Lord Jim and Under Western Eyes:  
Two Treatments of Guilt and Atonement

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In his Journal, Andre Gide once wrote: "Much interested by the relationship I discover between Under Western Eyes and Lord Jim." Certainly these two novels by Conrad bear many striking resemblances to one another. Both are about guilt and the need for expiation, and the narrators of both are characters within the novel. Neither narrator is present when the central character commits the act which triggers his sense of guilt and influences his behavior throughout the rest of the novel. Both narrators learn the details of the event from the central character's description of it.

A closer look at the two books, however, reveals differences as well as similarities. Lord Jim is full of exotic imagery and long, rich descriptions designed to convey moods:

A Marvellous stillness pervaded the world, and the stars, together with the serenity of their rays, seemed to shed upon the earth the assurance of everlasting security. The young moon recurved, and, shining low in the west, was like a slender shaving thrown up from a bar of gold, and the Arabian Sea, smooth and cool to the eye like a sheet of ice, extended its perfect level to the perfect circle of a dark horizon.

The descriptions in Under Western Eyes tend to be a good deal more spare and less metaphorical. When extended, they are often ironic:

To his right, beyond the toy-like jetties, he saw the green slopes framing the Petit Lac in all the marvellous banality of the picturesque made with painted cardboard, with the more distant stretch of water inanimate and shining like a piece of tin.

Not only is the language of the two books different. The narrator of Under Western Eyes is much more detached from Razumov than Marlow is from Jim. Finally, the two books have different focuses. Lord Jim shows a series of events and presents many possible in-
interpretations of their moral significance. It asks the reader to attempt to evaluate these interpretations. **Under Western Eyes** does not so much pose the question of the significance of Razumov's actions as show their motivations. Jim is interesting because the absolute significance of his actions is hard to evaluate. His motivations are not clearly shown. Razumov's motivations are clearly and convincingly analyzed. He betrays Haldin in order to maintain stability in his life. He then discovers that the Russian government is no more interested in providing him with a stable and secure life than are the revolutionists. The government is itself no more than another anarchic force. Razumov is caught between the forces of autocracy and revolution throughout the book. In the end, he rejects autocracy, horrified by the havoc it has wreaked on the Haldin family, and confesses, ignoring horrifying aspects of the revolutionists themselves. **Lord Jim** poses moral problems. **Under Western Eyes** deals with the psychological experience of guilt and atonement.

A comparison of two books by the same author, with somewhat similar themes and narrative formats, provides an opportunity to examine the relation of the form of a novel to its content. In altering his treatment of the subject of guilt and expiation in order to shift his emphasis from questions of absolute guilt and redemption to psychological revelation, Conrad gives a different tone to **Under Western Eyes** than to **Lord Jim**.

The form of **Lord Jim** is carefully controlled, mainly through those shifts in narration which are so frustrating on a first reading. As the book progresses, each section is narrated in a way appropriate to it alone. The omniscient narrator of the
first four chapters provides a sketch of Jim's life up to the Patna's collision and a brief description of the inquiry, at which the emphasis on tangible facts so infuriates Jim: "They demanded facts from him, as if facts could explain anything." The reader, at this point, is even more at a loss than Jim, not knowing even why Jim is at the inquiry. If the omniscient narrator were to tell more, he would be forced to discuss the incident itself, and in so doing, would almost certainly point to some absolute interpretation of its causes and significance. To avoid this, Conrad introduces Marlow, a man whose information on the incident comes only from Jim, and who cannot himself reach and maintain any conclusions about the significance of these events. At one moment, Marlow does all he can to separate himself from Jim, and at the next he acknowledges him as "one of us". Marlow also leads the reader to question his motives, at times speaking as if he were only interested in helping Jim, and at others of "burying" him in the interest of "putting out of sight all the reminders of our folly, of our weakness, of our mortality." This inconsistency casts doubt on all of Marlow's statements and forces the reader to attempt to sort them out for himself.

