Women and the Enlightenment of Seamen in Conrad's *Chance*, *The Arrow of Gold* and *The Rescue*

by Camille La Bossière

The shipwrecked sailor of Venus
in the deep, naked, destitute.
Porfyrius

Love has turned my wits.
Lope de Vega

It is a convention of Conrad criticism that Chance marks a critical landfall in the charting of his alleged artistic decline. According to Thomas Moser, in his highly influential Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline (1957), Conrad's failure results from a lack of "realism" in his dealing with love between man and woman. The convention, which owes much to Moser, argues that Conrad's art founders on sentimentality: in Chance (1913) and

the bulk of his subsequent work, the one-time master of the OTAGO fails to make us see below the surface, and presents us with black and white melodramatic portrayals of heroes and heroines. This view, focusing mainly on Chance, The Arrow of Gold, and The Rescue, survives as a consequence of the failure of critics to take sufficiently into account the literal facts in these fictions; and, inversely (not without some irony in view of Conrad's definition of humanity as "the intimate alliance of contradictions,")(1)to discern the pervasiveness of the ironic logic of contraries underlying the surface of facts, events and characters in Conrad's fictional universe. Cosmo's reflection in Suspense, Conrad's uncompleted final work, might serve to mark the way for such critics: even "facts appraised by reason" preserve "a mysterious complexity and a dual character." (p. 38) The question considered here is whether Conrad's treatment of women, particularly in Chance, The Arrow of Gold and The Rescue, is simply melodramatic --and, by extension, whether Conrad's portrayal of women in relation to seamen and to their enlightenment is also simply sentimental. The facts and the logic governing these facts will suggest, I hope, a revision of a convention given authority by a critic who considers Conrad "most convincing when he is most ironic."(2)

At the core of Conrad's vision of the way to truth lies woman and/or the sea. In the dream-world of his fiction, flotation in the sea is akin, in the manner of a 'metaphysical' conceit, to immersion in the 'glasses' or 'well' of a woman's eyes. Conrad, in a general way, suggests the analogy in his second novel, An Outcast of the Islands (1896). On the same page as the optical metaphor for the sea, "the restless mirror of the Infinite," we read: "like a beautiful and unscrupulous woman, the sea. . . was glorious in its smiles, irresistible in its anger, capricious, enticing, illogical, irresponsible; a thing to love, a thing to fear." (p. 12) And in Almayer's Folly (1895), Conrad's first novel, Dain Maroola, an adventurous Malay mariner, declares in the manner of a Renaissance sonneteer: "The sea, O Nina, is like a woman's heart." (p. 174) The analogy is repeated in explicitly optical terms in Chance: "He [Anthony] plunged into them [Flora's eyes] . . . like a mad sailor taking a desperate dive . . . into the blue unfathomable sea so many men have execrated and loved at the same time." (p. 332) In Lord Jim (1900), the protagonist "plunge[s]" his "gaze to the bottom of an immensely deep well," (p. 307) that is, Jewel's eyes, an action analogous to his earlier infamous jump from the PATNA "into a well--an everlasting deep hole." (p. 111) Commenting on his having surrendered to Eros, the narrator in "A Smile of Fortune" uses a similar comparison: "To meet her [Alice's] black stare was like looking into a deep well. . . ."

('Twixt Land and Sea, p. 70) Monsieur Georges confesses in The Arrow of Gold (1919): "Woman and the sea revealed themselves together;" (p. 88) and the young mariner's comparison--in love, he has "fallen as into a vague dream" (p. 93)--echoes Stein's Calderon-like pronouncement in Lord Jim: "A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea." (p. 214)

This sea/woman/dream complex of analogy is also associated with the jungle. It is in the jungle, for example, that Nina's "dreamy eyes" (Almayer's Folly, p. 16) and Aissa's apparition to Willems evoke a "dream" behind a "veil woven of sunbeams and shadows." (An Outcase of the Islands, p. 70) By extension, the wilderness becomes a mirror of the Infinite, a jungle which closes upon Conrad's protagonists "as the sea closes over a diver," in the words of "Heart of Darkness." (p. 92) The savage woman in this last work offers a mirror-image of this jungle/sea: "And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its tenebrous and passionate soul." "Heart of Darkness." (p. 136) And it is significant that, as Willems, enshrouded in vines, surrenders to his desire for Aissa in An Outcast of the Islands, he is likened to a "swimmer" (p. 81) in unreason; he falls "into the darkness," there to be granted "a vision of heaven--or hell." (p. 89)

Woman in Conrad's fiction thus becomes a mirror of infinity, expressed as sea, well, dream and jungle. Like the mirrors in Stein's darkened house in Lord Jim, women reflect "unfathomable depths," in which men come to see "Truth" and, at times, "Beauty," (p. 216) as in the mirror of Dona Rita, a double of La Gioconda and bearer of an "arrow of gold" reflected in a mirror. Both mirror and artifact symbolically reconcile primitive savagery and civilization. Extended to reflect mirror, well, dream and jungle, the commonplace sea/woman analogy takes on a more complex significance in Conrad's work, one which perhaps for the very reason that it is a common-place and appears simple, has received little consideration in studies of Conrad's achievement. Working within such an analogical context, we may discern in Chance, The Arrow of Gold and The Rescue the ironic dream-logic of infinity at work in the enlightenment of seamen by way of immersion in Eros.

