is psychologically harmful, but cannot stop himself from engaging in it regardless. McLean's code of conduct provides him with protection against the psychological and moral pitfalls, but when those protections fail, he embraces rather than rejects his addiction. In *Apocalypse Now*, one sees Willard smoking, staggering, sobbing, thinking, drinking, and dreaming, but what one is really seeing is Willard waiting...*waiting for a mission, getting softer*. *The Break Line* ends where *Apocalypse Now* begins, with McLean beginning his forty days and forty nights of waiting...waiting for the next mission.

In the same way that Willard and McLean are addicted to killing so the character upon which they are both based, Marlow, is addicted to adventure – not just the adventure afforded by the sea, but the adventure afforded by being a British sailor at the peak of Britannia's rule of the waves, the holder of an office in the preponderant global power. "Youth" is littered with descriptions of the excitement, exhilaration, and euphoria of adventure, of the thrill of confronting dangerous seas and travelling to exotic locations, several of which I quoted in the previous part of this essay. Like his successors, however, Marlow knows that this lifestyle is fraught with moral and psychological danger. Where "Youth" focuses on the pleasures of a life of adventure, *Heart of Darkness* focuses on its pitfalls, exemplified in both Kurtz's life and Marlow's reflections. Edward Said refers to this self-awareness in Marlow, Jim, and Kurtz when he writes that 'Conrad's heroes, afflicted as they may be by an unusual power of reflection and cosmic irony, remain in the memory as strong, often heedlessly daring men of action' and that his fiction is valuable as literature despite belonging to 'the genre of adventure-imperialism' (155). Although *Lord Jim* finds Marlow in a significantly less reflective and regretful mood than *Heart of Darkness*, he briefly acknowledges both the desire and the danger of the lifestyle he shares with Jim in a passage on the *logic of adventure*:

The story of the last events you shall find in the few pages enclosed here. You must admit that it is romantic beyond the wildest dreams of his [Jim's] boyhood, and yet there is to my mind a sort of profound and terrifying logic in it, as if it were our imagination alone that could set loose upon us the might of an overwhelming destiny. The imprudence of our thoughts recoils upon our heads; who toys with the sword shall perish by the sword. This astounding adventure, of which the most astounding part is that it is true, comes on as an unavoidable consequence. Something of the sort had to happen. You repeat this to yourself while you marvel that such a thing could happen in the year of grace before last. But it has happened – and there is no disputing its logic. (261-262)

Marlow marvels that Jim could lead such an adventurous life so late in the nineteenth century and the British Empire is – in the logic of adventure – a necessary evil for facilitating such a life. Like Willard and McLean, Marlow is addicted to a life of adventure. A comprehensive understanding of Marlow's attitude to colonialism cannot be achieved without recognising this addiction. Marlow may appear more (*Heart of Darkness*) or less (*Lord Jim*) conflicted about the extrapolation of the logic of adventure, but it is a logic whose inevitability he welcomes.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In this essay, I have assumed that the order of publication by Conrad reflects the chronology of Marlow's life. Of the four narratives, "Youth" is clearly first and *Chance* last. Marlow's voice in *Lord Jim* is more mature than in *Heart of Darkness* and the metafictional conceit of him telling these tales to Conrad provides further evidence for the significance of the publication dates.
- <sup>2</sup> The Highlanders are referred to as 'Montagnard' in the film, the name given to them by the colonial authorities in French Indochina.
- <sup>3</sup> The novel's title recalls another of Conrad's novellas, *The Shadow-Line* (1917).
- <sup>4</sup> John Ebert (137-141) reaches a similar conclusion, based on different evidence from the film (and using *Redux* as his source).
- <sup>5</sup> In this passage, narrated by McLean, Brabazon demonstrates an idiosyncratic understanding of the distinction between a sociopath and a psychopath. My point is not reliant on the accuracy of this distinction, but on the degree of self-awareness the passage evinces.
- <sup>6</sup> Interestingly, Fredric Jameson (29) has recently suggested that Coppola 'borrowed' the conclusion of "Youth" for *Apocalypse Now*.

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