The ambiguous reaction Marlow provokes is not his only advantage as a narrator. In chapters five through thirty-five, Marlow rambles away to his listeners. He describes the chief engineer hallucinating about pink toads, Brierly, driven to suicide by his horror at Jim's weakness, Chester, ready to use Jim as he would an inanimate object, the French Lieutenant, unable to conceive of life without honor, and others. The attitudes and experiences of
these people all have a bearing, in one way or another, on the central theme of the book: the significance of human moral failure. By means of Marlow's verbal digressions, Conrad juxtaposes conversations and events that are not contemporaneous, but have a related significance. Marlow rambles somewhat less as he recounts Jim's attempt to escape from his past, his own conversation with Stein, and Jim's early experiences in Patusan. He then stops talking and becomes a writer. As such, he digresses and contradicts himself less. He does manage to present a few more sidelines on Jim's story in his remarks to the "privileged reader" and his description of Jewel and Tamb' Itam's reactions to Jim's failure to fight.

In the penultimate paragraph, he says that Jim's reality sometimes comes to him "with an overwhelming force," but that at others he "passes from my eyes like a disembodied spirit." Marlow's book-long struggle to reach a conclusion about Jim's significance has failed. The implication is that the reader must solve, or fail to solve, the problem for himself.

Critical response to the book has varied widely. Gustav Morf and Albert J. Guerard see Jim as guilty in leaping from the Patna and doomed to destruction by his sense of guilt in the end. Edward Crankshaw sees the book as a description of a human experience with no absolute moral meaning. Ian Watt sees Jim as failing initially, but finally redeeming himself by behaving "honorably." In concluding this, Watt asserts that Jim's apparent betrayal of Jewel is insignificant when set against his adherence to an ideal of integrity. Yet she and Tamb' Itam are faithful to him, while he does not live up to their expectations. It is hard not to sym-
pathize when Jewel says: "He has left me. You always leave us—
for your own ends." Her and Tamb' Itam's sense of being failed by Jim adds to the ambiguity of the book.

There seems little question that Jim fails when he deserts the Patna, but at the same time all men, even such strong ones as the French Lieutenant and Stein, are capable of failure. Some are just lucky enough not to experience it. Watt's claim that Jim redeems himself in the end is fairly convincing, but clouded by the presence of Jewel and Tamb' Itam. It is the qualifications and apparent contradictions which permeate Lord Jim that have made it such a popular subject of criticism for so long.

Conrad's political novels generally tend to be more concerned with psychology as well as politics, and less with questions of absolute moral significance than his earlier works. Dr. Monygham in Nostromo is Conrad's most noteworthy study on the theme of guilt and atonement between Lord Jim and Under Western Eyes. F. R. Leavis refers to Monygham as "a stronger and quite unequivocal Lord Jim." In fact, he is much more of a psychological study than Jim. As the omniscient third person narrator of Nostromo puts it, his conduct is guided by "the imaginative exaggeration of a correct feeling." He has signed a meaningless piece of paper implicating himself and a group of others in a nonexistent conspiracy. The others would have been arrested and tormented without his signature, and all have been forced to sign similar pieces of paper. Monygham, in fact, stood up under torture longer than most before signing. He has not injured anyone by his confession, and has no reason to feel guilty, but he does.
The most terrifying thing about Dr. Monygham is not his false confession, but what has happened to his personality as a result of it. He has become utterly devoted to Mrs. Gould, "but his devotion, absorbing all his sensibilities, had left his heart steeled against remorse and pity." He considers himself degraded, and hence exempt from further degradation. Thus, he not only risks his own life, but causes the death of another. He is an upright, moral man who has been dehumanized by his sense of guilt. In saving the mine, he rehabilitates himself in his own eyes and lives on, freed from his self-imposed burden.

Dr. Monygham is a relatively minor character in Nostromo, and receives limited treatment, but Razumov is the central character of Under Western Eyes, which is built around his story. The form of Under Western Eyes, like that of Lord Jim, is adapted to its subject. Unlike Marlow, the narrator does not color the book with his own personality. He does not digress as Marlow does and is thoroughly detached from Razumov. His detachment, combined with his access to Razumov's diary, allows him to analyze Razumov much more effectively than Marlow can analyse Jim. Marlow can only repeat what Jim has chosen to tell him, and his own reaction to Jim keeps influencing his storytelling. The language teacher, on the other hand, is largely a transcriber of Razumov's thoughts as recorded in his diary. He is so nearly omniscient, that at one point Conrad is carried away and has him describing Prince K---'s sadness as he sits alone in his study. The teacher is, in fact, mainly a mouthpiece for Conrad himself. Because the entire action of the novel is presented by the teacher, Conrad is less able to use narrative shifts to achieve special effects than he
is in Lord Jim. Thus he is sometimes confronted with a choice between achieving a narrative effect and maintaining the narrator as a believable persona. In such instances, he sacrifices the coherence of the persona.