Conrad's popular success was established by Chance. A love interest and what readers perceived as simple Dickensian melodrama readily account for the reception. "Figures from Dickens--pregnant with pathos" (p. 162) act their parts on stages similar

to those of Bleak House and Little Dorrit. A seriocomic trial; a niggardly relative (a cardboard manufacturer) and his vulgar, unfeeling family; a kind, simple and sympathetic middle-aged couple; a heartless father; a motherless child put upon by a cruel world; and a rescue of a Damsel in distress by a Knight in shining armour--all are here in what appears to be simply the tale of Flora's journey from riches to rags to happiness.

A good number of critics have focused attention on this ostensibly simple and thus melodramatic aspect. Douglas Hewitt, for example, finds in Chance, a "division of mankind into the camp of good and bad."(3) Thomas Moser judges that the "hero" and "heroine" are "sinned against, themselves unsinning," and that the novel offers "an intended moral of a rather dubious nature: love between man and woman is the most important thing in life."(4) And Flora according to Laurence Lerner, is "the simple and chivalrous idealization of the sailor."(5) The complex facts of the tale, however, suggest another view. Flora, though she initially does not love Anthony, marries him for two contradictory motives: out of selflessness (generosity to the lonely Anthony) and out of selfishness (to provide a home for herself and her father once he leaves prison). Her presence on board the FERNDALE, Anthony's ship, is nothing short of disastrous for the groom and his father-in-law. Also, Anthony's generosity is difficult to distinguish from folly. His absurd goodness, like MacWhirr's insane reason in "Typhoon," is equivocal; in the words of Marlow, his "simplicity. . . wears the aspect of perfectly satanic conceit." (p. 351) Furthermore, to consider Chance as but another example of heightened Victorian melodrama is to ignore the central position of Marlow's intellect in the novel; to overlook Conrad's overt preoccupation with the 'doubleness' or words as analogues of the self and of experience, a concern signalled by the ambivalent title; and to render senseless the epigraph provided by the Baroque Metaphysical physician, Sir Thomas Browne, on the subject of fortune, chance and providence.(6)

Chance is essentially a witty dramatization of the power of words. We are invited early (p. 8) to sharpen our wits, as Marlow inverts the philosophical meaning of "substance" and "accident" in speaking of accidental similarities between Powell's namesake, one of the five shipping-masters presiding in the basement of St. Katherine's Dock House, and Socrates: "I mean he resembled him genuinely; that is in the face. A philosophical mind is but an accident." And Marlow, who on at least four occasions explicitly distinguishes the literal from the figurative sense of a word (e.g., pp. 56, 73, 251, 282), revels, much like a Renaissance poet, in puns on "start" and "pedestrian," and in

oxymora such as "brightly dull." (e.g., pp. 37, 70, 42, 93) On one occasion, he becomes a bilingual punster: "à propos des bottes" (without rhyme or reason) offers a literal transfer to "à propos of some lace." (p. 165) In not quite so lightly playful a vein "horribly merry," p. 171), the reader is reminded: "We live at the mercy of a malevolent word." (p. 264) It is by virtue of the word "Thrift" that Flora's father, de Barral, builds a comic economic empire, which, in failing, deposits him in jail and leaves his daughter vulnerable. "Tiff," "convict," "pauper," "odious," "unlovable," and "unfortunate" are designated "words" with power over Flora's destiny. (pp. 167, 263, 385) "That hostile word 'jailer'" gives the absurd situation aboard the FERNDALE "an air of reality," (p. 407) according to Powell.

The words of Flora's letter to Mrs. Fyne, a feminist in the view of Marlow "as guileless of consequences as any determinist philosopher," (p. 63) when misread, wreak havoc on shore and at sea, while the empty, dangerous words ("poisonous pills," p. 61) of Mrs. Fyne's feminist manifesto find their consequences in Flora's actions: "no scruples should stand in the way of a woman . . . from taking the shortest cut towards securing for herself the easiest possible existence." (p. 59) Flora writes to the Fynes that she does not love Anthony and is marrying him for security for herself and her father; Mr. Fyne relays this information to Anthony, who proposes marriage to Flora by saying that he will marry her for her father's sake, a proposal which confirms Flora in her feeling of being unlovable. Other words singled out for treatment as words--"sagacity," "simplicity," "compunction," "enthusiastic," "hopelessly," "intoxicated," and "marriage"--find their multiple meanings mirrored in human action. And the failure of Flora and Mr. Fyne to distinguish between "generosity" and "folly" (p. 251) ironically prefigures the foolish generosity ("imbecility . . . or innocence," p. 158) of Captain Roderick Anthony of the FERNDALE. The Damsel and her Knight, like the novelist, are immersed in a "grey sea of words, words, words,"(7)there to experience the ambiguities of "good" and "evil," "chance" and "design" in love: as Marlow reflects, "the incapacity to achieve anything distinctly good or evil is inherent in our earthly condition," (p. 23) a view not shared by a number of Conrad critics.

At the conceptual centre of the tale lie "chance" and "accident," verbal analogues of the fate of Flora and Anthony. Marlow, the skeptical lexicographer in this fiction, with Powell and "I" one of the three narrators, offers the pivotal definition" "I don't mean accident in the sense of a mishap. . . ," he specifies to

Powell. "By accident I mean that which happens blindly and without intelligent design." (p. 36) Like its partial synonym "chance," "accident" is "incalculable." (p. 100) The significance of this definition for the entire tale becomes clear as Marlow, echoing a distinction in the Preface to The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, discriminates between "information" and "knowledge": the former is a deliberate acquisition of "facts;" the latter, "a chance acquisition." (p. 206) Like belief in "the consoling mysteries of Faith," "knowledge" never comes by way of "reason." (p. 206) It is "by chance" that Flora's "ignorance" of the ways of the world is shattered, that she suffers "a sort of mystic wound," and that she comes to an "informed innocence." (pp. 99, 118, 196) But is is also ironically by "chance" (now in the sense of "good luck" or "opportunity") that, by two misfortunes (her father's suicide and her husband's death in a marine mishap), Flora comes to a happy ending. "Accident," in her case, may not have been without intelligent design.

The fate of the absurdly virtuous Anthony provides a reverse image. It is "not by chance" (p. 216) ("good luck" and "accident" as defined by Marlow) that he meets Flora and enters, out of selfishness (he is lonely) and generosity (Flora is an orphan), a "whirlwind" (p. 331) of passion analogous to MacWhirr's typhoon. Though saved by "chance" ("good luck" and/or "intelligent design") from death by mishap and murder (both related to Flora's selfishness), he dies in an accident. "Chance," like "accident," may also be blind. Significantly, "chance," in its ambivalent meaning of "good luck" and "accident," is twice repeated on the final two pages of the tale.

Thus, like the FERNDALE, by analogy a "world . . . launched into space," afloat on "a sheet of darkling glass crowded with upside-down reflections," (pp. 273, 274) Flora, twice immersed in a mirror,(pp. 265, 384) and Anthony, a once-"doubled" captain, (p. 265) plunging into the "sea" of Flora's eyes, (p. 332) are immersed in "the complicated bad dream of existence." (p. 443) They come to their respective ends, reversed reflections of "Chance," expressed in equivocal words. Their plunge is as much the result of inner compulsion as it is of external circumstances: they are part of the dream-life of pervasive ambiguity. As Conrad notes in a letter to Captain Edward Noble, "events are the outward sign of inward feelings." (8) Immersed in this "doubleness" ourselves, we may, in the manner of Marlow, a man given to "chasing some notion or other round and round his head," (p. 33) both confirm and deny (the narrator "I" observes: "with Marlow one could never be sure," p. 94) the Elder Brother's assertion in Comus:

Of. . . that power
Which erring men call Chance, this
I hold firm:
Virtue may be assailed, but never
hurt,
Surprised by unjust force, but not
enthralled;
Yea, even that which Mischief
meant most harm
Shall in the happy trial prove
most glory.(9)

To share with Moser the view that Chance is merely a didactic work of sentiment is merely to confirm the assertion in Comus. Marlow's celebrated sermon on love and life is, in part, ironic:

> Of all the forms offered to us by life it is the one demanding a couple to realize it fully, which is the most imperative. Pairing off is the fate of mankind. And if two beings thrown together, mutually attracted, resist the necessity, fail in understanding and voluntarily stop short of the --the embrace, in the noblest meaning of the word, then they are committing a sin against life, the call of which is simple. Perhaps sacred. (p. 426)

The irony implicit in this passage is drawn out some twenty pages later as Marlow queries Powell on his intentions toward Flora: "And the science of life consists in seizing every chance that presents itself. . . . Do you believe that?" to which Powell replies: "Oh, quite!" (p. 446)

The reader will recall that Powell's start in his career, his initial "chance" or "opportunity," came as a result of duplicity (the two Powells gave Anthony the impression that they were nephew and uncle). The entire novel illustrates the ambivalence of "chance." The mirror of Chance, like the mirror of Flora's eyes, the mutually-reflecting mirrors of de Barral and Anthony, and the doubling mirror of Flora's and Anthony's fate, reflects complex ambiguities. The novel itself, as Conrad notes, is a "dream,"(10)a metaphor which might be extended to the sea, "a sheet of darkling glass crowded with upside-down reflections." If there is a message in this tale of "equivocal situations," (p. 328) it is that within every thesis there is reflected an inseparable antithesis. In dramatic terms, this dream-fiction may be described as "a tragi-comedy," (p. 272) "slipping between frank laughter and unabashed tears," (p. 310) an appropriate coincidence of opposites in a tale controlled by the intelligence of a character fond of circular logic, of "chasing some notion or other round and round his head."