Fortunately, the novel's design does not require the sort of complex narrative shifting that Lord Jim's design makes necessary. The only break in the narrative that seems quite artificial in view of the old teacher's nature is at the end of Part One, where Razumov's conversation with Mikulin is cut off at the words "Where to?" It is certainly an effective break. The words "Where to" give an excellent sense of Razumov's helplessness and entrapment. They would not stick in the memory as they do, were they followed by the rest of the conversation. However, the narrator's claim that because the story is a true one he "would not even invent a transition" is quite unconvincing. It seems even more unlikely when, nearly two hundred pages later, he returns to the conversation. Had he wished to tell the story as directly as possible, Conrad would no doubt have sent Razumov off to Geneva before turning to describe the Haldins. Such a linear narrative would have been more appropriate to the old teacher, though not as striking or interesting. It could be argued that the teacher is attempting to present Razumov's predicament and his response to it as forcefully as possible, and has chosen to break the book up in order to do this. If so, he is all the more a mouthpiece for Conrad, who is using the same technique to achieve the same goal.

There may be a question why the narrator is introduced as a character at all if he so completely represents Conrad's view-
point. Several reasons are given in the Author's note, the most important being his use "in the way of comment" and in producing "the effect of actuality." When the narrator makes comments which Conrad agrees with, he seems to be only a man reporting what he observes. It would be easier to accuse Conrad of prejudice if he put his comments into the mouth of an omniscient narrator who was obviously an extension of himself. The narrator also gives the story the flavor of authenticity with his insistence on the plain truth of the tale which distinguishes it from works of imagination. In the Author's Note, Conrad is at great pains to emphasize that the horror of the story lies in its being quite commonplace for Russia. Whether or not he was correct, Conrad saw himself as portraying a terrible reality in the book.

Albert J. Guerard has claimed that in Under Western Eyes, "the narrator's own obtuseness is one of the great sources of ... sympathy for the damned. His mumbling about 'Western readers' and about a 'lurid Russian coloring' at the moment of the Haldin's most intense grief increases sympathy for the Russians generally." This claim is a bit excessive. The remarks Guerard refers to do not ironically hint at the narrator's lack of penetration. They are a plain attempt to point out the great differences which both Conrad and the narrator see between Russia and the West. Through the narrator, Conrad manages to portray Razumov and the Haldins sympathetically, but there is every reason to believe that he shared the narrator's view of Russia as a place ruled by laws alien and largely incomprehensible to westerners. He once wrote in a letter: "I
know extremely little of Russians. Practically nothing."\textsuperscript{19} If anything is ironic, it is Conrad's writing a novel on a subject of which he claimed such ignorance. Even Guerard seems to backtrack in his conclusions on the book, admitting that the narrator "may well reflect Conrad's cool views,"\textsuperscript{20} and claiming that it is the timing of his statements that creates sympathy for the Russians.

For Guerard, this is a rather minor point, and it would not merit such discussion were it not taken a step further by Tony Tanner, who sees the narrator as a complacent fool with "no vision of evil" and draws parallels between the narrator and Geneva, represented in the novel as a city of orderly dullness.\textsuperscript{21} However, the negative references to the city are made by the narrator himself. It is possible that Conrad disliked the Swiss and was even amused by the contrast he had set up between Switzerland and Russia. Yet if Tanner is correct, the narrator is crudely shoved aside whenever Conrad wishes to make a direct statement undercutting what the narrator stands for. Taken as an ironic figure, the narrator seems badly handled. Seen as Conrad's mouthpiece, he is much more successful.

\textit{Under Western Eyes} has two themes: the destructive forces of autocracy and revolution and the experience of Razumov, a victim of these forces. The book begins by showing how Razumov becomes trapped between the two forces. At the end of Part One, he and his predicament are set aside, to be slowly reintroduced later. Conrad focuses on the revolutionaries for a while, ridiculing some, such as Peter Ivanovitch, whom he despises, and developing
sympathy for others, such as Tekla and Sophia Antonova, whom he sees as merely misguided. True, Tekla appears at first in a satiric light, with her story of "the poor, saintly apple woman" who converted her to revolutionism. The story manages to be simultaneously horrifying and amusing in its deliberately cheap sentimentality.