Negative criticism of Chance, it seems to me, is more appropriately and more accurately based on the issue of words. For the reader who does not find solving cryptograms congenial, the novel is certainly unsatisfying (unless, of course, the reader fond of sentimentality finds only melodrama in

Chance). There are many words about experience, relatively few portraying it. With the metaphysical punster Marlow as its controlling wit, Chance is a refined verbal puzzle. While some readers may derive pleasure from this sort of complexity, others may find it a sterile exercise. Regardless of the decision the reader may reach as to the quality of the complexity, its presence removes the novel far from mere melodrama.

The theme of the enlightenment of a mariner by way of immersion in the unreason of love is more explicitly articulated in The Arrow of Gold (1919) and The Rescue (1920). Genetically linked in terms of dates of conception, the novels dramatize in westerly and easterly locations, centered on Marseilles and Carimata Strait, respectively, the "initiation" of two sailors "into the life of passion," (11) each involved in clandestine operations for the taking of a kingdom. While Monsieur Georges, by way of Dona Rita, and Captain Lingard, by way of Edith Travers, are carried to disaster and disillusionment in a sea of crosscurrents, dreams of kingdoms in Spain and Celebes are exploded. As we read in The Rescue, Lingard "would go with the mysterious current; he would go swiftly--and see the end, the fulfilment both blissful and terrible." (p. 219) The Psychomachia lost by two dreamers in the "Garden of the Rose" is doubled in the body politic: "the madness of battle: is like "the madness of love." (The Rescue, p. 224) Georges and Lingard share the fate, not of Guillaume de Lorris' Dreamer, but of his Narcissus gazing into a mirror:

> . . . for when he knew
> Such passion must go e'er unsatisfied,
> Although he was entangled in Love's snare,
> And that never could sure comfort find . . . ,
> He lost his reason in but little space.(12)

Immersed analogically in the mirror of the infinite expressed as woman, both Lingard and Georges leave the world of logic and surface fact, and enter a world of contradiction and illusion.(13)

The Arrow of Gold is generally considered the worst of Conrad's novels. It is, in the opinion of Douglas Hewitt, "a work which his admirers do well to overlook;"(14)"material for the gossip of biographers," according to Albert Guerard;(15) "a tedious best seller," in the judgment of Lawrence Graver.(16) Frederick Karl, (17)Thomas Moser(18)and Neville Newhouse(19)concur in the reason for the verdict: Conrad's melodramatic, sentimental treatment of love. While the final verdict on this novel's literary value in relation to Conrad's other long fictions is sound, the reason adduced for the verdict is not, I think, quite as sound. Georges is not, in

Moser's phrase, "the impeccable hero," (20) nor is Rita the innocent heroine. As Ortega's grotesque paroxysm of anguish (in which there is "truth. . . enough to move a mountain," p. 318) reveals, Rita "is more than fit to be Satan's wife," (p. 318) and, as the reader is reminded throughout the novel, Rita is "both flesh and shadow," a "real" being and a mimesis. (p. 135) She is a femme fatale (not innocente), a living double of La Gioconda, (p. 211) "the principle of life charged with fatality." (p. 268) And Georges' naiveté is indistinguishable from ignorance; he lacks "knowledge of evil," (p. 70) an ignorance which, as Conrad noted a year before the publication of The Arrow of Gold, is itself evil. (21) Georges is a double of "Young Ulysses," (p. 12) to be enlightened by immersion in the contradictions mirrored and reconciled in Rita. His ignorance of the "dreadful order . . . in the darkest shadows of life," (p. 283) his blindness to the nightmare-logic of existence, betrays Rita at a critical moment: his naiveté is itself part of this dark order.

A reading of The Arrow of Gold within the frame of dreams, analogical thought and enlightenment in infinity-as-woman suggests another reason for the novel's failure. Conrad's attempt to work into this one piece virtually every major motif found in his other works, in the hope, it would seem, of multiplying levels of meaning and of broadening ranges of effects in an overall impression of super-added symbolism. The Arrow of Gold reads like a compendium of Conrad motifs. In addition, the use of an extended diary as a narrative device too easily leads to the discursive rendering of emotional states. The diarist tends to write about his experience. Correspondingly, the symbols thus rendered are entirely too obtrusive. But it is also for the above reasons that The Arrow of Gold is useful to the student of Conrad: the pattern of Conrad's analogical thought as it relates to the enlightenment of a mariner may be more readily perceived here than in any other of his fictions.

Georges' spiritual odyssey begins with his introduction to unreason. A young gentleman-sailor "in a state of sobriety" and of "refreshing ignorance," (p. 31) for whom "life. . . [is] a thing of outward manifestation," (p. 87) enters the Cannebière in Marseilles at carnival time. It is a street, like Marlow's river in "Heart of Darkness," "leading into the unknown." (p. 7) In a scene of bedlam and masks, he enters by analogy a "jungle," in which he meets "Night" and "Faust." (pp. 9, 13) This hell-like atmosphere serves as a prelude to the mariner's experience. During a drinking bout in the midst of decaying splendour, Georges comes to learn of Dona Rita, a Basque peasant converted into an objet d'art by the aesthete Henri Allègre and now an heiress and a Carlist agent. Leaving a house of

mirrors reflecting fantastic plants, the mariner passes through a chequered "black-and-white hall;" (p. 60) he is in a state akin to that of Decoud in Nostromo, his "head. . . full of confused images." (p. 61)

The mutually-reflecting symbols of mirror, jungle, woman and sea, analogues of infinity, are all obviously deployed as Georges descends further into unreason. The significance of his first meeting with Dona Rita is marked by a mirror: they walk on a "floor inlaid in two kinds of wood . . . , reflecting objects like still water." (p. 68) At once, Georges feels a "stranger" in the "moral region" of "incomprehensible emotions." (p. 69) He becomes, like Renouard in "The Planter of Malata," an "explorer" of "an undiscovered country;" (p. 69) also, somewhat like Marlow in "Heart of Darkness," he is compared to a "stranger. . . stumbling upon a hut of natives" possessed of secret "knowledge of evil." (pp. 69-70) In addition, like Pearl in "A Smile of Fortune," this country is the land of "fairy tale," (p. 96) a place entered "for good or evil." (p. 87) Meeting Rita, the young mariner enters an "infinite reverie," "a vague dream," in which he is at once both "hot" and "cold like ice." (e.g.: pp. 77, 86, 105, 93, 106, 99).(22) "Immortal art," in which are reconciled "gleams" and "shadows," is reflected in Dona Rita's "enigmatic eyes," which, like the sea, are "unfathomable," "illimitable." (pp. 88, 93) Under the spell of an "Enchantress" "as old as the world," (pp. 105, 101) Georges enters a timeless element similar to the jungle in "Heart of Darkness."

Subsequently, Georges learns of the tension of opposites at work in Dona Rita and art. Unlike an objet d'art, Rita possesses a personal history which she relates, a history focusing on a series of brushes with savage passion; the initial episode is prefaced by a gaze in a mirror, symbol not only of self-knowledge, but also of art as a reflection of life. With the light of love for Rita, "both flesh and shadow," (p. 135)(23)comes over his life a darkness, "the inseparable companion of all light" (p. 125)--a union of opposites reflected in Rita herself. Like the crew of the NARCISSUS(24)and the chief mate of the PATNA,(25)he finds himself "hot and trembling" in the midst of "absurdities and contradictions." (pp. 141-142) Thus enchanted by "a fateful figure seated at the very source of the passions that have moved men from the dawn of ages," (p. 146) he experiences "unspeakable bliss and inconceivable misery." (p. 151) Love, art and savage passion are mutual reflections, all three reconciled in the mirror of the infinite which is a woman's eyes: "She was that which is to be contemplated to all Infinity." (p. 288) This phase of enlightenment ends with Georges gazing into the "enigmatical . . . black glass" (p. 152) of Rita's eyes.

Like Willems in the jungle of An Outcast of the Islands, Georges is left as if "wrestling with a nightmare," (p. 154) during which he meditates on his feelings before a looking-glass. And, like Willems, he yearns for an escape from "dreams," only to see within the mirror of the self that he is in love with La Gioconda, the femme fatale of the "inscrutable smile." (pp. 163, 169, 211) In the arms of Rita, he lives in "a dream-like state," "that warm and scented infinity, or eternity." (p. 219) But this dream is shattered as his love is rejected by Dona Rita. As a consequence, Georges suffers "inner destruction" in a timeless state, signalled as in The Nigger of the NARCISSUS(26)and Lord Jim,(27) by a reversal of optical perspective: "The small flame had watched me letting myself out." (pp. 229-230) His state approaches madness as he shivers violently in a warm night.

The next phase of enlightenment finds Georges seeking refuge from the infinite. He returns to sea in the hope of finding in the "occupation, protection, consolation, the mental relief of grappling with concrete problems, the sanity one acquires from close contact with simple mankind." (p. 242) The young mariner finds comfort in the sight of "perfectly sane" shipwrights. (p. 245) But the sea itself, as Captain Anthony in Chance and the captain-narrator of The Shadow-Line had learned, is an equivocating mirror, for it reflects, like Rita's eyes, "the brilliance of sunshine together with the unfathomable splendour of the night." (pp. 242-243) And following a shipwreck, Georges returns to Marseilles and a carnival of bedlamites, an objective manifestation of his own loss of "lucid thinking." (p. 272) He has come full circle in a twelve-month period likened to "a daydream . . . containing the extremes of exultation, full of careless joy and of an invincible sadness." (p. 62) For Georges there is no refuge from unreason on land or at sea.