The Haldins are introduced and shown sympathetically from the very first. Still, they are creatures of their heritage. Miss Haldin, for all her kindness, believes in revolution at any cost. She provides the very epigraph of the novel: "I would take liberty from any hand as a hungry man would snatch a piece of bread." It is hard to blame her, the autocracy being as horrible as it is, but it is equally hard to imagine a wonderful, free state under the leadership of Peter Ivanovitch. Like Razumov, the Haldins are victims, and they serve to keep the destructiveness of a Russian heritage before the reader until Razumov reappears. They are most important, of course, in triggering Razumov's confession at the end of the book.

However effective Conrad is in rendering his views of autocracy and revolution, it is Razumov's psychological experience which finally dominates Under Western Eyes. Razumov turns a revolutionary assassin in to the police and eventually comes to feel a need for atonement. The emphasis is not on absolute guilt and redemption, as in Lord Jim, but on Razumov's own vision of himself and on how he is driven to betray Haldin, to become a spy, and finally to confess. His experience is morally significant only in his own eyes.

Much of Razumov's behavior stems from his sense of isolation.
In the Author's Note, Conrad writes that "being nobody's child, he feels rather more keenly than another would that he is a Russian—or he is nothing." This is an important effect of Razumov's sense of isolation, but not the only one. In addition, he has a strong desire to attain significance in the eyes of others, a drive first manifested in his pursuit of the silver medal. When Haldin appears and tells his story, Razumov develops two more traits which remain with him throughout the novel: a sense of being trapped and a feeling that he can only escape by unburdening himself to another person. A comparison of the description of events surrounding Haldin's betrayal, in which all of these psychological traits are apparent, with the description of events surrounding Jim's jump, in which psychological motivation remains obscure, illustrates the contrast between the two books.

In Lord Jim, Jim's description of the circumstances surrounding his jump is overlaid with his own remarks and Marlow's responses to him, as well as by Marlow's remarks to his listeners. The events, already obscure, seem all the more mysterious and hard to evaluate after being filtered through two narrators. The reader is repeatedly led away from Jim's motivations and the events themselves. Jim asks Marlow whether he, in Jim's position, would have had the courage to swing a maul in order to shore up the Patna. He goes on to justify his behavior, arguing that he could not have saved anyone in any case. Marlow turns from the events themselves to say to his listeners: "These were issues beyond the competency of a court of inquiry: it was a subtle and momentous quarrel as to the true essence of life," emphasizing the
the universal implications of Jim's overall failure, rather than discussing Jim's reasons for not shoring up the ship. A few lines later, he goes even farther, saying: "The mystery of his attitude got hold of me as though he had been an individual at the forefront of his kind, as if the obscure truth involved were momentous enough to effect mankind's conception of itself." The mystery catches hold of the reader too, but, rather than attempting to solve it, Marlow changes the subject: "My fault, of course, One has no business really to get interested. It's a weakness of mine." He does return to Jim's mental state after a fashion, speculating that he was "Fascinated by the sword hanging over his imaginative head." Marlow conceives of Jim imagining his own death, speaking of "a hot dance of thoughts in his head." However he spends little time on the nature of these thoughts, but changes the subject again, talking about Jim's confession to him, and the inability of one man to absolve another for such a failure. The implications of Jim's failure for Marlow and others again receive more attention than Jim's motivations. This is because it is these implications which are the real subject of the book.

In Chapter Nine, which ends with the jump, there is more description of Jim's actions and less commentary by Marlow. Still, there is almost no probing of the roots of these actions. The whole scene has a dreamlike quality. As in many dreams, a peaceful state has inexplicably become ominous. Earlier, the Patna seemed at the center of a still and utterly safe world. Now, everything is different:

'It was black, black;' pursued Jim, with moody steadiness. It had sneaked up on us from behind. The infernal thing! I sup-
pose there had been at the back of my head some hope yet. I don't know. But that was all over anyhow. It maddened me to see myself caught like this. I was angry, as though I'd been trapped. I was trapped! The night was hot, too, I remember. Not a breath of air.

What once seemed secure has become oppressive, nearly claustrophobic.