Having returned to land, Georges now enters the final phase of his enlightenment. And it is only in this part of The Arrow of Gold that Conrad avoids a pastiche effect. Georges descends "into the abyss," where he comes to perceive: ". . . I had given up the direction of my intelligence before the problem; or rather that the problem had dispossessed my intelligence and reigned in its stead side by side with a superstitious awe. A dreadful order seemed to lurk in the darkest shadows of life." (p. 283) As a result of his accident at sea, he had met Baron H., who, in turn, had put him in touch with the courier Ortega, a double-agent seeking the destruction of Rita and the Carlists, who, in turn, thanks to a letter--a "mirror" in which "she could see her own image" (p. 264)--from Georges to Rita, has a chance to contact her. The perception

of this design suggests to Georges a satanic logic: "It is only the Devil, they say, that loves logic." (p. 283) Though he does not see himself as "a victim of the Devil," (p. 283) the sequence of events in which he and Rita are ensnared suggests a dark order: "all that was enough to make one shudder--not at the chance, but at the design." (p. 283) This insight proves futile to Georges, however, as he takes Ortega to Rita's house, where, unknown to the unexpected visitors, she is hiding. On entering the house "full of disorder" Georges is cast "adrift in the black-and-white hall as on a silent sea;" he then crosses "an enchanted place" of mirrors and crystal to the mutually-surprising discovery of Rita, ironically "an insensible phantom" of the "real" Rita that is in him--the physical Rita is an "image." (pp. 284-288, 296, 299) In an extraordinary stroke of artistic expression, Conrad has her "arrow of gold," a delicate pin, an objet d'art and, symbolically, a deadly weapon and a talisman of love, reflected in a mirror. (p. 307) The images suggest a union of savagery and refinement in the infinite expressed metaphorically as art and love, manifestations of the coincidence of opposites.

Next, Thérèse, Rita's sister, likened to a "sleep-walker" in the grip of passion, (p. 279) reveals Rita's location to Ortega, who, armed with a primitive weapon, would kill the object of his lust. Georges, for a moment a "drowning man," (p. 289) his brain "in a whirl," (p. 308) regains command of himself, "working in a logical succession of images," (p. 309) but, ironically, the self-possession proves unnecessary. Ortega, the mad, primitive "warrior" surrounded by art, seriously wounds himself. And, soon after, in a double objectification of the coincidence of savagery and refinement in love and art, Georges hurls the arrow of gold at Rita, and she returns it. In the end, Georges retains the arrow, like Karain's Jubilee sixpence in Tales of Unrest, a counterfeit yet true talisman for the prevention of "dreaming." (p. 350) Thus armed, Georges returns to the sea, his "other love." (p. 351) He has come to experience art and truth in an odyssey likened to "a day-dream." (p. 62)

The stage shifts to the East (Carimata Strait, the setting) for The Rescue (1920), under way in 1896 and not completed until 1919, the year of the publication of The Arrow of Gold. While the political complexity of this novel may suggest comparison with Nostromo, the action here is focused on one character, Captain Lingard of the brig LIGHTNING. It is significant that Conrad's only comment on the subject matter of The Rescue in a letter to William Blackwood has to do with Lingard and, specifically, with his enlightenment: "It is only at the very last that he is enlightened."(28) And

it is a woman who provides the medium of this knowledge.

In The Rescue, as in The Arrow of Gold, the full Conradian complex of dream-motif, mirror-symbol and the ironic logic of contradiction or inversion coincide in the expression of a voyage to enlightenment in a timeless state. On the first page of the first chapter, we read of the LIGHTNING in Carimata Strait: ". . . the brig floated tranquil and upright as if bolted solidly, keel to keel, with its own image reflected in the unframed and immense mirror of the sea." (p. 5) Her thirty-five year old captain, Lingard, "in dreamy stillness," gazes on "the image of the brig." (pp. 6, 10) He also sees the upside-down image of his head and shoulders in this mirror of the infinite, but he is "blind to the mysterious aspects of the word." (pp. 6, 11) Albeit ignorant of life and its logic of inversion, he is not insensitive. Much to the consternation of his painfully useless first mate, Shaw, Lingard is also susceptible to "absurd fads," moments of "awakened lyricism," when his heart is uplifted "into regions charming, empty, and dangerous" --"bottom-upwards notions," in the estimation of Shaw. (pp. 11, 12) This susceptibility to unreason is the root cause of coming catastrophe and enlightenment. And such a notion takes possession of Lingard shortly after his being startled by an improbability, the sudden meeting in pitch darkness with a boat commanded by Carter, second mate of the HERMIT, a British schooner-yacht gone aground off the coast of Borneo.