Jim can recapture his sensations vividly, but cannot or will not recall any connected thoughts. He gives, as Marlow puts it, "a strange illusion of passiveness, as though he had not acted but had suffered himself to be handled by the infernal powers who had selected him for the victim of their practical joke." This suggests that perhaps Jim is somehow not responsible for his jump. Yet it is hard to accept this conclusion in view of Jim's actions. He must at some level make a decision to walk towards the boat whether he admits it or not. Marlow remarks: "The infernal joke was being crammed down his throat, but---look you---he was not going to admit of any sort of swallowing motion in his gullet." The "infernal joke" idea is thus offered and rejected, leaving Jim's moral failure unexplained. The decision to jump is not described. One moment, Jim is experiencing a rush of sensations:

The ship began a slow plunge; the rain swept over her like a broken sea; my cap flew off my head; my breath was driven back into my throat. I heard as if I had been on the top of the tower a wild screech, "Geo-o-o-orge! Oh, jump! She was going down, down, head first under me...."

and the next he has jumped. "It had happened somehow," says Marlow. Exactly how remains a mystery. The lack of a clear explanation for the jump makes its significance difficult to evaluate and is responsible for much of the book's enigmatic quality.

In describing the time both before and after the jump, Jim
makes an effort to deny any kinship with the other crewmen, even as Marlow sometimes tries to deny kinship with Jim. Once again, now by means of Jim's attitude, the question is posed whether or not all men are united in their fallibility. The reader is asked whether Jim or anyone else has a right to disassociate himself from others.

In the chapters leading up to the jump, Jim's imagination is often mentioned, and his ability to visualize both what he can recall and what he fears is clearly shown. It is not, however, clearly related to his behavior. The connection between his vision of the Patna sinking and his jump is not explicated. Jim does not acknowledge being afraid, though he acts like a frightened man. In Under Western Eyes, Razumov's imagination is every bit as active as Jim's. Unlike Jim's, however, it is shown interacting with his attitudes, so that Razumov's complete psychological processes are rendered. When Haldin tells him what he has done, Razumov's first thought is: "There goes my silver medal!" Suddenly the object he had hoped would gain him recognition is vanishing before his eyes. After hearing Haldin's story, he imagines being discovered and punished by the police for harboring him. He is sharply conscious of lacking relatives to protect him and sees himself "creeping, broken down and shabby, about the streets—dying unattended in some filthy hole of a room, or in the sordid bed of a Government hospital." His thoughts move on, first to other implications of his loneliness, and then to reasons for denouncing Haldin. Jim, on the other hand, is not shown thinking. He visualizes the ship sinking under him, and then he
has jumped.

Razumov is oppressed by the thought, "I am being crushed and I can't even run away." He has "not even a moral refuge—the refuge of confidence." Wanting desperately to escape from the trap Haldin's appearance has placed him in, he feels that he may be able to do so by sharing his tale. He thinks of Russia, the only substitute he has for a family, seeing in it its autocracy "a guarantee of duration, of safety...a work not of revolutions with their passionate levity of action and their shifting impulses—but of peace." He may be wrong, but he is not dishonest. "For a train of thought is never false. The falsehood lies deep in the necessities of existence, in secret fears and half-formed ambitions, in the secret confidence combined with a secret mistrust of ourselves, in the love of hope, and the dread of uncertain days."

The "necessities of existence" would seem to be Razumov's Russian heritage. If so, the implication is that, in the end, all thoughts and actions can be traced to conditions of life. No such implication is found in Lord Jim, in which the mystery surrounding actions is so strongly emphasized, but Lord Jim is about westerners, like Conrad and Marlow. Probably neither Conrad nor Marlow would have liked to be told he was merely the product of his environment. On the other hand, both Conrad and the language teacher see Razumov as an alien because he is a Russian. Both are attempting to portray what Conrad calls in the Author's Note "the psychology of Russia." If Russia truly has a unique psychology, it must proceed from the Russian national environment.
However, if actions could all be attributed to environment, morality would be nonexistent and Lord Jim not worth writing. Thus the philosophical underpinnings of the two books are somewhat different. Under Western Eyes hints at a sort of cultural determinism, while Lord Jim does not. True, the hint is rather slight, and "the secret confidence combined with a secret mistrust of ourselves" may even be the source of Jim's belief that he will not fail a second time, and of Marlow's fear that all are fallible. Still, there is much more stress on cultural and psychological cause and effect in Under Western Eyes than in Lord Jim.

The language teacher goes on to discuss the necessities of existence that acted on Razumov and "many brave (Russian) minds," which "turned away from the vague and endless conflict to the one great historical fact of the land. They turned to autocracy." Razumov sees revolutionaries as destroyers and believes that by denouncing Haldin he can both relieve himself of the burden which has suddenly fallen upon him and serve the cause of order. He still has not realized that the autocracy is no less destructive than the revolutionists who oppose it.