The significance for Lingard's enlightenment of the decision to rescue the HERMIT is marked analogically by immersion in a pitch black deluge, in which men, by an optical illusion, fall "out of the universe," and in which "words" and "every sound" are effaced, leaving "nothing free but the unexpected." (Part I, Chapter III) In the past, the rescue of Hassim and Immada, political exiles befriended by Lingard, had been prefaced by a similar encounter with a messenger in a "dream," a deluge of fire and water, in which Lingard had been "deafened and blinded." (Part II, Chapter III) Suspended in aboundless world, Lingard now experiences the loss of his external senses, a prefiguration of the coming descent within himself.

Now, with the rescue of the HERMIT, both still and moving (again by an optical illusion), Lingard comes to enter another deluge, the abyss of Edith Travers' eyes, reflected in and reflecting the sea, in which "the whole universe and even time itself apparently come to a standstill;" (p. 144) he comes to "the contemplation of vast distances." (p. 148) Thus enthralled, like Georges, in a "mystic grip," (The Arrow of Gold, p. 140) he becomes, by analogy, a "swimmer" being

taken to sea by an "undertow" of a "dark and inscrutable purpose flowing to the end, the fulfilment both blissful and terrible." (p. 219) The sensation of being immersed in contradictions is also expressed as a whirlwind--Lingard has "the sensation of being whirled high in the midst of an uproar" (p. 179)--and as "a destroying flood," "an obscurity . . . without limit in space and time." (p. 241) He enters the boundless universe of unreason, twice referred to as "a world of improbabilities." (pp. 244, 352) Here, he cannot distinguish between reality and illusion, waking and dreaming. Waking from a brief sleep, he thinks, "So it was only a deception; he had seen no one." (p. 171) In fact, he had returned from a meeting with Edith some few moments before. To Lingard, caught in the intrigues of politics and love, the entire universe seems to glide smoothly through space as the tide stands still. (p. 200)

Immersion in an obscurity, expressed as woman and deluge-sea, is disastrous for Lingard. The good seaman-like sense of Carter ("I am a sailorman. My first duty was to the ships," (p. 220) he writes to Lingard), now first mate of the LIGHTNING, in the sinking of Daman's praus, an action made possible by Lingard's imprudent decision to leave the brig on Edith's request that he rescue d'Alcacer and Mr. Travers, seriously compromises Lingard before his would-be allies. Lingard awakens to the "truth"; looking within himself, he sees that "he did not know his mind himself," (p. 210) that he has been decoyed from his purpose by a "conflict within himself":

> Conflict of some sort was the very essence of his life. But this was something that he had never known before. This was a conflict within himself. He had to face unsuspected powers, foes that he could not go out to meet at the gate. They were within, as though he had been betrayed by somebody, some secret enemy. He was ready to look round for that subtle traitor. A sort of blankness fell on his mind and he suddenly thought: 'Why! It's myself.' (p. 329)

Moser's assertion that Conrad "considers evil to be external" to Lingard(29)is clearly mistaken. In the conflict between allegiance to Hassim and infatuation with Edith, Lingard can no longer distinguish between truth and illusion. An actor in an objectified Psychomachia, an "exotic opera," he meditates on this conflict; he comes to ask himself the Calderòn-like questions: "Who could tell what was real in this world?" "Am I dreaming? Am I in a fever?" (pp. 295, 431, 229)

In this dream-performance, Lingard is deceived and betrayed by Edith, who, selfishly, to retain him, does not relay a vital message to him from Hassim and Immada. Contrary stresses produce in Lingard as in Belarab, his

ally, a stillness, a kind of "mystic suspense between the contrary speculations. . . disputing the possession of his will." (p. 281) And, at a critical moment, when his personal action is imperative for the salvaging of Hassim's and Immada's fortune and of his own plans, he is paralyzed by a dream-vision of his beloved, who is once likened to "a creature of darkness." (p. 313) Lingard is literally and figuratively awakened only by the explosion of the EMMA, his supply depot, to the loss of many lives, including Hassim's and Immada's. Moser's claim that Conrad "sees man's greatest good as complete repose" "in a love that will blot out all awareness of the world"(30) seems not to take these facts into account. Love in the Conradian universe "exalts or unfits, sanctifies or damns." (p. 415) In itself, it is equivocal; and, in Lingard's case, it unfits and damns: he is "undone by a glimpse of Paradise." (p. 449) Nor is Lingard's self-deception and betrayal of his allies, and Edith's deception and betrayal of Lingard the stuff of sentimental melodrama. His partner, Jorgenson, a "dead" captain of a "dead" ship, a "somnambulist of an eternal dream," (p. 382) has provided an objective manifestation of the coup de foudre of love: the explosion of a powder magazine.