He is not, however, entirely without misgivings. His fears of capture and torture show that he is aware of autocracy's dark side. This makes him somewhat uneasy. Haldin represents a destructive force, but he is also a human being whom Razumov is about to ruin. In his realization of this, Razumov shows more sensitivity than Haldin himself, who is willing to cause the deaths of innocent bystanders in the course of what he sees as the elimination of a destroyer. Haldin, unable to see two sides of an issue, is presumably not bothered by phantoms, as Razumov is.
Were Razumov less sensitive to the complexities of his situation, he would merely drift wherever he was carried by the forces around him, instead of being tormented and crushed as he is.

Once Jim and Razumov have made their respective decisions, both sense that something is terribly wrong. Jim says: "There was no going back. It was as if I had jumped into a well—into an everlasting deep hole." Jim has fallen into a darkness that seems as inescapable as the darkness of death. Marlow agrees: "He had indeed jumped into an everlasting deep hole. He had tumbled from a height he could never scale again." The Patna is swallowed up by the darkness and the chief engineer believes it has gone down. The disappearance of the ship drives Jim's sense of separation from his past still further home. He is lost among the morally inferior, represented by the boat's crew. In the darkness they take him for one of their own. Darkness is accompanied by silence. Jim has lost his bearings and seems to have no hope of ever getting them back. "And all the time it was only a clouded sky, a sea that did not break, the air that did not stir. Only a night; only a silence." The Patna will survive, and Jim will be given another opportunity. It seems that perhaps, after all, a joke has been played in the darkness.

Razumov's sense that something is wrong develops more slowly. This is appropriate to the emphasis on the consciousness of guilt in Under Western Eyes, as opposed to the consciousness of guilt in Lord Jim. Razumov arrives at his decision by degrees, and the decision itself seems rational until he is confronted by the grim realities of autocracy. He is disgusted by the General,
who cannot see a revolutionary as a human being. The General is a human incarnation of autocracy with its irrational contempt for human life in the pursuit of its own ends. His inhumanity prevents him from taking any interest in Razumov's moral experience or in Haldin as a person. The autocracy, like the dark powers that seem to toy with Jim, whisks the fates of human beings around unpredictably, although, being a political system, it is more comprehensible. This realization disturbs Razumov, although he will not be sufficiently horrified by it to abandon autocracy until the end of the book.

When Haldin descends Razumov's staircase into the darkness, he vanishes much as the Patna disappears into the darkness of the squall. Still, there is a difference between the darknesses of the two books. The darkness in *Lord Jim* is more mysterious. The fate of the Patna is unknown, and its survival unexpected, as is Jim's second opportunity. Razumov, like Jim, feels lost and confused, but the darkness of Russia is not so deceptive as the darkness that surrounds Jim. Haldin is unquestionably doomed to torture and death. In *Lord Jim*, the forces that shape men's lives are shrouded in mystery. In *Under Western Eyes*, "Fatality enters your rooms while your landlady's back is turned; you come home and find it in possession bearing a man's name, clothed in flesh—wearing a brown cloth coat and long boots—lounging against the stove." It even tells you its history, which springs from the Russian heritage you share with it. The most mysterious aspect of the Russian darkness is its sinister effectiveness in crushing everyone who comes under its influence, from its enemy Haldin to
its faithful servant Mikulin.

Both Jim's and Razumov's lives can be divided roughly into two parts. In the first, each makes what he is conscious of as a moral failure. In the second, each comes to terms with his failure in a new environment. Neither chooses this new environment; both are sent away. In Jim's case, however, the emphasis is on Marlow and Stein's reasons for sending him away, while in Razumov's it is on his sense of helplessness and the ease with which he is forced to leave Petersburg.

As noted above, Marlow's attitude towards Jim is ambiguous. In sending him away, he alternately seems to want to help the poor young man, and to put him out of sight and mind. One suspects he really wants the latter. Marlow protests his good intentions because he fears to admit his own weakness, then tells the truth because the subject fascinates him and he wants to get to the bottom of it. He would not tell the story at all were he indifferent to its implications. Stein says: "And because you not always can keep your eyes shut there comes the real trouble—the heart pain—the world pain." He seems to be speaking of Jim, but both he and Marlow are simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by the idea that man is defective. They want to explore the nature of this defect by providing a man who has failed with an opportunity to succeed and seeing whether he can redeem himself. Jim, like Razumov, has "nowhere to go," and so goes where they send him, but this is less important than why he is sent, and what he achieves or fails to achieve.

Mikulin's reason for sending Razumov off as a spy is simple.
He wishes to serve the autocracy. On the other hand, Razumov's having nowhere to go is not merely mentioned in passing as is Jim's, but is given great attention. Throughout the book, Razumov's sense of isolation and entrapment is stressed. It is largely a feeling of having no one and nowhere to go that drives him to denounce Haldin in an effort to unburden himself. The "Where to?" at the end of Part One and the first few paragraphs of Part Four underline this still more strongly. Razumov's desire to confide in another person in order to obtain psychological relief nearly ends in his confessing to Mikulin about his failed attempt to save Haldin. Apparently it is not what he confesses, but the act of confession itself which fascinates him.

As well as feeling isolated, he is living on Mikulin's sufferance, and must go where Mikulin wishes or be ruined. He goes to Geneva, in part because he has no choice and in part because Mikulin convinces him that by serving Russia he will eventually be able to escape from his isolation and build a stable life.

Precisely what Jim achieves at the end of his life has been much debated. Some see him as a success, some as a failure. Razumov, by contrast, unquestionably achieves relief from his emotional burden. This is in keeping with the different subjects of the two books. Lord Jim deals with tricky questions of absolute morality, and whether or not Conrad himself felt he understood them, the personal moral philosophies of different readers tend to lead to different conclusions about the book. It is easier to agree on the psychological revelations of Under Western Eyes.

In Lord Jim, Jim's confrontation with Brown is described in
detail, and a moral kinship between the two men is hinted at. Brown is repulsive, and yet Jim, externally young, strong, and confident, resembles him in having once been afraid. For the last time in the book, Conrad brings before the reader the question whether any man has a right to feel superior to any other in light of their common weaknesses. Gustav Morf discusses the way the exchange between the two men points attention towards "a sickening suggestion of common guilt, of secret knowledge that was like a bond of their minds and of their hearts." Morf emphasizes the confrontation's effect on Jim, but its effect on the reader is even more important. The reader is forced to ponder not only whether Jim can in any sense be placed above Brown, but whether Marlow or anyone else can be placed above either. Marlow himself says: "Nobody, nobody is good enough." Jim's last act is described quite briefly, and from a psychological point of view there is nothing very mysterious or complex about it. He feels that by facing Dorian he can atone for his jump. The scene's power derives partly from the contrast between Jim's calm resolution and the desperation of Jewel and Tamb' Itam, and partly from the setting: "The sky over Patusan was blood-red, immense, streaming like an open vein. An enormous sun nestled crimson amongst the tree-tops, and the forest below had a black and forbidding face." The very aspect of the heavens indicates a significant, mysterious, and awful event is about to take place.

Jim's self-assurance in his last moments does not necessarily provide the key to the book. After his death, Marlow asks: "Is he satisfied—-quite, now, I wonder? We ought to know. He is one
of us—and have I not stood up once, like an evoked ghost, to an-
swer for his eternal constancy? Was I so very wrong after all?"49
and leaves the reader, presumably "one of us," to seek an answer.

The psychological reasons for Razumov's confession, unlike
those for Jim's facing Doramin, are presented in detail. Razumov,
has become a spy because he lacks any practical alternative and because Mikulin has temporarily convinced him that he will be able to
find recognition and moral stability in the service of autocracy.
As a spy, he encounters the Haldin's, whose lives have been shat-
tered by the loss of their son and brother. He is forced to con-
verse with Miss Haldin, who is full of respect the man she be-
lieves was her brother's greatest friend. At the same time, al-
most everyone he meets either praises Haldin or abjures the trait-
tor who denounced him. Just before denouncing Haldin, Razumov
thought: "I want to be understood."50 When he considered confes-
sing to Mikulin, it was because "to be understood appeared ex-
tremely fascinating."51 For a person who so wants to be under-
stood, living in a position of undeserved respect becomes unendur-
able. In addition, Razumov has an acute sense of insignificance,
which is sharpened when he meets Haldin's mother. Haldin will
live on in the minds of his family, but Razumov has no one to re-
member him.