The truth of Shaw's observation--"Women are the cause of a lot of trouble" (p. 22)--has ironically been visited upon the heart of Lingard, a reader of the Iliad.(31) The captain of the LIGHTNING, whose cabin is ironically dominated by a gilt sheaf of thunder-bolts darting between the initials of his name, the man who had "calculated every move" and who had "guarded against everything," (p. 104) by way of another Helen, has come, in a manner similar to d'Alcacer's, a Spaniard fond of musical glasses, to descend "into the innermost depths of his being," (p. 411) there to learn something of himself. This tale of the enlightenment of a mariner conveys, in its own words," an effect of a marvellous and symbolic vision." (p. 320)

From the above readings of Chance, The Arrow of Gold and The Rescue, it becomes clear that these fictions do not suffer from a deficiency of irony as a consequence of melodramatic distinctions between good and evil and of a sentimental treatment of love. As William Blake comments on his illustrations of Dante's Inferno, where fire and ice unite, "In Equivocal Worlds Up & Down are Equivocal."(32) Similarly, in Conrad's world, distinctions between opposites are ambiguous and obscure once the reader perceives the facts and the underlying logic governing those facts, the logic of "the innermost frozen circle of Dante's Inferno," in the words of Conrad's "The Warrior's Soul." (Tales of Hearsay, p. 1) Marlow's words in Lord

Jim, seeming to anticipate the tack of some future critics, are perhaps appropriate here: "All this may seem to you sheer sentimentalism; and indeed very few of us have the will or the capacity to look under the surface of familiar emotions." (p. 222) Conrad's later tales of the enlightenment of sea-dreamers in the infinite ironies of love represent a continued effort to probe below such a surface.

NOTES

1. A Personal Record, p. 36. All references to Conrad's works are to the Collected Edition, London: Dent, 1946-1950, 21 volumes.

2. Thomas Moser, Joseph Conrad: Achievement and Decline (Cambridge, Mass., 1957), p. 138.

3. Douglas Hewitt, Conrad: A Reassessment (Cambridge, 1969), Second Edition, p. 89.

4. Moser, pp. 141, 105.

5. "Conrad the Historian," Listener, LXXIII (1965), 555.

6. "Those that hold that all things are governed by fortune had not erred, had they not persisted there"--Sir Thomas Browne, Religio Medici, Part I. This epigraph, like that provided by Boethius for The Mirror of the Sea, is found in a critique of man's reason as an instrument for the knowing of "the Providence of God."

7. William Blackburn (ed.), Joseph Conrad: Letters to William Blackwood and David S. Meldrum (Durham, 1958), p. 133. Letter of 26 August 1901 to William Blackwood.

8. G. Jean-Aubry, Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters (London, 1927), Vol. I, p. 183. Letter of 2 November 1895.

9. The Portable Milton, ed. Douglas Bush (New York, 1949), p. 94. Comus provided the epigraph of Conrad's Victory.

10. Author's Note to Chance, p. viii.

11. Author's Note to The Arrow of Gold, p. ix.

12. The Romance of the Rose, trans. H.W. Robbins (New York, 1962) p. 31. Cf. The Rescue: ". . . something has happened which has robbed him of his power of thinking." (p. 414)

13. Chaucer's Franklin's Tale, a rhetorical and logical tour de force on the theme of love, provided the epigraph of The Rescue.

14. Hewitt, p. 2.

15. Albert Guerard, Conrad the Novelist (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 284.

16. Lawrence Graver, Conrad's Short Fiction (Los Angeles, 1969), p. 170.

17. Frederick Karl, A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad (New York, 1960), pp. 277-279.

18. Moser, pp. 185, passim.

19. Neville Newhouse, Joseph Conrad (London, 1966), pp. 73, 138.

20. Moser, p. 149.

21. Notes on Life and Letters, p. 194.

22. The logic and imagery here suggest comparison with Donne's in "Sonnet 19" of Divine Meditations: "contraries meet in one," "cold and hot," as the poet contemplates his relationship to the Infinite as in a "fantastic ague."

23. The Pygmalion myth enters explicitly in The Rover, p. 212.

24. The Nigger of the NARCISSUS, p. 93: "like men driven by a merciless dream to toil in an atmosphere of ice or flame."

25. Lord Jim, pp. 94-96.

26. The NARCISSUS sails beneath "the moon rushing backwards with frightful speed over the sky" (p. 55).

27. "Had the earth been checked in her course?" Jim asks as the PATNA strikes a capsized hulk beneath the placid surface of the sea (p. 26).

28. Blackburn (ed.), p. 10. Letter of 6 September 1897.

29. Moser, p. 145.

30. Ibid., pp. 145, 143.

31. The Rescue, p. 22. Moser, arguing for a simple Lingard, calls him "unlettered." (p. 67) The critic confuses the Lingard of An Outcast of the Islands, whom, we are told by Conrad, does not read, (p. 198) with the protagonist of The Rescue.

32. The Portable Blake, ed. Kazin (New York, 1968), p. 594. Blake, however, unlike Conrad, rejoices in the infernal; Conrad approaches it with ironic reserve.