When he meets Miss Haldin after seeing her mother, Razumov's
desire to be understood and to attain a lasting significance in
someone else's eyes come together. He feels that everything
about his position in Geneva is false, and rejects it completely.
Since he is regarded as good, he decides that he is evil. He understands that Miss Haldin is a victim but, failing to acknowledge the influence of autocracy, he takes the role of villain entirely upon himself. If he cannot be remembered as a good man, he will be remembered as an evil one. He does not, however, just want to be despised as an evildoer, but to be understood and forgiven. He asks Miss Haldin whether she believes in remorse and she tells him that she believes all people will be pitied in the end. This convinces him that she will be able to understand and absolve him, that at last he has someone to go to. By confessing, he relieves himself of his sense of being insignificant and misunderstood. Henceforth, he will be remembered and understood as a repentant sinner.

After Jim's death, Marlow speculates whether he is satisfied, a question he can never find an answer to. By contrast, the language teacher, after describing Razumov's confession to Miss Haldin, presents the last entries in his diary, which reveal his final satisfaction and the reasons behind it. Razumov's confession to the revolutionaries and his deafening by Nikanor, a creature who destroys both in the name of autocracy and of revolution, underline the political aspect of the novel. The diary underlines the psychological aspect. It shows how Razumov's imagination, on the basis of Haldin's description of her trustful eyes, has caused him to see Miss Haldin almost as an angel, "appointed to undo the evil by making me betray myself back into truth and peace," and himself almost as a devil, who desired "to steal (Haldin's) sister's soul from her." Guerard believes that Razumov's
exaggerated conception of his own depravity is a hangover from an earlier version of the novel, in which Razumov was to fall in love with Miss Haldin and marry her before confessing. This may be partly correct, but it is not psychologically inconsistent with Razumov's character as it stands that he should execrate himself so strongly. Although there is little mention of religion in the novel, Razumov obviously feels that he must purify himself spiritually. Such purification can only be obtained through self-humiliation, acknowledgement that one is a great sinner. Razumov may well be heaping abuse on himself so as to humiliate himself more fully.

As Razumov sets off to confess to the revolutionaries, there is an ambivalence on the narrator's part, which no doubt reflects Conrad's own mixed feelings. Razumov is called "the puppet of his past." "His past" could be taken to mean his social heritage, but things seem more complicated than that. He leaves on the stroke of midnight to face the revolutionaries, just as Haldin once left at midnight to face the autocrats, the other side of the Russian horror. Russia is somehow more than just a chaotic nation with a bad political system. It casts a destructive influence over its own people's lives. While it is mainly a psychological and political novel, Under Western Eyes occasionally resembles Lord Jim in casting out hints of something dark and inexplicable, though in the later novel this mysterious thing is invariably associated with Russia.

For all that, Razumov's triumph is much more clear than Jim's. It is not a moral triumph, but one of self assertion, an "escape
from the prison of lies." Until his confession, he is too much the product of his surroundings to be held guilty, although he perhaps could have been had he continued to deceive the Haldins. Thus it is hard to say that he atones for anything. Rather, by telling the truth in accordance with his inner drives and in spite of excellent external reasons not to, he asserts himself in a way that gains him the recognition and respect he has always yearned for. Tekla devotes herself to him and Sophia Antonova admires his character.

*Lord Jim* is about human weakness and the possibility of atoning for moral failure. Jim's psychology is secondary. It is scantily rendered and sometimes seems a mystery even to him. Marlow with his digressions and self-contradictions forces the reader to draw his own conclusions about the moral meaning of the book. *Under Western Eyes* is a treatment of the psychological experience of guilt and atonement. The essentially direct narrator whose access to Razumov's diary and ability to interpret it makes him nearly omniscient serves excellently to reveal Razumov's inner experience.

In choosing to explore psychology in *Under Western Eyes*, Conrad chose to use the well-informed, essentially uninvolved language teacher as narrator. The result is a fine psychological portrait of Razumov. In painting this portrait, the teacher so thoroughly analyses Razumov's motivations that it is hard to imagine him acting otherwise than he does, and hence hard to fault him. Marlow, with his personal involvement and limited information, could never have drawn such a portrait of Jim, but he is
very effective as a device for exploring the implications of human moral weakness.
Notes


11. Watt, pp. 346-356 develop and qualify this idea quite elaborately.


18. Guerard, p. 245.
19. Karl, p. 91n.
38. Conrad, *Under Western Eyes*, Author's Note.
46. Morf, p. 367.
Reading List


